



Sonoma County Business Environmental Alliance 2005 Environmental Best Practices Report

Executive Summary

The 2005 Sonoma County Environmental Best Practices Report analyzes responses to the 2005 Voluntary Environmental Practices Survey and compares these results, where possible, to results from the past four years. The survey was sent to more than 400 of the leading businesses in Sonoma County representing the 20 leading sectors. The response rate was nearly 11 percent and represents nearly ten percent of the total workforce in Sonoma County. This year's report aims to provide greater detail about what actions Sonoma County businesses are taking to address their environmental impact while enhancing their bottom line performance.

Key highlights from this report include:

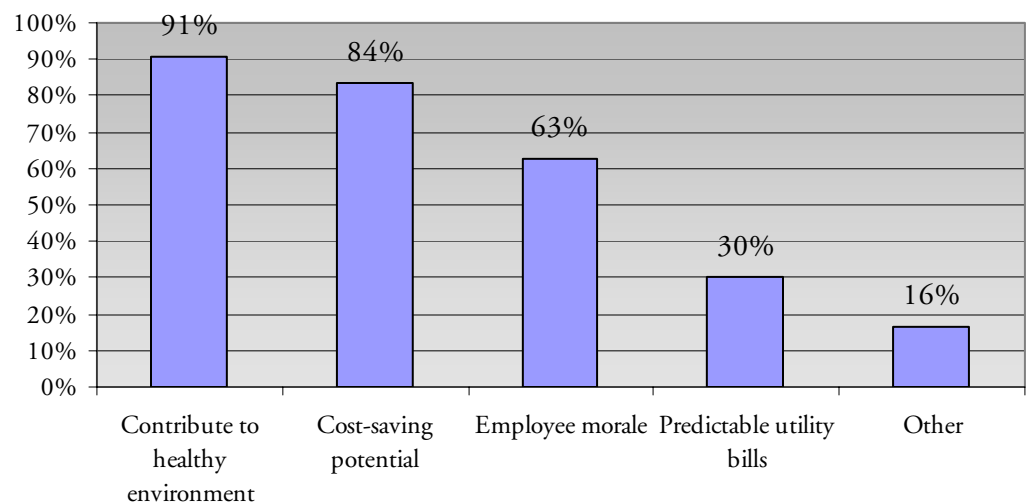
- Nearly all (98 percent) of respondents are interested in voluntarily adopting sound environmental practices. Respondents most frequently point to wanting to contribute to a healthy environment (91 percent) and cost saving potential (84 percent) as reasons for adopting sound practices.
- Businesses, however, are not always able to increase environmental efficiency while reducing resource consumption. Seventy-two percent of respondents cited cost and budget restrictions as an obstacle.
- Sonoma County businesses are conserving energy, water, and waste; more than 90 percent of companies pursue voluntary practices for energy conservation, 81 percent pursue voluntary practices for water conservation, and 98 percent pursue voluntary practices for waste reduction.
- While energy conservation rose modestly to 91 percent (up from 87 percent last year), water conservation has seen an increase of nearly 50 percent from 59 percent in 2004 to 81 percent this year.

For the 2005 Environmental Best Practices Report, the BEA has identified a number of key opportunities to help support the business community in Sonoma County:

- Develop a searchable database of environmental best practice on website.
- Highlight programs for water and energy efficiency on website and through quarterly newsletter.
- Expand outreach through "BEA Allies" program to enlist the support and cooperation with local business groups. Through these Allies the BEA will present their message and materials specific to the needs of the group.
- Provide How-To Guides to businesses interested in developing environmental programs at their place of work.
- Present workshops and presentations to interested groups throughout the county.
- Focus future efforts on topics that were of most interest to business, especially energy and water conservation.

Interest in voluntary adoption of sound environmental practices is high Reasons for Implementing Environmental Practices

