

# The Keyswide Sustain-Ability Project

Goal: 80% Reduction of Emissions by 2050

## **GLEE's "Green" Paper on the 4 R's = Reduce, Reuse, Recycle & Rot**

Prepared for the KSAP Recycling Summit, November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008

### **Why the 4 R's?**

Although the State of Florida has a 20% waste diversion policy, the Florida Keys rate remains below 10%. In order to meet the State of Florida's newly mandated 75% waste reduction by 2020, and 10% compost by 2010, we will have to be proactive and work together on a wide variety of initiatives. The four R's of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Rot (compost/mulch) are all proven components of an effective, integrated waste reduction system.

To assist its partners in the Keyswide Sustain-Ability Project proactively identify and enact programs to reach these goals, GLEE has convened multiple experts in waste reduction, recycling, composting, and more.

### **The E-Mission Statement**

In 2007, KSAP participants pledged to the tenets of the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, striving to take action in our own operations and communities to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by roughly 2% per year. Our State and Federal governments are currently working on various cap and trade scenarios to create carrot and stick approaches to emissions reductions. The more you reduce, the more you are rewarded – the more you contribute to the waste stream, the more you are penalized.

Waste reduction saves energy and resources in the long run. Our collective trash, yard waste and recyclables are currently hauled between 65 to 200 miles one way. While we recognize the benefits of providing for a waste to energy plant on the mainland, if we can find ways to effectively utilize even a portion of it here, it could reduce our carbon footprint, and save transportation dollars. Programs that increase composting and recycling and decrease waste have been used successfully by other local governments to reduce emissions and reduce municipal solid waste (MSW) expenses.

### **Do We Have Support?**

**Individuals:** In the world of sustainable actions, recycling is known as the "gateway drug" because it is easy to get individuals to participate, feel good about their actions, and then move on to even greater sustainable actions. In the Keys, many of our new residents, snowbirds, and tourists are used to much higher recycling standards and expectations, and have told us many a time that they want to see less waste in their communities. It's a fact that the Keys first coordinated recycling effort was instigated by citizens in 1989, reaching waste diversion rates of over 30% via their grassroots efforts.

**Businesses:** Currently businesses in the Keys must have a separate paid account to recycle, which is a norm throughout the state. It is important to note however, that most business recycling programs have been proven to actually save the businesses money. A crucial component in the implementation of these programs is to proactively work to remove the instant impression that recycling is an added financial burden. Under most contracts for Keys' businesses, recycling is collected at approximately half the cost of trash; therefore, reducing trash volume and increasing recycling saves businesses money.

**Waste Businesses:** We appreciate the services that our current waste haulers provide for our residents and businesses Keyswide. We know that they are committed to serving our ideals, as long as achieving those ideals is financially viable and leads to desired profit margins. We know that it will take a combined effort to achieve

higher waste diversion rates and expect that their professional knowledge and experience can help us provide for the needs of the community and the health of the islands we all live on.

**Local Government:** Because of their commitment to the Keyswide Sustain-Ability Project, we know that no one in our local governments opposes improvements in the 4 R's, but that they do get nervous when words like "mandatory" or "increased fees" are uttered. The purpose of today's Recycling Summit is to show our elected officials and government staff that there are other municipalities in Florida that are enjoying high waste diversion rates and equitable rates for their communities with strong community support and to ask them to take specific steps towards understanding their options to achieve the same.

**State of Florida:** Governor Crist's 75% waste diversion by 2020 and 10% composting component by 2010 has already been mentioned. Through FDEP, there are multiple grants, loans and technical support personnel to help residential recycling, business recycling and waste haulers meet higher standards. Through the support of the DCA, the County has already laid out goals for waste diversion and local mulch programs.

**Federal Government:** Although there are no federal mandates to reduce waste that we know of, recycling efforts across the nation are celebrated annually on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November, as designated by multiple Presidents over the years. The EPA and USDA all have funding programs to help rural areas like ours reduce waste and protect our environment.

### **What Can We Do?**

As a Green Paper, this document does not mandate actions, but instead provides recommendations for action. It speaks not of policies already determined, but of researched propositions put before the citizenry, elected officials and staff of our local governments to evaluate and make their own decisions.

It is therefore, GLEE's recommendation that our local governments, as KSAP partners, do hereby resolve to meet or exceed the waste diversion and composting objectives set forth by the Governor of the State of Florida.

- To achieve economies of scale and ease of implementation, we recommend that our local governments coordinate with each other through a Solid Waste Task Force, as recommended in the Monroe County Comp Plan.
- To reduce uncertainties, we recommend that our local governments survey existing successful programs and consult with citizenry and industry on perceived obstacles and opportunities.
- To achieve the quickest results, we recommend taking proactive actions, including but not limited to:
  - 1) Devise and propose an equitable tier system (the Pay As You Throw concept) for waste pricing, that would place more costs on the most wasteful; create the ability for residents to cut costs by reducing waste, and subsidize efforts to educate, encourage and increase recycling rates Keyswide.
  - 2) Design and implement a new type of mulching program that would reach Florida's goal of 10% composted material by 2010 Keyswide.
  - 3) Set an example by making recycling accessible and mandatory for public employees and readily available in every public building and recreational area Keyswide.
  - 4) Close the loop by directing staff to enact procurement standards to purchase recycled materials, whenever possible and reasonable Keyswide.
  - 5) Identify, evaluate and prioritize education and incentive programs by their resultant waste diversion.

### **What Can GLEE Do?**

For individuals, GLEE will continue to coordinate Recycling Fairs for the public throughout the Keys in November. For businesses, GLEE will help decipher the code to reducing waste costs through increased recycling. For local governments and other KSAP partners, GLEE will help both research and implement your ideas, by seeking experts, funding and community support. You have GLEE's support in all of these things.