

NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE ALL-STAR GAME, THE WINTER CLASSIC AND THE NHL DRAFT



As part of its commitment to environmental stewardship, the National Hockey League joined forces with NRDC on sustainability initiatives in 2008, when NRDC assembled an NHL Greening Advisor for each team in the league. The NRDC Greening Advisor for the NHL, like those produced by NRDC for other leagues and organizations, is a web-based resource that offers environmental guidance and strategies to promote more sustainable practices for NHL team and arena operations.

“Most of our players learned to skate on outdoor rinks,” says NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman. “For that magnificent tradition to continue through future generations we need winter weather—and, as a league, we are uniquely positioned to promote that message. We are thrilled to be able to work with the NRDC and to draw upon its vast experience and expertise in greening league events and league and club operations.”

In January 2010, with support from NRDC, the NHL formally launched “NHL Green,” an initiative designed to enhance the league’s ecological profile while educating fans about environmental issues. The league simultaneously launched its NHL Green website (nhl.com/green), which features news stories and videos highlighting current league and team greening efforts, NRDC-generated green tips for fans, and links to websites providing additional information and resources. NHL Green offers information to clubs and facilities on efficient and cost-effective environmental practices.

The NHL’s commitment to environmental excellence and education has also been a focus of its jewel events. For example, following the 2010 NHL Winter Classic at Fenway Park in Boston, the NHL hosted a panel discussion on “Sustainable Success: Business and the Environment,” to discuss how environmental stewardship of the planet can be good for both business and the economy. The event was moderated by New York Times columnist David Brooks and featured Boston business leaders, academics, and NRDC Senior Scientist Allen Hershkowitz.

In early 2012, the NHL collaborated with NRDC to produce a public service announcement about the league’s greening initiative. This PSA was shown in all arenas and on broadcast TV, including ESPN, ABC-TV, TBS, and TNT, as well as NHL-TV, and was viewed by more than 20 million people.

Starting in the 2010-11 season, the NHL established a league-wide initiative to work with Rock and Wrap It Up! to donate unused prepared food. All 30 NHL teams committed to pack up all prepared but unsold concession food on game nights for redistribution to local shelters and other places that serve people in need. Over the course of the initiative’s first full season, NHL clubs provided 163,000 meals to people in need and diverted 105 tons of food from landfills and incinerators across North America. This effort earned each of NHL’s four Midwestern clubs the U.S. EPA’s Region 5 Environmental Quality Award for its participation in the agency’s WasteWise Food Recovery Challenge. Four NHL Clubs in EPA Region 2 won that region’s EPA Environmental Quality Award, and the Boston Bruins received EPA Region 1’s Environmental Merit Award, all for their food diversion work with Rock and Wrap It Up! According to the U.S. EPA, the NHL reduced greenhouse gas emissions by the equivalent of 79 metric tons of carbon dioxide through this initiative. As of May 2012, the league-wide food recovery program had diverted more than 200 tons of waste from landfills and incinerators and provided local shelters with more than 300,000 meals.

In July 2011, the NHL was named to the Official Shortlist for the 2011 Beyond Sport Awards as a finalist in both the “Sport for the Environment” and “Federation of the Year” categories for its work in sustainability, primarily its initiatives with food donation. In December 2011, the NHL was officially awarded the 2011 “Sport for the Environment” Award. The NHL was also named to the Official Shortlist for the 2012 Beyond Sport Awards.

The NHL has also worked with NRDC to incorporate green practices and procurement into numerous league events, including the 2010 NHL Draft, the 2011 Winter Classic, the 2011 All-Star Game, and the 2011 Stanley Cup Final.

The 2010 NHL Draft was held in Los Angeles at STAPLES Center, which boasts many sustainable features such as solar panels, waterless urinals, and a robust recycling program.

Additional environmental initiatives for the draft included:

- Purchasing Green-e certified carbon offsets for all venue energy use;
- Reducing transportation needs to the venue by hosting the majority of NHL personnel at hotels within walking distance from STAPLES Center;
- Eliminating most paper collateral from the event by making Media Guides and Year-End Review packets available online only; and
- Printing tickets on recycled stock.