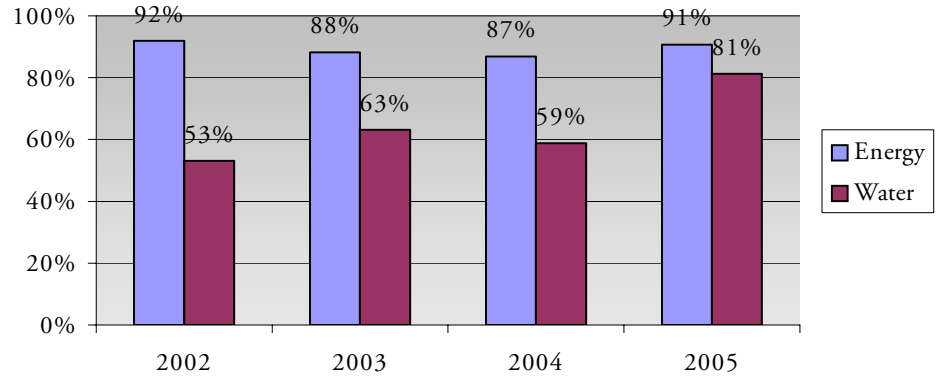
Ninety-eight percent of respondents indicated that they were interested in adopting sound environmental practices. While the motivations varied, over 90 percent of the respondents cited wanting to contribute to a healthy environment as one of the key reasons. Also, more than half of the respondents were interested due to the cost saving potential (84 percent) and increasing employee morale (63 percent). Over 30 percent cited more predictability in utility bills as another rationale for their interest.



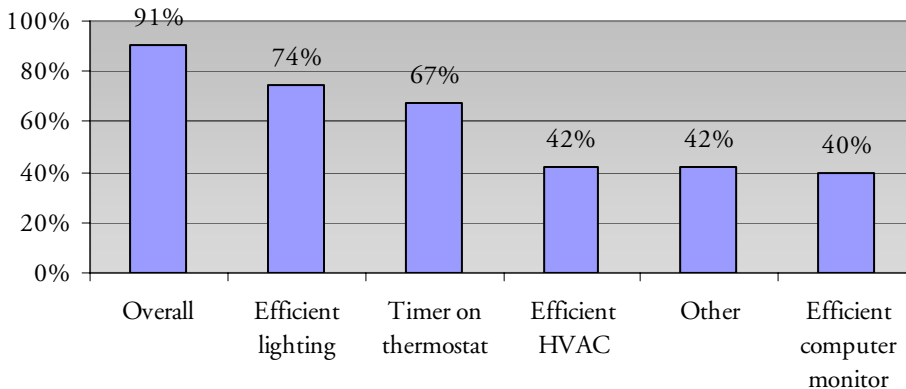
Energy and water conservation are on the rise

Respondents report both greater energy and water conservation in their businesses this year. Energy conservation (91 percent) is at its highest level since then energy crisis in 2001 (92 percent). This is up nearly 5 percent from last year's level. Water conservation is substantially higher than it has been since the BEA started the survey. Eighty-one percent of the respondents reported pursuing voluntary water conservation practices this year. The previous high was 63 percent, reported in 2002. One reason for this recent upsurge in water conservation practices could be the increased politicization of water issues in Sonoma County. This brings water issues greater attention and causes businesses to think about them more often. Also, there are many water programs being offered by the retailers in Sonoma County including clothes washer and toilet rebates.

Energy and Water Conservation



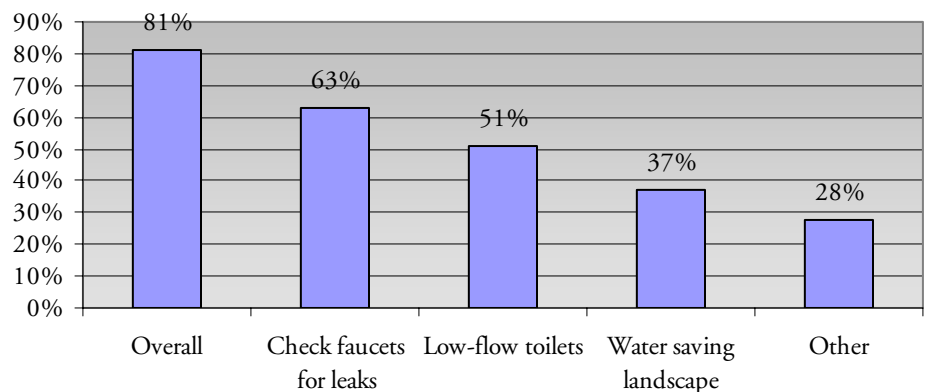
Energy Conservation Practices



Most respondents are installing energy efficient lighting (74 percent) and using a timer on their thermostat (67 percent) to cut down on their energy use. Other common practices include using energy efficient computer monitors (40 percent) and efficient HVAC systems (42 percent). Other efficiency programs that were mentioned include: solar energy production, installing more efficient appliances including boilers and variable drive motors, and installing more accurate temperature sensors.

The most common water saving practices among the respondents were regularly checking all faucets for leaks (63 percent) and installing low-flow or ultra-low flow toilets (51 percent). Thirty-seven percent of respondents also have planted water-saving landscaping in some of their areas. Other practices being employed in Sonoma County businesses include updating irrigation systems, using reclaimed water to irrigate, and installing more efficient pressure nozzles.

