

Alpine Shire Council Champion effort delivers rewards

Award for Excellence in Green Purchasing — Small Rural Council

This award recognises the small rural council with the largest investment in green products as a percentage of available expenditure.

Alpine Shire is situated around 300 kilometres north of Melbourne in the Ovens and Kiewa Valleys and takes in some of Victoria's most spectacular features. Bright, Myrtleford and Mount Beauty are the main townships in a Shire which consists of 92% public land.

Investment in green products has delivered some outstanding results for the Shire – including the award for Excellence in Green Purchasing by a small rural council.

A total of 7% of the Shire's available funds in 2008-09 were spent on green products, with the Shire reporting green purchases in almost every category.

39% of the spend was on recycled products, from organic mulch, recycled content papers for outsourced printing, biodiesel, cleaning products, banner stands and bollards right down to pencils. The recycled copy paper purchases alone over the twelve months saved 400 kilograms of CO₂-e, or just over one acre of forest habitat.

Water saving devices, drought tolerant grasses, computer controlled irrigation systems, reusable bags, water tanks, dual flush toilets and sensor lights were also purchased. Replacement of office air conditioning with a more efficient system brought energy savings along with a more comfortable environment for staff.

The largest green purchase for the year was a new tip truck for the Shire's works department. The Mack Trident is bigger and lighter than the Hino Ranger it replaces, and brings with it some significant environmental savings.

An aluminium tipper body means it is lighter, faster and able to tow extra capacity. And the change from mechanical fuel pump to electronic motor fuel injection with Euro 4 emission control makes it more fuel efficient.

'The new truck cost about \$60,000 more than buying a new Hino. It was more expensive, but the benefits with fuel efficiency and time saving far outweigh the monetary expense,' says Sandra Light, Waste Management Officer and the Shire's ECO-Buy Coordinator.



The Shire's new fuel efficient, Euro 4 emission controlled Mack Trident.

One other noteworthy purchase was a thermal blanket for the refurbished Mount Beauty swimming pool. Designed to complement the solar water heating system, help maintain water temperature and quality and reduce evaporation, the blanket delivers savings in water and energy and improves the Shire's ability to sustainably manage the pool.

Like other Councils, Alpine Shire has faced challenges in getting staff to take on green purchasing as part of day to day operations.

It has taken time – and some ‘outside the square’ actions, but supported by the efforts of Sandra Light, the Shire’s passionate green purchasing champion, Alpine Shire has taken green purchasing beyond a policy decision into action.

By talking with suppliers, Sandra has been able to emphasise the Shire’s green purchasing needs and make expectations clear. This process has even helped some suppliers introduce new products to build their green product line.

Internal action means ongoing communications with staff and management at all levels. Checking with all departments to make sure they’re aware of the green alternatives is imperative, as is rewarding those who buy green.

A pat on the back for making the effort to go green can go a long way according to Sandra. ‘We always try to recognise staff who take the lead and source green products for their projects.’

It’s been a big achievement for a small Shire. And they’re beginning to see the rewards – the cost savings, environmental benefits and long term value for money – and awards.

And there’s more to come - ‘We can always improve,’ says Sandra.

**Recycled copy paper
purchased by Alpine Shire
during 2008-09 saved an
acre of forest habitat –
and 400kg of CO₂-e.**

SNAPSHOT - GREEN PURCHASING BY ALPINE SHIRE

- Fuel efficient vehicles for replacement of aging fleet and equipment
- Thermal pool blanket for refurbished Mount Beauty Pool
- Compact fluorescent light bulbs and Solar lighting
- Showerheads, dual flush toilets and sensor lighting in toilets
- Recycled paper for copying and printing
- Solar heat reflective paint
- Non toxic cleaning products and disinfectant, phosphate free dishwashing liquid, cornstarch bags
- One tonne of steel and a cubic metre of timber from Ovens River Weir reused along paths in Tawonga