



CASE STUDY: UNIVERSITY OF OREGON, HOME OF THE DUCKS

CAMPUS FACTS

LOCATION:
Eugene, Oregon

FOUNDED:
1876

TYPE:
Public

TOTAL STUDENT POPULATION:
24,591 (20,829 undergraduates)

STAFF:
4,986

PRIMARY ATHLETICS CONFERENCE:
Pacific 12 (Pac-12)

PRIMARY ATHLETICS DIVISION:
NCAA Division 1

NUMBER OF VARSITY TEAMS:
19 (10 women's, 7 men's)

NUMBER OF SPORTS FACILITIES:
18 (11 athletic, 7 recreational)

SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE FOUNDED:
2007

AASHE STARS RATING:
Silver, 2011

SPORTS GREENING WORK STARTED:
2005

SPORTS FACILITY LEED CERTIFICATIONS:
Matthew Knight Arena LEED Gold Certification
for New Construction, 2013

THE DUCKS' GREENING STORY: MOTIVATIONS, CHALLENGES, AND LESSONS

The University of Oregon Ducks have hosted some of the greenest sports events in the nation. Their newly LEED Gold-certified Matthew Knight Arena demonstrates that the University of Oregon's community partnerships and greener event practices are now driving sustainability efforts throughout the athletics department's operations.

WHY IS UO GREENING SPORTS?

Greening the University of Oregon's sports facilities and operations reinforces the university's identity as a role model for sustainability. "Oregon Athletics is committed to playing a leadership role in the university's greening efforts," says athletics director Rob Mullens. "From individual offices to our complex of athletic venues, our staff, student-athletes, and supporters are making a difference for the environment." According to Bob Beals, associate athletics department director for facilities, greening efforts at Oregon athletic facilities result from an ethos of sustainability that exists in Eugene (the university's host community) and the state of Oregon. "It reflects the community that we live in," he says. "In Eugene and Lane County, more sustainable operations are the standard." The state's bottle deposit legislation was enacted in 1971, and citywide access to curbside residential recycling was mandated in 1983. On campus, the university has been recovering cardboard and paper for recycling since 1991. The UO transportation team has studied transportation trends for football games, and UO Athletics has encouraged alternative transportation options since 1999. "It's what people expect," says Beals. "People living in our community want to do the right thing from an environmental perspective."

WHERE DID UO START?

In 2008, the University of Oregon hosted the U.S. Olympic Trials for track and field, then did so again in 2012. Thanks to the Ducks' leadership, both events are among the most environmentally responsible sporting events in the United States, with the 2008 event earning the International Olympic Committee's Sport and Environment

Award and the 2012 event earning Gold level certification from the Council for Responsible Sport (see "Standout Greening Accomplishments" sidebar).

The Oregon athletics department worked with the city of Eugene and TrackTown USA (a local organization devoted to track and field events in Eugene), along with a collection of campus partners (including the facilities and transportation departments), to plan energy use, waste management, and transportation for the events. The event team reduced the need for mobile generators by establishing an integrated energy plan which reduced and replaced energy needs. One of the most innovative activations at each event was Safeway's "TrackTown Power Station," where fans lined up for an opportunity to generate battery power by riding one of the spin bikes in 2008 or running on a human hamster wheel in 2012. The festival management team, led

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STANDOUT GREENING ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS HOSTS OF 2012 U.S. OLYMPIC TRACK AND FIELD TRIALS

227,123 people attended the 2012 U.S. Olympic Team Trials for Track and Field, which spanned 20 acres and 10 days.

- The event team purchased 122,000 kilowatt-hours worth of Green-e certified renewable power through the local utility, EWEB, to cover 100 percent of the event's energy needs.
- 78 percent (133 tons) of event waste was recycled or composted, including waste from build-out and tear-down.
- 100 percent of serviceware was compostable.
- Additional electric infrastructure was extended to eliminate mobile generators.
- Free bus tickets were provided to ticket holders, resulting in 7,744 boardings—a 29 percent increase from 2008.
- BP America-Target Neutral provided carbon offsets for the 2,732 tons of CO₂ emissions produced by the event operations and all athletes' and officials' air travel.
- A free valet station serviced 4,575 bikes.
- Water stations were positioned around the festival to encourage the use of refillable water bottles.
- Of the 17,456 square feet of plywood used, more than 70 percent was reclaimed after the event.
- Over 1,800 people volunteered over 48,000 hours, 1,000 free tickets were provided to youth and families that otherwise could not attend, the free fan festival hosted over 5,000 people daily, and over 8,000 youth participated in the Run!Jump!Throw! activity station.

by SportsOne, engaged sponsors to support various sustainability measures either directly in their booths or via underwriting the sustainability features in the event.

Anticipating more than 220,000 athletes, media members and spectators, the event team created a multifaceted transportation plan. It introduced the first bicycle and skateboard valet service at an Olympic competition and partnered with the Lane Transit District to provide all ticketholders and credentialed volunteers with free local bus transportation.

