

OSU ECO-REP

handbook & survival guide

How our lifestyles and choices affect the environment and people.



Welcome!

Welcome to the OSU Eco-Rep handbook! Inside you will find a detailed description of what it looks like to be an Eco-Rep at OSU. It covers everything from a “job description” to events/outreach programs to general sustainable practices that you will follow and teach your peers. As an OSU student, you have the power to influence your peers’ actions for good. As an Eco-Rep, your primary role will be encouraging your peers in ResLife to participate in sustainable actions, which will help our school reduce its ecological footprint. Thank you for taking an interest in cultivating good stewardship at OSU!

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Being an Eco-Rep

What it means to be an Eco-Rep

- Eco Representatives at Oklahoma State University is a leadership program that promotes a sustainable lifestyle. Representatives support the University's Core Value, *Stewardship of Resources*, through peer education and outreach activities. Eco-Reps represent an environmental consciousness and challenge their peers to adopt a culture of sustainability.
- Eco-Reps:
 - Promote resource and energy conservation through educational programs and outreach in campus resident communities
 - Model environmental stewardship and sustainable habits to peers in OSU's Res Halls
 - Teach good stewardship best practices, raise awareness about sustainability issues, and encourage positive behavior
 - Get fellow residents to participate!!
- Your collective effort makes a huge difference



2017-2018 Eco-Reps

Goals of Eco-Rep Program

1. Contribute to Housing and Residential Life's mission: "To provide safe, affordable, accessible, and well-maintained residential communities, which encourage individuals to value learning, inclusion, citizenship, and community engagement," by helping students gain a better understanding of sustainability and the impact of their individual actions.
2. Train Eco-reps to be peer educators and student leaders for environmental and sustainability issues.
3. Educate Eco-Reps to be proactive change agents that empower community members to live more sustainably.
4. Prepare Eco-Reps to develop, promote, and implement events, activities and campaigns for their peers.
5. Decrease waste and increase reuse and recycling in the residence halls, including a reduction in recycling contamination.
6. Decrease energy and water usage in the residence halls.
7. Reduce financial cost of utilities through achievement of reduction in energy use, water use, and waste minimization.



Responsibilities as an Eco-Rep

Eco-Reps should expect to volunteer approximately 2 hours per week for programming.

- Weekly Meetings
 - Goal: Participate in person or send someone in your place
 - Consult meeting minutes for actions steps if unable to make it to a meeting (find minutes on CampusLink)
- Hall Community Resource
 - Goal: Be the community resource for questions, concerns, and ideas regarding sustainability.
- Education and Outreach
 - Goal: Deliver programming to peer residents
- Promote energy and resource conservation, including the ResLife Recycles program.
- Promotion of special events and initiatives
 - Goal: Help support and promote special events and programs that complement Eco-Rep programming efforts. You may be asked for additional ideas to make the events more sustainable. You will be expected to communicate with staff on their roles and how they can make the event more successful in your community. Be sure to encourage the CM's to bring their residents to these events. (See Events & Programs section on page 7 for a list of all events).

Officer Duties

- See Appendix A

What it means to be a Peer Educator

A peer educator is a trained person who enlightens their peers on a certain topic. They are also a type of mentor.

By attending Eco-Rep meetings, you will be equipped with knowledge that the peers you are trying to engage may not have or understand. They also may not be as invested or interested in making a change as you are, but it is up to you to demystify eco-friendly practices and make them seem interesting.

- Act as role models
- Educate and lead by example

- Be a resource for students
- Be knowledgeable about sustainability living practices (on campus)
- Empower your peers to take action
 - As a peer educator with more knowledge and interest on the subject of sustainability, it may often be perceived as arrogance by your peers. They obviously will not listen to you if this is the case. Go into this position with the idea of empowering your peers, instead of constantly correcting them; this will help them receive your constructive criticism and make them more likely to change their actions.
- Changing behavior
 - As an Eco-Rep you are charged with a very difficult task: changing the behavior of your peers. Changing our habits is difficult and takes time – even when we know the change will be for the best. How many times have you told yourself to exercise more or procrastinate less? Here are some tips to help you effectively communicate with your residents about behavior change. Remember to stay positive and patient.
 - Understand your audience: Ask yourself, what motivates this person? If you don't know, try to find out. Your audience will respond better to messages that speak about their values and interests. Ask them why creating a sustainable community is important – relate it back to them! Be flexible and don't assume a tactic that worked for one person will work for all people.
 - Connect with your audience: Your audience will be more willing to listen to people they know and trust. Talk about shared interests, experiences, or values to help them feel understood and respected.
 - Develop your message: Your message should be clear, understandable, and relatable. Often times, environmental information (especially technical facts) is confusing to the average person; most people don't see a connection between themselves and the facts being presented. Make a clear link between the individual and information to help them begin caring about the environmental concern at hand. Ex: What is the environmental concern? How does it affect the person? What are steps they can take to help improve it? Don't lecture. Have a conversation.
 - Allow your audience to arrive at their own conclusions: The most successful way to have people really care about and understand a problem is to have them come to their own conclusions about it. Give your audience enough information for them to make their own informed decision. Once they take ownership, they are more likely to carry out and stick with their new behaviors.
 - Things to avoid: Do not overload your audience with apocalyptic messages. Balance the issues with possible solutions. If you focus too much on the problems, your audience will feel depressed, helpless and won't see a need to care about the issue and take action.