Water Conservation Practices

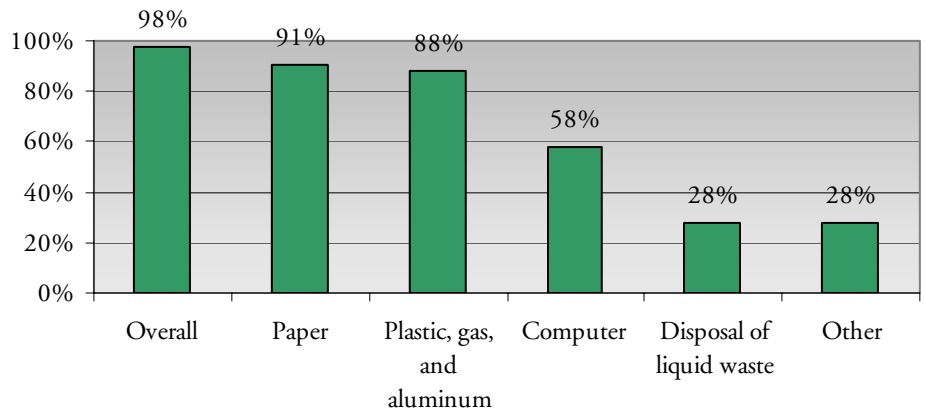


Waste reduction and greenhouse gas emissions are also a priority

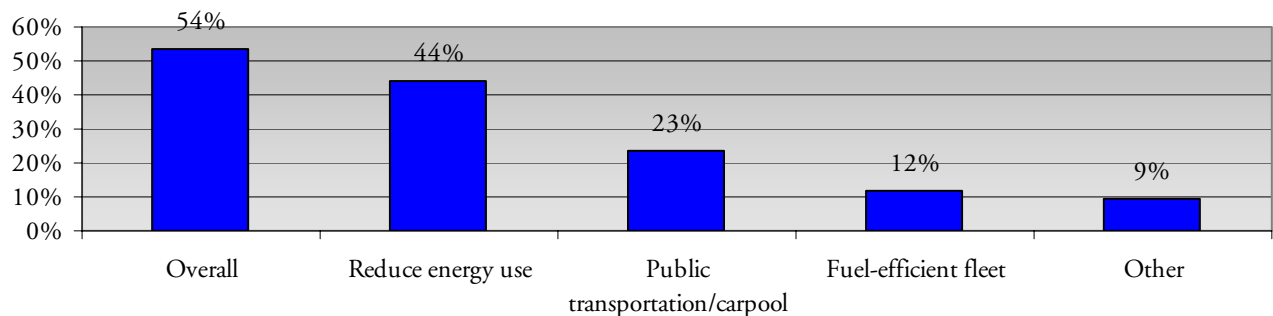
Nearly all respondents are managing their waste streams and more than half are limiting their greenhouse gas emissions. Ninety-eight percent of respondents report voluntary practices to reduce their waste. Of these, paper (91 percent) and plastic, glass, and aluminum container (88 percent) recycling were the most common practices. Also, 58 percent of respondents recycle their old computers.

As greenhouse gas emissions are becoming a larger issue both locally and internationally, Sonoma County businesses are not being left behind. More than half of the respondents (54 percent) are taking actions to limit their greenhouse gas emissions. A handful of businesses also reported that they have installed photovoltaic cells to produce their own energy.

Waste Reduction and Recycling Practices



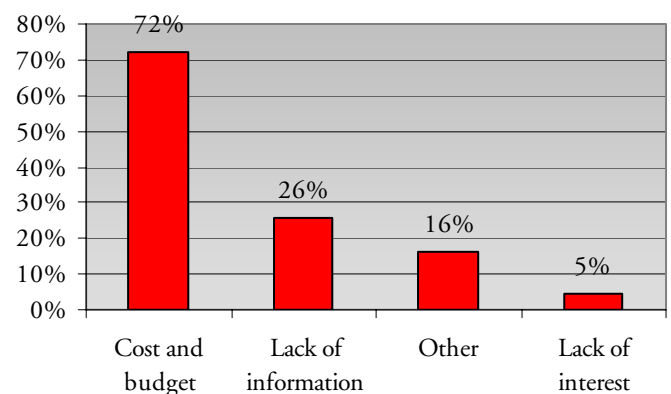
Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction



Businesses face challenges to adopting sound environmental practices

Unfortunately, not every company can implement all of the environmental practices and procedures it would like. Most of the respondents cited cost and budget restrictions as a major challenge to increasing environmental efficiency (72 percent). This number is up nearly 20 percent from last year's results. This may be due to the fact that more and more businesses are already addressing the "low hanging fruit" that are cheaper and easier to address. Also, about one quarter of the respondents cited a lack of information about solutions or programs as an obstacle. This reinforces the need for the Business Environmental Alliance to continue its work to educate the business community in Sonoma County. Encouragingly, very few respondents cited a lack of interest of employees or stakeholders, indicating that the not only executives, but also many other employees, are interested in these practices and are more than willing to adopt them.

