

Innovation, commitment and cooperation are key to strengthening the green economy

By Jason Klipa

Catalyst asked PA Chamber Investor member Wal-Mart to share its "green" initiatives, and how sustainability efforts are saving money for customers, suppliers and the business.



Wal-Mart has laid out three big goals to guide its sustainability efforts:

- To be supplied by 100 percent renewable energy;
- To send zero waste to the landfill; and
- To sell products that sustain people and the environment.

Our goals guide our work every day and provide a vision of where we want to be.

To take meaningful steps, we need to measure our progress and be accountable to ourselves and our stakeholders. As a result, we have developed dozens of measurable objectives with benchmarks and timelines designed to achieve these goals.

Between February 2008 and January 2009, we redirected from landfills more than 57 percent of the waste generated by our stores, Sam's Clubs and distribution centers, exceeding the national recycling rate. This was achieved through a number of initiatives, including better managing our inventories, increased charitable donations and implementing new and innovative recycling programs.

We have been able to change our waste from a cost center into a revenue stream by sending less to landfills and recycling more. It saves money for our customers, our suppliers, and our business, as well as decreasing our reliance on non-renewable resources.

For example, each year our tire and lube express centers send millions of tires to recyclers for processing. In 2008, we were able to recycle 16 million tires, which create energy and products. Nearly 2.5 million of those tires went into Majestic Rubber Mulch, a product sold in our stores.

Another example is our use of recycled cardboard. Wal-Mart recycled more than 25 billion pounds of cardboard that is used to make new paper products. By recycling this cardboard, Wal-Mart saved approximately 216 million trees. In addition, we used the recycled cardboard to make our pizza boxes for our private label brand that we sell in Wal-Mart delis.

Our recycling efforts also include the innovative solution that was created to collect loose plastic known as the "Sandwich Bale." Like a sandwich, the plastic is pressed between two stacks of cardboard then bundled and transported to a recycling center. By using this process, we are reducing the need to use virgin materials for packaging. This process enables us to compress 32 different recyclable items, including aluminum cans, loose plastic wrap (such as plastic bags), plastic hangers, plastic water and soda bottles, office paper, paperback books and other recyclable items, between layers of cardboard.

As a part of our commitment, we also have begun to look at what happens to green job creation in our supply chain. One example of the

impact of green job creation is with Lennox, one of our suppliers. Wal-Mart asked Lennox to develop a more efficient HVAC system for our stores. Our engineers worked with theirs and now Lennox's factory employs hundreds of workers with high-paying green jobs necessary to manufacture and ship thousands of these efficient units every year. The product demand became so high for these high efficiency products that

one of Lennox's manufacturing plants added over 70 manufacturing personnel just to support this product line.

Here in Pennsylvania, we convened the first Wal-Mart Pennsylvania Green Jobs Council Summit in October 2009,

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bringing the private sector together with government, educational, environmental and community leaders to identify ways to accelerate green job growth. From the summit, there were several key findings identified including the following:

- Green jobs need to be broadly defined by policymakers, including how it "greens" the broader economy and community, improves efficiency and the quality of life.
- There is a need to engage small and medium businesses to adopt sustainable practices into their business models.
- There is much opportunity in the energy efficiency sector, and it would be beneficial to focus on its development.
- It is more effective for employers to work directly with job trainers to identify skill gaps to develop the most beneficial programs.
- There is a need to focus on basic skills such as reading, math and problem-solving, especially for a majority of the individuals impacted by this current economy.
- There is a need for the certification of energy auditors. There has been progress in residential certifications but not yet in commercial.

Wal-Mart looks forward to continuing to work together to develop a strong green economy.

For more information about Walmart Green Jobs Council Summits, go to <http://greenjobs.walmartcommunity.com/> or to sign up for our GREENewsletter, please email us at greenjobs@wal-mart.com. ◆

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