

MCPS Green and Growing 2009 Review

Another year has passed, with 2009 presenting many challenges to the Monmouth County Park System. Some of our answers to the issues of 2009, which continue into 2010, have been formulated in the Green and Growing Committee. Through research and implementation, the Committee has helped to steer the Park System toward new procedures and purchases that will make us a leader in “going green.”

World wide, the green initiative has resulted in the introduction of new products, services, and equipment. New “green” labels appear on packaging, and new “green” advertising gimmicks are used. But along with all the new green products are items that may not be completely legitimate. As consumers, we must be cautious, do our research, and investigate such products. Just because the label says the product is green does not guarantee that it is.

Another challenge is determining the performance of green products. In some cleaning products, for example, the chemical that provides the disinfectant to kill viruses, bacteria and mold has been replaced with a less effective chemical, thus limiting the product’s usefulness. When choosing a “green item,” particularly when replacing an item, you have to be sure that the item can meet the requirements of the job.

Unfortunately, in many instances green products are more expensive than their non-green counterparts. The effort needed to produce a green item that is effective and efficient drives the cost up. Put simply, the cost may exceed the benefit, which is obviously a major factor in these tight budget times.

Many types of equipment now carry the green label. From vehicles to mowers, in one fashion or another, manufacturers are altering construction of equipment in an effort to make the product “green friendly.” Early on, the most common alterations dealt with fuel conservation. Electric has been the most common substitute for fossil fuels. However, there are many ways manufacturers may refer to their equipment as “green.” Consumers must

research the piece of equipment thoroughly, deciding if the equipment performs as advertised and is cost-effective.

These are some of the concerns that the Park System weighs when considering green products. The following are examples of equipment that was purchased by the Park System in 2009, applying green standards:

- Five Chevy Colorado trucks, replacing larger Ford F 250s. The Chevy Colorado is more fuel-efficient, can handle similar work load, yet still has the four-wheel drive capability.
- One Electric Toro Workman Utility Vehicle, replacing a gas-powered Cushman Utility Vehicle. The Toro Workman is powered solely by electric, thus conserving gasoline. It is quiet, making it park and visitor friendly, and it is capable of handling the same workload as the gas-powered Cushman.
- One Kubota Four-Wheel Drive Front End Bucket Loader, featuring a three-vortex combustion system diesel engine that allows for efficient operation, with a hydrostatic transmission and fuel-efficient idling.
- One Jacobsen Eclipse Electric Triplex Mower, adding to Pine Brook Golf Course's electric mowers. The new Electric Eclipse features an all-electric power train, which produces virtually no noise, has no hydraulics which eliminates turf damage due to leaks, and regenerative braking system for recharging the batteries.
- Solar panels installed and operating at Sunnyside Recreation Area. The solar panels provide electricity to the facility, and depending on the weather, produce excess electricity which can be returned to the power company for a savings on Sunnyside's electric bill.
- An effort is being made to use utility vehicles in place of full-size vehicles for transportation within parks where it is feasible. This effort saves fuel and reduces carbon emissions.

Not all green products are desirable for various reasons. Here are two examples of products that the Park System researched and rejected in 2009:

- An alternate fuel known as "bio-diesel" was studied by the Park System. Registered and meeting EPA standards, this fuel source consists of soybean oil or yellow grease (recycled restaurant cooking oil). The oil is blended with petroleum diesel at different percentages. B20 is the most commonly evaluated grade. Although bio-diesel fuel may be a future consideration, research proved that it may not be an

appropriate alternative for the Park System at this time. There are pros and cons to bio-diesel, but a major draw back is that equipment manufacturers are hesitant to honor or extend warranties to equipment using alternative fuels. As technology advances and manufacturers alter machinery, the Park System may reconsider this fuel.

- A demonstration of a Hybrid John Deere Fairway mower was presented at Hominy Hill Golf Course in the summer of 2009. Although the mower was a very attractive piece of equipment, the price was high. The mower was advertised as a hybrid and to a degree it was, but not necessarily what most consider a hybrid. Its major selling point was the design of the hydraulics, and lack of leaks which cause significant damage to turf. The Park System declined to consider purchase of this machine at this time.

Remember, going green means making choices that reduce, minimize, and attempt to reverse the negative impact of our actions on the earth and its resources. Because the Park System's mission is to preserve and protect Monmouth County's natural resources, it is our duty to investigate and when feasible, use products and procedures that will advance the green movement. As stewards of the land, it's the right thing for us to do.