Successful Conversations

As an Eco-Rep, you have to find the delicate balance in how to remind people about sustainable behavior, without becoming nagging and annoying. Nobody will listen to a “self-righteous environmentalist” and nobody wants to feel guilty about his or her choices or lifestyle. Most likely, the residents you will be talking with will have different interests and values and the issues you bring up will be the first time they are hearing about them.

Two important rules when engaging in conversation are:

1. Listen. If you don't listen to peers, why should they listen to you? Make them feel heard. What are the needs of this person? What are the barriers they are facing?
2. Question your assumptions. Find out the source of what's really happening in the situation. Perhaps things are not as they seem. For example, a resident might not recycle because he sees custodians put recycling in the trash. It is more likely that the custodian is placing both bags of trash and recycling in her wheeled barrel, but when she gets outdoors, she separates the bags into the appropriate trash or recycle dumpster. Follow the recycling!

Events and Activities

Calendar

- Move-in Recycling – August
- Student Org. Fair – August
- Campus Sustainability Month – October
- America Recycles Day – November 15
- Promotion of No Impact Poke Sustainable Living Certificate (all year)
- Caught Green Handed photo recognition campaign (spring semester)
- Event Recycling for RHA and Resident Community events
- Support campus Earth Day efforts – April



Surveys

Surveys are used to get honest feedback about programs and understand our residents better. We will use surveys to ask residents about their regular eco-friendly habits, what they think of our current Eco-Rep programs, and what they would like to see in the future in regard to sustainability here at OSU. This will help plan for the years to come. There are two types of surveys to conduct:

1. Hall Community Surveys: These surveys will be done in person by you, the Eco-Rep, with your residents. People are more likely to think about their responses to in-person questionnaires, so use this type of survey to ask about current Eco-Rep programs and what residents would like to see in the future.
2. Online Surveys (Google Forms, Survey Monkey): You will be expected to send out these surveys to your residents (typically at the beginning and end of each semester for comparison purposes). Since they are not conducted in-person, people will be more honest about their responses so they don't feel pressured to answer a question one way or another. Because of this, ask more quantitative questions regarding their sustainable practices.

Event Planning

The Basics:

- Bring a camera and a recycling bin (if needed)
- Give people a head's up! – more people will participate

Promo Ideas:

- Fliers at front desk and elevators or stairs
- Group Me
- Emails through RHA
- Sign on your door
- Announce to CMs
- Visit residents door to door (a day/couple hours before to remind them)

Making it inclusive...

It is essential that all of our community residents feel welcome and included in programming efforts so as you are planning out programs, think about what it means to be inclusive in your event.

Inclusive Programming Checklist:

- Are there holidays (including non-Christian) I need to be sure to schedule around and/or for? Am I only celebrating Christian and/or American holidays?
- Am I prepared to interact with all residents at the program – not just people I know? Did we design the program so everyone has the ability to interact with people they don't know?
- Is most of my target audience actually interested in my programs? How can I get them more interested?
- What day/times are most students available?
- Did I assess the accessibility of my program and space? Ex: Can a wheelchair easily maneuver?
- Is most of what we are doing free/low cost?
- Am I clearly advertising what the program is for?
- Did I personally invite everyone to my programs, not just ones I know will attend?

Making it environmentally friendly...

Because of our commitment to sustainability (and because it is better for the earth), all programs should strive to be as environmentally friendly as possible.

Sustainable Programming Checklist:

- Do I have a convenient recycling receptacle clustered with a trash can at every program?
- Am I recycling acceptable items?
- Am I buying locally produced foods/goods or from a local business?
- Am I buying minimally processed foods? Bulk or minimally packaged foods?
- Can my event be vegetarian?
- Am I buying fair trade items? Organic?
- Am I role modeling positive habits around recycling and utility conservation?
- Am I purchasing only what will be used? What is my plan for leftovers?
- Am I only purchasing what I really NEED?
- Do I encourage students to bring their own reusable cups and dishes to programs? If I am providing, did I buy something more environmentally friendly? (ex: compostable) NO Styrofoam!
- Did I turn off electronics and lights after my event?

