

“If you want one year of prosperity, plant corn. If you want ten years of prosperity, plant trees. If you want one hundred years of prosperity, educate people.”

-Chinese Proverb

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Conducting a Greenhouse House Gas Inventory: MES Student Intern with the Attorney General's Office

By Jeremy Epstein
MES Student

As Washington's state agencies go, the Attorney General's Office (AGO) isn't always the first to be associated with a "green" image. Those accolades are often reserved for the Ecology or the Fish and Wildlife Departments. I mean, how much could a bunch of lawyers really care about leading the pack of state agencies in environmentally proactive action? As it turns out, a great deal.

I was recently privileged to be selected for a graduate



student internship to help the AGO carry out a comprehensive greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory. While it is highly likely that all Washington state agencies

will be required to carry out such studies in the near future, AGO's proactive stance on the issue is commendable, and will afford them a generous head start in incorporating reduction strategies into their operations. When it is finished, the AGO will be one of only two state agencies so far to have commissioned and carried out such a study.

What is a GHG inventory? In short, an inventory seeks to document and quantify all of the GHG emissions caused by all of actions that it takes to run the AGO's

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Evergreen Edible Forest Gardens

By Natalie Pyrooz
MES Student

In the last few decades, Americans have become increasingly disconnected from our food sources. Food miles have multiplied, and the final form of what we eat is more often prepackaged and processed. Food diversity has dwindled: only 17 plant species provide 90% of the human food supply.

The gardening movement is one attempt to reconnect people to the land. Tending a garden provides the opportunity to grow one's own food, it can create a deeper relationship to the seasons, and it can cultivate a meaningful understanding of life itself.

Several themed teaching gardens are dispersed throughout the campus core, initiated by MES faculty member Frederica Bowcutt. These include a basket garden, a



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Internship at Community College

MES Student Helps College Evaluate Efforts

by Stephanie Hoatson
MES Student

As a first-year MES student and new to the Pacific Northwest, I was eager to take advantage of any opportunity to learn more about a new area while expanding my own knowledge base. After fine tuning a new series of time management techniques for the new school year, I felt I was ready to take on a new work experience.



Stephanie Hoatson, SPSCC Intern

Through the MES list-serve, I learned of an opportunity to work as the Sustainability Intern for South Puget Sound Community College (SPSCC). Being chosen for this position has been so important to me in both a personal and professional sense. Personally, I have been continuously trying to live a more sustainable lifestyle and was excited to be able to share some of those goals on a larger scale.

A fairly new aspect to SPSCC, the Environmental Sustainability Committee (ESC) aims to research, educate, and promote sustainable practices relating to college purchases, facility planning, construction, waste disposal, and energy consumption. After the President of SPSCC signed the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment, one of the committee's main goals for the 2008-2009 school year is to determine the college's carbon footprint—which is where I come in. Working with the ESC, I am finding myself wading through contact information, phone calls and e-mails attempting to dig up the data needed for a proper analysis of the college's current and future sustainability practices—a feat which has already proven to be a little daunting even for the most organized individual.

While the final analysis of the campus's carbon



footprint is still a bit distant, I have been attending monthly meetings with the ESC hoping to gain a head-start on ideas regarding the college's future steps. The committee is dedicated to potentially changing certain campus-wide practices in order to reach its sustainability goals. Currently, surveys are being processed regarding commuting and parking in hopes of determining what changes could be made in order to increase the use of carpool or public transportation programs, perhaps lending a hand in decreasing the school's overall emission output.

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Edible Forest Gardens (continued)

prairie garden, and a post-glacial forest garden. The Organic Farm, in itself a profound experiential learning opportunity, also hosts the Community Gardens and Demeter's Garden, which provide outlets on campus to connect with the gardening movement, get your hands dirty, and learn about growing things. Residential areas on campus have recently begun to include edible landscaping. In the spring of 2008, student residents initiated installation of two raised beds for growing food crops; one contains overwintered kale, and soon more plants will fill both beds. Gardens embedded in campus housing areas interweave living and learning about sustainability. Equipped with intellectual stimulation from the classroom, a shovel, and a pair of gloves, students come forth with the tools to change their lives and their future.



Huckleberry (*Vaccinium parviflorum*) is just one of the many plants featured in the edible forest garden

Within my graduate fellowship position as the Sustainability Coordinator for Residential and Dining Services, I have the opportunity to develop an edible forest garden for the area next to the Housing Community Center for my thesis project. This has been especially appealing due to my interest in botany and plant ecology, the connection to developing sustainable food systems, the ability to concurrently enhance wildlife habitat, and the interdisciplinary and collaborative nature of the work.

Edible forest gardens borrow principles from forest ecology, but fill ecological niches with food-bearing plant species. They are composed of multiple vertical layers (ground covers, herbs, shrubs, trees, vines, varying root systems). Shaded by large cedar, maple, and alder trees, the proposed site is not ideal in that it does not have abundant sunlight. However, it encapsulates the Pacific Northwest through the existing big trees, and will illustrate the ability of perennials to provide food with low maintenance.