The 2008 event achieved a 70 percent waste diversion rate, increasing to 78 percent in 2012, by using only compostable serviceware and by recycling all plastic, aluminum cans, and paper products.

“At the 2008 and 2012 Olympic Trials for track and field, we moved our community’s—and I think the U.S. Olympic Committee’s—expectations on sustainability from an event check-box to an approach that was integrated throughout all aspects of the event, from operations, marketing, and fan education and engagement to the athlete experience,” says Ethan Nelson, chair of the sustainability committee for the 2012 Trials and ongoing liaison between the athletics department, the university, and the City of Eugene.

Following the successes of the 2008 Olympic Trials, the athletics department evaluated ways to permanently improve the environmental performance of all Oregon athletics department facilities, particularly the stadium, during large football events.

“Initially, we realized that we needed to begin by implementing simple changes,” says Beals. “Low-hanging fruit was the theme; we started by taking small steps to ensure success, and that helped snowball our greening efforts.” UO’s greening partners included Sanipac (the local waste hauler), the campus Office of Sustainability, the city of Eugene, Lane County leadership, and the Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative.

To implement these early ideas, the Oregon athletics department created a sustainability committee to “foster awareness and minimize our environmental impact,” says Beals. To enhance its effectiveness, the sustainability committee drew representatives from a wide range of departments, including administration, development, facilities, food/hospitality, business office, and marketing staff as well as student-athletes.

The committee began with athletics offices to lead by example, installing composting and recycling bins at workstations and throughout common areas, switching to postconsumer recycled-content paper, educating staff about recycling and sustainability, and implementing suggestions from the University Office of Sustainability’s Green Office Certification program. As a result of these efforts, the athletics facilities team earned Bronze certification from the Office of Sustainability, and the physical education and recreation department earned Silver.

In late 2010, the athletics department partnered with the Office of Sustainability to complete the nation’s first greenhouse gas inventory and sustainability report for a Division 1 athletics department. The report recommended implementing several new environmental initiatives throughout Oregon Athletics, including developing an environmentally-oriented purchasing policy and training staff members in “triple-bottom-line purchasing,” initiating recycling and composting collection at all sports events (including at the 58,500-seat Autzen Stadium, where the football team plays), and implementing energy efficiency upgrades at all facilities.

In 2011, Oregon Athletics collaborated with the waste hauler Sanipac to upgrade the recycling system. Since 2004, the stadium had collected paper and cardboard for recycling and a post-game sorting process collected commingled recyclables from the seating bowl. Partners started by implementing a three-bin collection system—recycling, composting, and landfill—in the largest concession area and in select stadium suites. The team also engaged food vendors and concessionaires to shift serviceware to compostable materials.



Photo courtesy of University of Oregon.



The Ducks also began a recycling pilot program in the tailgating area. This initiative, undertaken in partnership with the Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative, provided fund-raising opportunities for student and community groups by paying them to collect recyclable containers throughout the tailgating lots. “In 2011, 43,000 beverage containers were collected, and in 2012, this amount nearly doubled to 80,000 containers,” says Beals. “This provided \$6,150 to the participating groups while eliminating independent canners [scavengers] from roaming the parking lots.”

This work helped Oregon Athletics increase the stadium’s recycling and composting rate threefold, from 20 percent to 61 percent, over the course of two seasons. By the 2012 season the indoor tailgating venue alone hit a diversion rate of 75 percent, primarily through increasing fan outreach. This reduced waste and provided for student and community engagement.

UO’s recycling initiative built upon several existing environmental programs at the stadium. Since the 1990s, Oregon Athletics has donated unsold concession food to the local food bank, Food for Lane County. And, in 2004, an athletics department employee constructed a “liquid beverage recovery container,” which allows fans to empty bottles, cans, and cups at stadium ticket gates before reusing or recycling beverage containers. This initiative enhanced public awareness of the stadium’s recycling efforts and captured liquid waste for disposal in a sanitary sewer rather than having it poured on the ground.

The stadium features two other unique programs. First, Oregon Athletics installed three nesting platforms on 100-foot field lighting poles at Autzen Stadium, Hayward Field, and the football practice fields for the annual spring return of lifetime osprey mates. All three platforms provide easy access to the Willamette River (where the birds feed). Second, a food donation drive at the annual spring football game was launched in the 1990s; spectators are admitted to the game in exchange for three cans of food. The program has provided 267,839 pounds of food to Food for Lane County and is the single-largest event benefiting that charity. At the 2012 game more than 36 tons of food were collected in a three-hour period.

CHALLENGES: OVERCOME AND ONGOING

Oregon Athletics operates eleven facilities and hosts sports programs during the game season and off-season. “It is a challenge to provide a safe facility while creating a memorable fan experience and providing services in a cost-effective manner,” says Beals. “Greening efforts don’t always rise to the top of the budget requests. As a result we look to find partners. Partnerships are critical; they allow us to enhance our resources dedicated to sustainability.”