Potential Campaigns

“No Impact Poke” Sustainable Living Certificate

The goal of this program would be to teach residents how to live sustainably on a college campus. Eco-Reps would have students pledge to undertake certain behaviors to receive this certificate. To qualify, they must meet certain expectations, which would be evaluated by the Eco-Rep in their building.

Categories of expectations could include:

- Energy conservation
- Water conservation
- Transportation alternatives
- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
- Shopping and consumerism
- Laundry
- Campus Action/Knowledge

Specific expectations could include but are not limited to:

- Reducing food waste by not taking more than they can eat and bringing leftovers home
- Taking shorter showers
- Washing clothes using the cold water setting
- Recycling only what is accepted in the bin
- Unplugging chargers and other electronics when not in use
- Adding more plants to their diet

Caught Green-Handed Campaign

This would be a social media recognition campaign. You would sign up for a week each semester and go out in teams of two to “catch” people being sustainable. You would need to be creative with what you catch people doing, but also make sure to incorporate more obvious eco-friendly actions.



When you approach people, you would explain that you're doing a random recognition campaign, and then ask if they are willing to participate. Make sure they know their picture would be on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. Ask them to write their own message on a small whiteboard to take a picture with.

Tips for success:

- Stay in and around campus housing
- Wear your t-shirt and name tag
- Make sure picture isn't blurry
- Remember to give them a Caught Green Handed button
- Plan to get a minimum of five different pictures – can be individual or group pictures
- Brainstorm with your partner in advance to determine possible locations to visit and even specific actions to be on the lookout for
- Check the OSU calendar for any relevant events you could go to and take pictures
- DON'T stay in one location or do all the same action
- Email your 2-3 best photos to the social media chair.

Humans of OSU

This program would be similar to the Humans of New York project. Once a semester, you would pair up and go out to take pictures of people who desire to (and are striving to) live more sustainably. This would be another social media campaign, so you'd need to ask them questions to write a short bio about them.

Question ideas:

- How did you get interested in sustainability?
- How do you live sustainably now?
- What sustainable goals do you have for the future?
- What would you challenge others to do to make their life more sustainable?
- Why is sustainability important?

When you finish, email the bio and picture to the social media chair for posting on social media.

Tips & Advice for Being an Eco-Rep

Say it. Repeat it. Say it again. Habits are formed from repeating actions. Messages on sustainable behaviors have to be given repeatedly for them to be remembered. This is why you're asked to do a variety of outreach efforts each semester.

Innovate – What's going on in your community that you can turn into an opportunity or important issue? Look for opportunities to make a difference. Don't be afraid of crazy ideas – they might just work!

Promote the positive – Remind and encourage positive behaviors without becoming overbearing or annoying. We aren't the Eco-police!

Be sensible – Appeal to people's sensibilities and try to find connections between the behaviors you want to see and issues they care about. This is an opportunity to open up to constructive conversations.

Be a people person – Eco-Reps benefit from knowing neighbors and friends. People respond more positively to those they have a relationship with. Get out there and say hello!

Be present – Consider posting your availability on your door and bulletin board so that residents know when to find you in the hall.

Network – Working with other people and groups on campus and in your hall is a great way to make your event more visible and known. Your attendance is much more likely to increase when people know you!

Be resourceful – Try to reuse materials and host events that are as waste-free as possible.

Be specific – Let your peers know what they can do in specific language. Focus on concrete actions they can take, not what they are not doing.

Set a good example – Role model the behaviors you are asking your peers to do. You can't expect them to change if you aren't doing it!

Keep learning – Be knowledgeable about what's going on around you. Learn about and share where energy comes from, where waste goes, and behaviors that matter.

Observe – Be a people watcher. Watch how actions are carried out compared to how they are supposed to be done. Plan for behavior change based on your own observations.

Identify roadblocks – Figure out what could be a barrier for peers engaging in sustainably friendly behaviors. Common ones are lack of knowledge (easiest to address), lack of opportunity to do the right thing (e.g., no control over heating and cooling in a building), lack of interest (hardest to address), lack of time, lack of money, and lack of motivation. Once you know the roadblocks, you can work with them to identify creative solutions.