A major challenge to implementing an educational gardening project on a college campus is in developing a long-term maintenance plan in a transitory environment. This requires support at both the operations and the faculty level. I am fortunate to be in a position allowing me to build the coordinating responsibility into my successor's job duties, and have networked with the Residential and Dining Services-Grounds crew to facilitate

long-term care. Students living in Sustainability Housing will be the active tenders and harvesters of the garden. Campus and community groups will give workshops to help



Natalie Pyrooz among *Puya raimondii* (the largest Bromeliad in the world) while in the Andes.

educate those students to correctly nurture the plantings. Evergreen is a beautiful place; to take part in establishing an enduring edible landscape is extremely rewarding. Although it is an institution, Evergreen nurtures the grassroots and unanticipated discovery, both within the classroom and in conversations that arise in the spaces between coursework.

For more information on Evergreen's teaching gardens, please visit:
<http://academic.evergreen.edu/projects/arboretum>

AGO Green House Gas Inventory (continued)



Jeremy Epstein,
AGO Intern

operations in an entire year. The period for which I am collecting data is 2007 and, when finished, the information gleaned will represent a baseline against which future greenhouse gas inventories at the AGO are measured.

The potential value of these data is massive. Having a baseline inventory allows an agency, business, or even an individual to make strategic, quantifiable, and reportable reductions to their greenhouse gas emissions. In essence, the AGO will be able to verify not only cost savings, but avoided emissions that result from implementation of new policies or installation of new technology in its facilities, and thus better gauge the efficacy of its dif-

ferent mitigation options.

Yet before any of this is possible, the coming months will see me pouring over data from hundreds of disparate sources, organizing it, and converting it from miles traveled, kilowatt hours used, or tons of garbage disposed of, for instance, into a final inventory report.

In a way, I've been preparing for this work for years. After graduating from the University of Colorado at Boulder, I took an internship with Natural Capitalism Solutions, a group that is led by L. Hunter Lovins. That experience left an indelible impression on me and gave me the impetus to attend graduate school at Evergreen to focus on climate change

policy issues. I know that the impact of my work is a mere grain of sand in the seemingly Everest-sized issue of climate change. Yet however miniscule the impact of my work is, I'm confident that this inventory will ultimately help the AGO to reduce its carbon footprint in a more focused and efficient manner, saving Washington's taxpayers money, and keeping the planet just a little bit cooler.

Sustainability and Community College (Continued)

The committee's efforts are admirable as it continuously learns from other institutions in order to create a more sustainable campus community.

Every step taken by each student, and by the Environmental Sustainability Committee as a whole, will help to continuously make a difference in the way the college thinks and acts in relation to the environment

around them. Perhaps a cleaner and more sustainable natural environment will aid in a more productive educational and work environment—regardless, it couldn't hurt! My work with the college has really just begun but with the continued support of the Environmental Sustainability Committee along with the growing support of the rest of the campus community, I hope that SPSCC will continue to

take even larger strides in decreasing its impact on the environment, a goal we should all strive for in every aspect of our personal and collective decision making.



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Graduate Study at Evergreen

- ✦ MES integrates the study of the biological, physical and social sciences with public policy.
- ✦ Its core curriculum explores the interactions among environmental problems, policy responses and environmental science.
- ✦ Electives and a thesis project allow students to develop specialized skills and knowledge in areas of their choice.
- ✦ Faculty members come from biological, physical, social science, providing a full understanding of environmental issues.
- ✦ The program is centered on highly participatory evening classes that accommodate full- or part-time students.
- ✦ MES alumni combine an interdisciplinary understanding of environmental sciences with the skills and wisdom to intelligently address environmental problems.
- ✦ Many alumni are employed in the public, private, and non-profit sectors, while others continue their graduate study in related PhD programs.

Letter from the Director

At Evergreen, you get your hands dirty – in a good way. You don't just sit in a classroom or library cubicle all the time. As you will see from the articles in this issue by MES students, when you come here to learn, you go out to learn too – sometimes in the most amazing places. Not only that, but you go out to share what you have been learning with others in the community and around



**Ted Whitesell, Director of the
Graduate Program on the
Environment**

the campus. That is why Jeremy Epstein is so thrilled about his climate change internship with the Attorney General's Office; and why Natalie Pyrooz is so inspired by her collaboration with campus and community groups to establish edible forest gardens; and why Stephanie Hoatson is so jazzed about being in on the ground floor of our local community college's sustainability work. In fact, all of these students are examples of the many ways in which our students are truly getting in on the ground floor of the new wave of green jobs that is rising all around us. In every one of these examples, institutions like the AG's office, the community college, and our own college administrators turned to MES

students for help to figure out how to even start the work of making their operations more sustainable. And these are just a few examples. Look at our past and future newsletters (posted at <http://www.evergreen.edu/mes/>) for others. I am so proud of the many ways in which our students are accomplishing their twin goals of learning about environmental work and actually accomplishing great things for our community and our state at the same time.

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