Oregon Athletics’ partnership with the city of Eugene and TrackTown USA on the 2008 and 2012 Olympic Trials events provided momentum for yearlong sustainability efforts across all athletics facilities. However, the greening goals for the one-off Olympic event proved easier to attain than greening some of the department’s ongoing procurement practices. The Ducks are still working to turn the successful approach used at the Olympic event into standardized operations for competition events. For example, the Ducks achieved Silver level certification for the entire 2013 track and field season from the Council for Responsible Sport.

Both Oregon Athletics and the city of Eugene see sports greening as a positive investment in changing fan behavior. “All of the information coming from the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Green Sports Alliance is showing that educating fans on sustainable lifestyle choices—whether it’s composting and recycling more, driving less, eating healthy food, engaging youth in sports, or generally reducing our carbon footprint—needs to come from an approach that is fun,” says Ethan Nelson of the City of Eugene.

STANDOUT GREENING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- In 2008, the University of Oregon, in partnership with the city of Eugene and TrackTown USA, received the International Olympic Committee’s Sport and Environment Award for North America for the sustainability performance of their U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials events. The city of Eugene also won the Governor’s Sustainability Award.
- In 2010, Oregon Athletics and the university’s Office of Sustainability completed a sustainability report and greenhouse gas (GHG) analysis, the first for a Division One athletics department.
- Oregon Athletics increased its recycling and composting rate threefold at the Autzen Stadium football complex, from 20 percent in 2010 to 61 percent in 2012.
- Since 2005, Oregon Athletics has donated an average of 9,300 pounds of concession food to Food for Lane County during each football season.
- Since 2005, the spring football game has required a donation of three cans of food in exchange for admission, collecting 267,839 pounds of food for Food for Lane County. The game is the single largest event benefiting the agency.
- In 2010, Oregon Athletics built its Matthew Knight Arena, which was awarded LEED Gold certification in 2013.
- In 2012, the University of Oregon helped host the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials (for the second consecutive time) and earned Gold certification from the Council for Responsible Sport, in collaboration with the City of Eugene and TrackTown USA.



Photos courtesy of University of Oregon.

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LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

PROVIDE A POSITIVE EXAMPLE

“Oregon Athletics strives to reflect long-held values of the university, community, and state,” says Beals. “We believe that intercollegiate athletics can help set examples for more sustainable practices for university students and the community. Oregon Athletics will continue working with partners to help address environmental concerns,” he continues. “The Oregon Ducks Green Team is steadily changing waste management and sustainability issues.”

“ZERO WASTE” INITIATIVES BENEFIT FROM CONSISTENT SIGNAGE

Even without statistics for the three-bin system, staff noticed a significant difference between the first year the recycling and composting initiative was implemented and the second year in the degree of contamination of presorted waste at football games. According to Jeff Nunes, general manager for concessions, “It’s an ongoing educational process to improve diversion rates with the three-bin process. Generally, people weren’t paying attention to the new waste containers, but that has changed with time, as our patrons began to see other people presort when clearing their tables.” Subtle peer pressure can help shift the social norm, along with clear signs and the three-bin process. Nunes recommends using simple, consistent signs around waste stations that integrate with other fan education initiatives (e.g., posters, public-address announcements, videos). “It is ideal when the same signage is used from facility to facility and event to event,” says Nunes. “It allows the community and fans to develop familiarity with our methods of waste diversion.”



ESTABLISH PARTNERSHIPS

“No one person takes on this role independently,” says Beals, who in recent years has advanced partnerships with several stakeholders, including Sanipac, the city of Eugene, the Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative, and student groups on campus. Oregon Athletics’ greening partnerships have helped move the Ducks’ environmental initiatives forward. “Try to bring in people who show enthusiasm, then find them a role,” Beals suggests.



Scott Johnson, district manager for Sanipac, says, “We appreciate being a player in the greening evolution of the Ducks’ athletic facilities and events. By partnering with the athletics department, we are able to promote recycling awareness to city residents, businesses, and university partners. The systems developed by Oregon Athletics are becoming standard for other UO events and venues, which Sanipac serves throughout the region. Autzen Stadium presents an opportunity like none other to communicate with more than 58,000 people each Saturday during football season.”

ADAPT PROGRAMS TO BENEFIT THE BROADER COMMUNITY

“People are recognizing the need for collaborative action on environmental issues. Taking the time to think about sharing your story and helping others to shorten their learning curve is a worthwhile endeavor,” says Nelson. “Sport sustainability programs benefit from municipal programs and infrastructure and vice versa. Being able to develop community-wide programs and telling that story at sports events results in citizens thinking, ‘Hey, this is kind of cool. I can do more of this.’ That is what all of these efforts come down to, because if the fans like it, they will support the greening projects and will do more of this when they are away from the event. This benefits the entire community, not just now but into the future.”

USE ALL AVAILABLE RESOURCES

“Join the Green Sports Alliance and contact peers within your state, region, conference, or within the NCAA,” says Beals. “Look for information from other university departments, staff members, and students. There are people out there willing to participate. Welcome them and encourage them to get into the game and become game changers too.”