The 2011 Winter Classic, held at Heinz Field in Pittsburgh, included a variety of greening efforts, such as:

- Purchasing Green-e certified carbon offsets for stadium energy use;
- Eliminating single-use plastic bags and replacing them with 40,000 free reusable commemorative bags available at merchandise stands;
- Recycling all cardboard, bottles, and cans inside the stadium;
- Coordinating the pickup and distribution of prepared but unsold concession food as part of the Rock and Wrap It Up! Initiative;
- Installing recycling receptacles next to each trash can on streets surrounding Heinz Field to combat the usual amounts of game-day litter and offer an option for recycling (now a season-long initiative);
- Collecting recyclables at tailgating parties; and
- Offering free public transit passes by the Port Authority of Allegheny County (paid for by sponsor Pepsi MAX) to fans traveling to the game.

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Additionally, the Winter Classic's location in Pittsburgh helped draw attention to the Consol Energy Center, the new home of the Pittsburgh Penguins and the first NHL arena to achieve LEED Gold certification.

The 2011 All-Star Game, held at RBC Center (now PNC Arena) in Raleigh, North Carolina, incorporated many environmental initiatives, including:

- Purchasing carbon offsets for energy use at the stadium;
- Eliminating single-use plastic bags and replacing them with free reusable commemorative bags at merchandise stands;
- Robust recycling programs both inside and outside the stadium, including tailgate recycling;
- Donating unused prepared food to the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle;
- The headquarters hotel, Raleigh Marriott City Center, donated unused toiletries, boxed lunches, packaged food, and clothing to Raleigh Rescue Mission; and
- An All-Star Open Street Fair before the All-Star Game where corporate sponsors Honda and North Carolina State University hosted sustainability booths and educated fans about their recent environmental initiatives.

At the 2011 Stanley Cup Finals, the league launched the NHL Water Restoration Project, a water balancing commitment focusing on the issue of freshwater scarcity and its effect on fans, communities, and the game of hockey. This initiative seeks to reduce water consumption in NHL arenas while simultaneously helping to conserve and protect depleted watercourses in the Northwest through a partnership with Bonneville Environmental Foundation. (BEF is a not-for-profit organization co-founded by NRDC.) For the Stanley Cup Finals, the NHL purchased Water Restoration Credits from Bonneville Environmental Foundation to balance the amount of water used during the series at TD Garden (Vancouver) and Rogers Arena (Boston). The league's purchases resulted in the restoration of more than 1 million gallons of water to a critically dewatered Oregon stream.

Subsequently, the league purchased Water Restoration Credits to mitigate the 3.5 million gallons of water consumed over the course of the 2012 Winter Classic in Philadelphia.

In early 2012, NHL Green introduced Gallons for Goals, a second phase to the Water Restoration Project. For every goal scored during the regular season, the league committed to restore 1,000 gallons of water to a critically dewatered river in the Northwest. As a result of this commitment, the NHL announced in April 2012 that, with 6,700 goals having been scored that season, the league replenished more than 6.7 million gallons of water to this watercourse. The league pledged to continue the Water Restoration Project with the water consumed at the 2012 Stanley Cup Finals.

The NHL also committed to purchasing renewable energy certificates (RECs) and carbon offsets to balance the carbon emissions resulting from arena electricity consumption and team air travel for all games in the 2012 Stanley Cup Playoffs. The league purchased 9.8 million kilowatt-hours (kWh) of Green-e Energy certified RECs (from U.S. wind projects) and 97 metric tons of carbon offsets from projects authenticated by the Verified Carbon Standard or the Climate Action Reserve. In addition, the league mitigated its 2012 electricity use (estimated at 1.5 million kWh) at its New York City headquarters through this initiative. In total, the RECs and carbon offsets purchased by the NHL in 2012 for the Stanley Cup Playoffs and league headquarters reduced carbon dioxide emissions by more than 15 million pounds, equivalent to taking approximately 1,310 cars off U.S. roads for one year. Through these purchases of RECs and carbon offsets, the NHL became the first professional sports league to join the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Green Power Partnership, a voluntary program that encourages organizations to buy green power as a way to reduce the environmental impacts associated with purchased electricity use.

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