

---

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

The professional sports industry includes some of the world's most iconic, inspirational and influential organizations. In a cultural shift of historic proportions, the sports industry is now using its influence to advance ecological stewardship. North America's professional leagues, teams and venues have collectively saved millions of dollars by shifting to more efficient, healthy and ecologically intelligent operations. At the same time, the sports greening movement has brought important environmental messages to millions of fans worldwide. Sport is a great unifier, transcending political, cultural, religious and socioeconomic barriers. It also wields a uniquely powerful influence, both cultural and economic, that provides much-needed leadership in sustainable practices and, in so doing, promotes a nonpolitical public commitment to environmental protection.

This report provides a collection of never-before-assembled case studies of the sports industry's most prominent and successful greening initiatives from across North America. In compiling this information, our goal is to celebrate the sports industry's growing embrace of environmental stewardship as more and more sports leagues, teams and venues invest in energy efficiency, water conservation, recycling, renewable energy, safer chemicals and fan engagement focused on remedying some of our most pressing environmental problems. A principal objective of this report is to educate sports professionals, their supply chains and millions of fans about the business case for greening, from achieving cost savings and enhancing brands to developing new sponsorship opportunities and strengthening community ties.

The sports greening success stories featured in this report provide valuable lessons for organizations of all types, whether they are involved with the sports industry or not, highlighting what teams, venues and league jewel events are doing to protect our planet and educate their fans. Each of the team and venue case studies includes four sections that help explain the greening process: (1) Why go green: what motivated teams and venues to start greening? (2) Where to start: how did teams and venues begin, who was involved, and which greening initiatives were investigated first? (3) Challenges overcome and ongoing: challenges teams and venues faced, tactics they used to meet these challenges, and hurdles they still face; and (4) Lessons from the field: important lessons from team and venue experiences as they implemented their green initiatives.



©Microgrid Solar

## PROFESSIONAL SPORTS IS PROVING THE BUSINESS CASE OF GOING GREEN

- ★ **Greening provides direct financial savings:** In this report you will learn about the team that saved approximately \$1.5 million in utility costs (electricity, natural gas, water and sewer service) from 2006 to 2011 by reducing natural gas use by 60 percent, electricity use by 30 percent and water use by 25 percent. In this report you will also learn precisely how much it cost one major arena in the southeast to achieve LEED Certification.
- ★ **Greening attracts sponsors:** In this report you will learn about the venue that saved \$1.6 million in a single year due to its greening efforts; it also attracted about \$1 million in new corporate sponsors that aligned with the greening efforts.
- ★ **Greening provides competitive advantage to attract tenants and entertainment clients:** This report includes a profile of the venue where being environmentally conscious has significantly improved brand image and provided a point of market differentiation, which has attracted new clientele and corporate partners. For this venue, going green has provided a platform to attract entertainers who want to play in green venues.
- ★ **Greening enhances the fan experience:** In this report you will learn about one team's efforts to post recycling signs around its venue and provide recycling bags for tailgaters, an initiative that resonates so much with the community that fans roll up their sleeves to help hand out and fill up the recycling bags, which are later picked up by the team.
- ★ **Greening strengthens community ties:** Aside from the operational benefits of going green, this report will tell you about the team that says it has received only positive feedback about its greening initiatives, including thousands of favorable media articles, local community achievement awards and immense fan applause, proving these efforts are worthwhile beyond the business case by representing the core values of the surrounding community. You will also learn about the largest public recycling event in the history of New York City, sponsored by Major League Baseball.
- ★ **Greening builds local economic growth:** You will also learn about one team's investment in onsite renewable energy, which not only directly benefits the environment but also contributes to local clean-tech jobs and helps to boost the local economy by stimulating the state's clean-tech manufacturing industry.

Key findings from the case studies include these:

- All Commissioners of professional sports leagues in the United States have made commitments to environmental stewardship and are actively encouraging the teams in their leagues to incorporate sustainable measures into their operations.
  - 15 professional North American stadiums or arenas have achieved LEED green building design certifications, 18 have installed onsite solar arrays, and virtually all have developed or are developing recycling and/or composting programs.
  - Among all sports leagues, Major League Baseball has the best-developed environmental data measurement program, followed by the National Hockey League and the National Basketball Association.
  - Of the 126 professional sports teams in the five major professional North American leagues, 38 teams have shifted to renewable energy for at least some of their operations, and 68 have energy efficiency programs.
  - All of the large sports concessionaires, that collectively feed tens of millions of people each year, have developed environmentally preferable menus for at least some of their offerings.
- All Jewel events, including the World Series, the Super Bowl, the Stanley Cup playoffs, the NBA Playoffs and Finals, the MLS Cup, the US Open Tennis Championships and all of the league All-Star Games, now incorporate greening initiatives into their planning and operations.
  - All leagues educate their fans about environmental issues, in particular the need to recycle and to reduce energy and water use.
- Perhaps most important, millions of pounds of carbon emissions have been avoided, millions of gallons of water have been saved, and millions of pounds of paper products are being shifted toward recycled content or eliminated altogether.
- Certainly much work remains to be done, but it is heartening to note that teams and leagues across North America are implementing meaningful changes and educating tens of millions of fans about environmental stewardship. Collegiate athletics, alongside minor leagues, high school athletics and other organized youth sporting events, are the next frontier for the sports greening movement. Many college athletics departments nationwide have already undertaken impressive environmental initiatives, from LEED-certified facilities and onsite solar arrays to recycling challenges between schools. Colleges are just beginning to tap into the enormous potential to benefit their bottom line and engage their huge communities of sports fans on issues of environmental stewardship.



**THE SPORTS INDUSTRY OFFERS THE POTENTIAL FOR UNPARALLELED OUTREACH TO MILLIONS OF FANS AND BUSINESSES VIA THE SCREENING OF ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS (PSAs) AND OTHER FORMS OF FAN ENGAGEMENT. FOR EXAMPLE, TO DATE THE SPORTS GREENING PSAs THAT NRDC CREATED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NBA, THE NHL, MLB AND THE USTA HAVE REACHED AN ESTIMATED 45 MILLION PEOPLE VIA BROADCAST TELEVISION AND IN-ARENA SCREENINGS. SEE THESE VIDEOS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AT [WWW.NRDC.ORG/GAME-CHANGER](http://WWW.NRDC.ORG/GAME-CHANGER).**

The motivation for sports to engage in greening is simple. The games we love today were born outdoors, and without clean air to breathe, clean water and a healthy climate, sports would be impossible. In fact, nature is the ultimate source of all economic value. No commerce or culture is possible without clean air and water; fertile topsoil; a chemically stable atmosphere; raw materials for food, energy and medicine; or the natural processing of waste by the millions of species inhabiting our soil, water and air. It is the availability of these wells of natural capital that makes sports and other types of human activities possible. Business leaders must devote the same level of effort to keeping this natural capital intact that they devote to more traditional capital. The sports industry's increasing demand for ecologically better products can help industrial leaders understand and embrace that goal.

This report is a celebration of the sports industry's impressive environmental accomplishments to date, of the extraordinarily important work being done largely behind the scenes, out of the spotlight. This document confirms that going green is savvy business, enabling teams and venues to cut operating costs, strengthen corporate branding, attract sponsors and enhance the fan experience, while providing many environmental benefits. Ideally, the practical examples and expert recommendations included in this report will inspire many more sports teams, and the businesses that service them, to follow their good example. The lessons from those who manage sports facilities will help us move toward ecological stability, crucial for social and economic prosperity. Current and future generations depend on these efforts, and on the prospect that others the world over will notice and emulate this industry's inspiring greening work.