Appendix A

Eco-Rep Student Organization – Officer Positions

Organization Purpose

Increase awareness of resource and energy conservation among housing residents at Oklahoma State University through leadership and peer-to-peer programming. Eco-Reps promote a sustainable lifestyle and help create a culture of sustainability in Housing & Residential Life.

Officers must be full-time students in good standing. Officers are elected in January and serve February through December in their positions and through the following April as mentors to the officers who replace them.

President

The president will be responsible for leading the organization toward growth and positive impact at OSU. The president will be responsible for planning three programs per semester that serve the purpose of the organization. The president also will:

- hold officer meetings weekly for planning purposes
- hold club meetings every other week or twice per month, at a minimum
- communicate with co-advisors every other week, at a minimum
- develop agendas in advance of meetings
- maintain the Eco-Rep email account by updating passwords when promoted

Vice President

The vice-president will help the president plan and execute the same three programs per semester that serve the purpose of the organization. The vice-president also will:

- serve as president in the president's absence
- serve as historian and photographer of events/activities
- post to social media account(s)
- maintain programming spreadsheet

Treasurer

The treasurer will create a budget at the beginning of every semester that must be approved by the president and advisor. The treasurer will be responsible for tracking expenses and income and may be asked to plan fundraisers for the organization. The treasurer also will:

- register the organization’s signature card and keep it up to date
- complete Student Government Association training to receive funding
- prepare and provide all requested information when funding is being pursued

Secretary

The secretary shall keep minutes of all official meetings of the leadership and/or body. These minutes will be posted to CampusLink within 7 days of a meeting for member and advisor access.

The secretary also will:

- keep a roster of members that includes: contact information, residence hall, club position (Eco-Rep Officer, CoCo-elected Eco-Rep, Eco-Rep Volunteer, or Advisor)
- send email or GroupMe meeting notice 2 days before each meeting
- send email reminder meeting notice with agenda on day of meeting
- approve new member requests to CampusLink and welcome each new member by inviting them to the next Eco-Rep meeting

Other positions may vary by year. These may include a Social Media chair and a New Member chair.

Appendix B

Contact Info

Ilda Hershey – *Sustainability Coordinator*

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Fred Dillard – *Coordinator Student Leadership*

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Appendix C

Helpful Social Media Accounts to Follow

@OSUgreen
[@OSUSGAsustain](#)
@OSUPark_Ride

@NetImpact_OSU
@OSUWasteMgt
@AASHENews

Appendix D

Glossary

AASHE: Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (OSU is a member).

Audit: inspection of something (usually trash or recycling bins or dumpsters).

Biodegradable: a product that will break down within a reasonably short period of time after customary disposal (aka it will continue to break down into small pieces but may not completely degrade). Not the same as compostable.

Climate change: a change in global or regional climate patterns that are attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide and other gases such as methane.

Community Recycle Bin: recycle bins at hall desks or resident lounges that are for recyclables generated in those community spaces (not for personal use).

Compostable: organic (carbon-based) goods that break down into nutrient-rich soil. Not the same as biodegradable.

Composting: Composting mixes organic waste such as food, and dead leaves, with air, water, and microorganisms to become nutrient-rich soil, which can be used as fertilizer.

Eco-footprint: The impact of human activities on the environment, usually measured in terms of land and water required to produce goods and services consumed.

Greenhouse gas emissions: Atmospheric gases that contribute to the greenhouse effect (CO₂, CH₄, and NO₂).

LEED: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design is the most widely used green building rating system in the world and is available for virtually all building, community, and home project types.

OKRA: Oklahoma Recycling Association – dedicated to providing education and referral services about integrated solid waste management.

OrangeRide: A bicycle rental and repair program offered to promote affordable and convenient transportation to the campus and Stillwater community. Located at the Multi-modal Transportation building.

OSU Recycles: OSU’s dual-stream recycle program for non-residential areas of campus.

Pedestrian cans: outdoor trash or recycle bins.

Personal recycle bins: Recycling bins that residents keep in their rooms (<https://sustainability.okstate.edu/resliferecycles/personal-bins>)

Post-consumer recycled content: Products made from materials that come from consumer recycling (ex: disposable water bottles could be recycled into carpet).

Pre-consumer recycled content: Things made from materials that have been recycled by producers/factories but have not been used or recycled by the consumer (ex: paper scraps from a mill that are reused in the paper-making process).

Recycle bins: Bins that recycled materials can be put in. Depending on the location, the accepted materials may be different (will be labeled).

Recycle dumpster: These green or blue dumpsters can be found outside around campus. Custodians and residents empty recycling bin contents into recycle dumpsters, which are serviced by Republic Services.