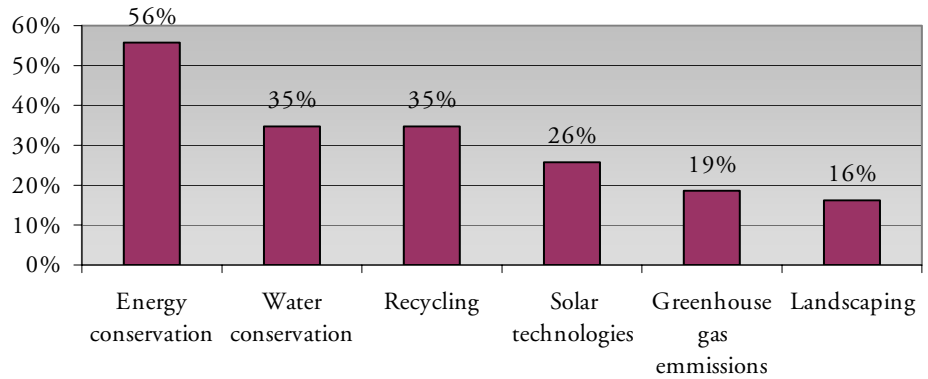
Greatest Challenges



Businesses in Sonoma County are interested in learning more

Topics of Interest

Nearly 80 percent of the responding executives expressed an interest in learning more about at least one aspect of environmental practices. Their interest in conservation practices loosely coincides with the practices that are most common. The most interest (56 percent) was in learning more about energy conservation, with water conservation and recycling following (35 percent each).



Methodology

The Voluntary Environmental Best Practices Survey was developed after researching many programs and surveys with similar environmental benchmarking goals, including: CERES, ISO 14001, Deloitte Touche Corporate Environmental Score Card, and many others. The voluntary survey helps firms to profile their progress and to see opportunities for further improvement. It retains the critical themes that are common to the majority of similar environmental programs but has been tailored to fit Sonoma County's environment and economy. The format of the report is based on the standard reports of the Sonoma County Economic Development Board and the Business Environmental Alliance.

The survey was mailed to 381 businesses in the middle of February. Businesses who filled out the survey last year, but were not on the original Press Democrat list of leading businesses also received a survey. The survey was sent out to a total of 410 businesses and 43 surveys were received, for a response rate of 10.5 percent.

The Business Environmental Alliance makes no claim that the information presented in this report is an accurate reflection of the environmental practices of every company in Sonoma County. In written surveys such as this one, the responding companies are often likely to be those businesses that are already environmentally aware. When reading this report, the Business Environmental Alliance advises readers to consider this possibility.

The Business Environmental Alliance and the Environmental Best Practices Report

The Business Environmental Alliance's (BEA) mission is to promote the economic benefits of responsible environmental practices and provide resources to enable businesses to implement these measures. In order to do so, the BEA acts as an information clearinghouse for businesses and our community partners. The BEA publishes this annual report, a quarterly newsletter, *The Bottom Line*, and a series of nine how-to guides for businesses interested in developing an environmental program for their company. Also, the BEA hosts periodic conferences and smaller events that promote the connections between environmental sustainability and economic value. The BEA is also seeking "Allies" to help it publicize its message and assist businesses in implementing environmental practices. For more information about these programs please contact the BEA.

The Business Environmental Alliance has conducted the Environmental Best Practices Survey since 1998 and produces an annual report. This report reflects the information gathered during a survey conducted in February-May 2005. Individual surveys are confidential. This report was prepared by Scott Rosenblum. Special thanks are due to Katy Hutchinson for editing the report and especially to all of the BEA Board members: Scott Kirk, Paul Harris, Ed Bertain, Jeff Clark, Peter Hoberg, Dave Meddaugh, Michael O'Brien, Warren Smith, Amy Patton, and Tom Conlon.

For more information, please contact:
Business Environmental Alliance
401 College Ave. Santa Rosa, CA 95401 (707) 565-7257
BEA@sonoma-county.org
www.sonomabea.org