

Environmental Stewardship



Vision

The Aspen Area will be a local, regional, state and national leader in all aspects of environmental stewardship.

Philosophy

As stewards of our environment and resources, it is our responsibility to balance human activity and the health of our natural environment. This ethic is our defining characteristic.

As stated in the 1993 and 2000 AACPs: "The natural environment is one of the community's greatest assets and the reason many people choose to visit or make the Aspen area their home." We do not simply aspire to be good stewards of the environment. We are committed to nurturing, sustaining, and protecting the environment, and believe in the urgency of these actions.

Some of our greatest environmental challenges include the various impacts of development and redevelopment, including:

- The treatment of run-off before it reaches riparian areas, a problem that is heightened when development occurs on steep slopes and in riparian areas.
- The generation of substantial amounts of demolition debris, a long-term problem due to strong trends towards residential redevelopment, and the impact on our limited landfill.
- Excessive energy consumption, including extensive snowmelting, outdoor pools/spas etc.
- Periods of high employment increases vehicle trips, which results in extensive idling related to heavy traffic congestion.

We recognize the decisions we make today regarding our air, water, and land will have a significant impact on our future. As such, we are committed to making choices and implementing programs that ensure our environmental sustainability. We recognize that these choices will come up even as we consider basic municipal services such as snow removal, maintaining public parks and fields, and street-sweeping and cleaning etc. We can also play a role in changing people's individual habits, from re-useable grocery bags to higher recycling rates and limiting the wasteful consumption of plastic bottles.

We continue to endorse the Ecological Bill of Rights, adopted by the City Council and Board of County Commissioners (please see sidebar on page 52-53).

What's Changed Since 2000

Since 2000, there have been a significant number of new programs and projects completed with a goal toward improving the environmental health of the Aspen community. Some of the highlights include:

- Continued improvement of the City and County Residential Energy Mitigation Program (REMP), which requires mitigation for energy consumption outside the home for of snow melt systems, pools/spas, etc.
- Continued City and County support of the Roaring Fork Transit Authority (RFTA), which saved 8,023 tons of CO₂ from being emitted into the environment in 2006.
- The City reached EPA PM-10 "attainment" status in 2003, after 15 years of devising and implementing strategies to improve air quality.
- Adopting the City's Canary Initiative in 2005 with a goal of educational outreach and aggressive reductions in our carbon footprint.
- Adopting the City's Waste Reduction/Recycling Ordinance in 2005, aimed at increasing the recycling rate, diverting yard waste from trash, and establishing a reporting system.
- Creating the ZGreen program in 2006, a City certification and outreach program designed to reduce the environmental impacts of Aspen's citizens, visitors, businesses, and events.
- Establishing a new taxing district in 2007, with the goal of treating stormwater run-off. Also, new development fees are being used to address run-off problems at construction sites, as part of the City's Clean River Initiative.
- Creating the Jennie Adair and Rio Grande Stormwater Management Projects in 2006. After six months of operation, this constructed wetlands project prevented 144 tons of sediment from discharging into the Roaring Fork River.

Definitions

ZGreen: A City certification and outreach program designed to help Aspen's citizens, visitors, businesses, and events reduce their environmental footprint.

PM-10: Small particulate air pollution including dirt, dust, and smoke. It is responsible for up to 60,000 deaths per year in the US and in Aspen it comes almost exclusively from traffic.

Ozone: A pollutant caused by upwind emissions of pollutants from gas drilling and traffic.

Canary Initiative: In 2005, the city adopted the ambitious Canary Initiative that identifies Aspen and other mountain communities as the "canary in the coalmine" for global warming. The goal is to aggressively reduce Aspen's carbon footprint to protect our community's future, and to contribute to global reduction of global warming pollution. Global warming is caused by greenhouse gasses, which trap heat in the atmosphere. According to the EPA's US Greenhouse Gas Inventory, in 2006 carbon dioxide (CO₂) made up 80% of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. CO₂ enters the atmosphere through the burning of fossil fuels, solid waste and tree products.

Clean River Initiative: A City program dedicated to improving the water quality in the Aspen Area.

Deconstruction: The selective dismantlement of building components, specifically for re-use, recycling, and waste management. It differs from demolition where a site is cleared of its building materials by the most expedient means.

What's New in the 2011 AACCP

The 2000 AACCP combined the Environment, Parks and Open Space into one chapter. The 2011 update to the AACCP recognizes that Environmental Stewardship is of such importance that it should be highlighted in its own chapter.

The 2011 AACCP establishes a series of ambitious goals that are intended to elevate environmental stewardship to a new level during the next 10 years. They include:

- Reducing the Aspen Area's carbon footprint by 30% compared to 2004 levels.
- Reducing electricity and natural gas consumption in the Urban Growth Boundary by 15% compared to 2004 levels.
- Implementing the Clean River Initiative through additional wetlands design and construction at Rio Grande Park, including treatment "vaults."
- Initiatives aimed at on-site treatment for run-off.
- Increasing the diversion of construction debris from the landfill, and moving towards recycling programs to help extending the life of the landfill.
- Substantially reducing our dependence on non-renewable energy.