Refuse: This noun means trash (anything that can’t be recycled). Refuse goes to the local landfill.

ResLife Recycles: OSU’s single-stream (AKA mixed) recycling program, which is run through OSU’s Residential Halls. (See <https://sustainability.okstate.edu/RLR> for more information).

Roll-off: Temporary extra-large open-top dumpster (usually used during move-in recycling), which is designed to roll on and off its transport truck.

STARS: A program of AASHE that stands for Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System. It allows colleges and universities to self-report, track, and measure their sustainability efforts in a comprehensive way.

Sustainable Development: Meeting human development goals without compromising the ability for future generations to meet their own needs.

The 3 R’s: Reduce your consumption and waste! Reuse what you have! Recycle what cannot be reduced or reused.

Appendix E

Resources

Energy – Why conserve energy?

- Conventional energy production/distribution pollutes the air and adds to climate change
- Mining coal destroys landscapes by flattening mountaintops and filling in valleys and streams
- To reduce the University's operating budget

Fast Fact: On average, 72% of OSU's electricity comes from the Cowboy Wind farm!

Read more here: <http://bit.ly/OSUenergyprogram> & <http://bit.ly/EPAOSU>

Transportation

The use of cars and trucks is one of the most environmentally damaging behaviors and of course, it is one that most of us engage in. They not only cause air pollution but water pollution as well from manufacturing and gasoline. Fortunately, alternative transportation, including walking, biking, and The Bus, is available for OSU students.

Fast Fact: Nearly twenty-six percent of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States are due to transportation (this makes it the second largest contributor after electricity production).

Read more here: <http://bit.ly/zipcarOSU> & <http://bit.ly/OSUcngas>

Waste Minimization

1. Reduce – The less stuff we buy, the less waste we will generate. Unfortunately, our reliance on disposable products has become a way of life and can be difficult to get away from. Can you think of things that we buy that we could do without or borrow instead?
2. Reuse – Reduce the amount of waste we create by reusing things that we do buy. When shopping, look for durable, reusable goods (ex: reusable mugs, bags, water bottles, utensils).
3. Recycle – This seems to be the “R” that everyone loves because it requires little change in lifestyle, but the other “Rs” are more important than recycling. After you have reduced and reused as much as you can, recycle (if possible)! At OSU, there are two recycling programs: *OSU Recycles* for campus buildings (classrooms, offices, labs, Edmond Low, and the Colvin) and *ResLife Recycles* (Res Halls).

Fast Fact: Recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to run a TV for three hours or listen to a whole album on your iPod. Americans throw away enough aluminum to rebuild our entire commercial fleet of airplanes every three mos.

Read more here: <https://sustainability.okstate.edu/recycling-overview>

Water

As you might have expected, the US consumes more water per capita than any other country in the world. In 2015, it was estimated that about 265,600 million gallons per day were used solely for domestic use (<https://water.usgs.gov/watuse/wudo.html>). Domestic water use includes drinking water, sanitation, and lawn watering.

Fast Fact: One bottle of water wastes the equivalent of five bottles of water in manufacturing... and Americans drink 21 gallons of bottled water per capita per year.

Read more here: <https://utilities.okstate.edu/domestic-water-production> & <https://www.watercalculator.org/> & <http://bit.ly/back2tap>

Eating for the Environment

Do you know the environmental impacts of the food that you eat? Did you even know that your food *had* a carbon footprint? It does, in fact, and this footprint comes from all aspects of your food – the type of food (meat and animal products have the highest footprint), transportation, packaging, etc. There are ways to lessen your footprint such as buying in bulk, eating more plant-based foods, and eating locally and seasonally. Also trying to buy more organic and fair trade food helps the environment and farmers.

Fast Fact: According to the Worldwatch Institute, the food eaten in the United States typically travels between 1,500 and 2,500 miles from farm to table.

Read more here: <http://bit.ly/OSUdining> & <http://foodstudies.okstate.edu/>

Conscious Consumerism and Purchasing

The power of a dollar – what are you supporting with your spending? Our industrial economy has transformed from producing primarily durable goods to disposable and cheap goods with one-time or few-time uses. Overt consumerism has incentivized Americans to buy more and as a result, throw away more. Purchasing used items from thrift stores helps keep clothes and other items out of landfills and gives them a longer life. Shopping local, organic, fair trade, and avoiding excess packaging are all ways to shop more conscientiously.

Fast Fact: Fashion is one of the top 5 most polluting industries in the world.

Read more here: <http://bit.ly/cowboysforsj> & <http://bit.ly/prosandconsofdonating> & <https://www.goodguide.com>