Sediment in stormwater runoff in the City of Aspen is 20 times higher than the national average. The Clean River Initiative is focused on improving our stormwater runoff.

Linkages

This plan recognizes that community goals are often inextricably linked: sometimes they complement each other, and at times they come into conflict. This community's commitment to responsible environmental stewardship has been evident for decades, and has evolved dramatically in recent years. Preserving the natural environment, scenic views and biodiversity are important to our attractiveness as a resort, and a real estate/development economy. There will always be a need to strike a responsible balance between environmental protection and physical development. We also recognize the need to strike a balance between environmental stewardship and the manner in which we provide basic municipal services, ranging from street sweeping to managing snowy and icy winters.

Ecological Bill of Rights

The community adopted an Ecological Bill of Rights in 1989, which states the overall environmental philosophy for the Aspen Area:

- The right to breathe clean air and enjoy clear vistas.
- The right to the preservation of natural riparian areas and wetlands.
- The right to permanently protected minimum stream flows in rivers and creeks.
- The right to the preservation and restoration of native wildlife and plant diversity by preservation of sufficient habitat.
- The right to protection of designated wilderness through management of adjoining land in a way that preserves the integrity of the wilderness areas.
- The right to a landscape free of noxious and invasive weeds.
- The right of appropriate access to public lands on roads and trails historically open to the public, consistent with the nature and designation of the public lands.
- The right to dedicated open space protected from urbanization and development.
- The right to the efficient and renewable use of energy.
- The right to be free from excessive noise.
- The right to see the night sky without the interference of unnecessary artificial light from growth, urbanization and highway development.
- The right to the absolute minimum involuntary exposure to toxic chemicals, radioactive substances and energy forms that are hazardous to health.
- The right to maintain and not exceed the carrying capacity (sustainability) of the land and water, including protecting water quality.
- The right to expect from our government legislation and active enforcement of land use and development regulations consistent with this Ecological Bill of Rights.

Environmental Stewardship Policies

Policy Categories

I. GREENHOUSE GASES

I.1. Within 10 years, reduce the carbon footprint of the Aspen Area from 2004 levels by 30%.

Community Goal

I.2. Incentivize alternative forms of transportation to reduce reliance on fossil-fuels.

Incentive Program

I.3. Ensure all development and uses minimize their greenhouse gas emissions.

Proposed Code Amendment

II. AIR QUALITY

II.1. Reduce the quantity of particulate pollution in Aspen's air.

*Community Goal,
Collaborative Initiative,
Environmental Health Work
Program*

II.2. Achieve and maintain healthy ozone levels.

*Community Goal,
Collaborative Initiative,
Environmental Health Work
Program*

II.3. Ensure all development and uses minimize their air pollution emissions.

Proposed Code Amendment

III. WATER

III.1. Maintain minimum stream flows for the Roaring Fork River and its tributaries.

*Community Goal, Work
Program for Water
Department*

III.2. Reduce the detrimental effects of diversions from the Roaring Fork River and its tributaries.

*Work Program for Water
Department*

III.3. Maintain and preserve existing riparian habitat and wetlands.

*Work Program for Planning
Department, Proposed
Code Amendment*

III.4. Reduce the quantity of urban pollutants in stormwater runoff that discharge into the Roaring Fork River and its tributaries.

*Work Program for
Engineering, Proposed
Code Amendment*

III.5. Optimize the natural filtration of storm- and melt- water.

*Work Program for
Engineering, Proposed
Code Amendment*

III.6. Require new development to treat its stormwater runoff, with a preference for on site.

*Work Program for
Engineering, Proposed
Code Amendment*

Environmental Stewardship Policies

Policy Categories

IV. WASTE MANAGEMENT AND REDUCTION

IV.1. Implement waste reduction and purchasing programs and encourage behavior that moves the Aspen Area toward being a zero waste community and extends the life of the Landfill.

*Community Goal
Collaborative Initiative, Work Program for Environmental Health & Landfill*

IV.2. Ensure adequate funds are available for environmental monitoring and eventual remediation of the Pitkin County Landfill.

Work Program for Landfill

IV.3. Increase the amount of construction and development materials that are diverted from the landfill, reused or recycled.

Proposed Code Amendment

V. RENEWABLE ENERGY

V.1. Reduce our dependence on non-renewable energy sources and instill an ethic of energy accountability.

Community Goal

V.2. Continue to pursue efforts to establish an electric grid of 100% renewable energy.

Community Goal

V.3. Within 10 years, reduce electricity and natural gas consumption in the Urban Growth Boundary from 2004 levels by 15%.

Community Goal

V.4. Encourage existing development and require new development and redevelopment to minimize their energy usage and use on-site renewable energies as the site allows.

*Incentive Program,
Proposed Code Amendment*

VI. WEED MANAGEMENT

VI.1. Ensure there is proper resource management to minimize the negative impacts of weeds on the Aspen Area.

Community Goal, Work Program for Parks and Open Space Departments

VII. WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

VII.1. Sustain, protect and restore biodiversity and native ecosystems through land use planning, resource acquisition and best land management practices on public and private lands.

*Community Goal,
Collaborative Initiative,
Work Program for Planning,
Parks, and Open Space
Departments, Proposed
Code Amendment*