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CAMPGROUND & RV PARK INDUSTRY

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## Dividends to be had by going Green

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz., April 2010 – As the nation celebrates Earth Day, there will likely be calls for increased investments in energy and water saving technologies as well as other environmentally sustainable practices, several of which are already in use at the Flagstaff KOA.

In addition to having two windmills, which supply 10 to 25 percent of the electrical hookup needs



for its 200 campsites, depending on the season, all of the park's outdoor lighting is solar powered, while it uses energy efficient light bulbs inside

its buildings. The park also uses six 55-gallon barrels to capture rainwater, which it uses to irrigate its native landscaping. Last year alone, the park captured about 5,000 gallons of rainwater, which was significant given that 2009 was a drought year. The park also sells only environmentally friendly holding tank products.

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"We started in 2009 by trying to be as green as possible," said Janyel Pitman, the park's manager, adding that the windmills are "worth their weight in gold."

"After all the tax rebates and credits, they didn't cost very much," she said, adding that the campground has used the land around the base of the windmills to create an "eco park" with educational displays that inform visitors about various recycling facts as well as things people can do in their homes to lessen their environmental impacts.

While the green initiatives undertaken by the Flagstaff KOA are exemplary, the park is actually one of a growing number of private campgrounds across the country that are making

investments in a variety of energy, water and natural resource saving programs.

Some are doing so on their own initiative, while others are doing so with active encouragement from the National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds in Larkspur, Colo., which launched a green parks initiative three years ago called "Plan-it Green."

"Industry research shows that consumers like to go to parks that are environmentally friendly, which is an additional benefit to parks that invest in green practices," said Linda Profaizer, president and CEO of the national association.





Profaizer added that the association has launched a new program with the Woodall's North American Campground Directory



that recognizes parks that adopt at least 9 of 18 green initiatives with a "Green Friendly" icon next to their park listings on the GoCampingAmerica.com and Woodalls.com travel planning websites as well as the 2011 print edition of the Woodall's campground directory.

Here's a sampling of some of the things campgrounds and RV parks across the country are doing to help the environment:

Carlsbad KOA in Carlsbad, N.M.: This park has installed a 2.4-kilowatt wind turbine, which helps power the campground's office, store, restaurant, bathrooms and laundry. The park has also installed a solar water heating system for its swimming pool, which paid for itself during the first season, said park co-owner Susan Bacher. The park also sells environmentally friendly holding tank products in its camp store.

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 Crossroads RV Park in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa: Park operator Jeff Krug built this park with green initiatives in mind, including compact fluorescent light bulbs, motion detector light switches and a tankless water heater. "We also don't use any paper products in our bath and shower rooms," Krug said. "Instead, it's electric hand dryers." He also installed geomat under the park's gravel roadways. "This strengthens, firms and holds a solid sub-base so the rock will not be lost in the mud," he said. This year, Krug plans to provide his guests with separate bins so that they can sort their glass, plastic, and paper waste for recycling.

Hill Country Jellystone in Canyon Lake, Texas: This park recently added two energy efficient cabins that it purchased with R-19 insulation, dual pane glass, a metal front door and R-30 roof insulation. The park also uses electronic confirmations and recently started using an online brochure, which should cut down on the park's printing costs and use of paper.

Jellystone Park Camp-Resort, Williamsport, Md.: This park has received awards from the



Washington County Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Corporation as well as the National Association of RV Parks & Campgrounds last year for its successful recycling initiatives involving local charity organizations. The park recycles all of its aluminum cans through Star Community, a local non-profit community for people with developmental disabilities. The park also collects plastic and cardboard on behalf of ARC Inc. of Washington County, which works to improve the lives of people of all ages with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Park owners Ron and Vicki Vitkun have also invested in motion activated lights and programmable thermostats and are exploring the merits of solar power for water heating and power generation.

Normandy Farms in Foxboro, Mass.: This park is landscaping its grounds with plants and flowers that require less water. It's also using pressure reducing shower valves and waterless urinals to eliminate flushing and reduce water waste. In terms of its electrical consumption, the park has replaced all of its lights with

fluorescent bulbs and installed motion lights in its common buildings. The park also offers single sort recycling stations, which combine cardboard, glass and aluminum into one receptacle.

Ocean Lakes Family Campground in Myrtle Beach, S.C.: This park received a "Plan it Green" award from the National Association of RV Parks & Campgrounds last year for its successful iCare Program, which encourages guests to sort their trash into recycling containers, to properly dispose of pet waste and even to pick up trash along the beach, thereby lessening the environmental impact of the guests and the campground itself. Last year, Ocean Lakes guests and employees recycled more than 59,000 pounds of waste using five iCare stations currently available at the campground. The park plans to install additional recycle stations this year.

Pinewood Lodge in Plymouth, Mass.: This park has installed low wattage fluorescent lighting in its buildings and street lights as well as electric light timers. The park has also equipped its restroom facilities with low-flow toilets and solar panels. "The cleaning products we use to clean these facilities, as well as our rental units, are low in harsh chemicals," said park owner Kim Saunders, adding that the park also



tries to reduce its carbon footprint by having its employees use electric golf carts for transportation around the campground as well as for transportation to and from work for those employees who live nearby.

Sacred Rocks Reserve in Boulevard, Calif.: Park owners Sharon and Dimitri Courmouis recently received a "Plan it Green" award from the National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds for various environmentally friendly initiatives, including removing nearly 80 tons of trash from the 163-acre property when they acquired the park in 2003; recycling 850 abandoned trees that had been discarded on the property; and rescuing hundreds of 400-year-old oak trees that were vulnerable to insect infestations. The park also invested in solar powered park models, which it uses as rental accommodations and sells to individuals and families, who can place them on leased sites at the park and use them as a weekend retreat or vacation cottages.

Sandy Pines in Hopkins, Mich.: This 2,220-site park recently invested in geothermal heating and

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cooling systems, which it uses to heat and cool the park's laundry, store, beauty shop and donut shop in addition to heating water for use in the park's car wash. The park has also converted two of its swimming pools from chlorine to salt water filtration systems. But the green initiatives didn't stop there.

This year, Sandy Pines plans to add geothermal heating and cooling to two more buildings while adding saltwater filtration systems to two more swimming pools, said Managing Director Max Gibbs. The park has also recently installed T-8 florescent lighting and other high-efficiency lighting systems in 20 buildings, and added three

instant hot water systems to its buildings, he said.

Sugar Loafin' RV Campground and Cabins in Leadville, Colo.: "We have always been a green park – even before green was in," said park operator Don Seppi, adding that he has solar panels on a service building, which help with heating. The park also has native plants and grasses throughout the campground. Seppi also promotes and sells Eco-Save holding tank products to his guests.

Vineyard RV Park in Vacaville, Calif.: This park has engaged in various green initiatives in recent years, including requesting water and power audits from its local utilities and investing in more efficient water and power fixtures.

The resulting savings enabled the park to recoup its investment in one year. The park also uses only recycled content paper and Eco-friendly paper towels, toilet paper and cleaning products. The park's owners plan to redevelop the entire property to green standards during the next two to four years. "During that time, we expect to rebuilt all buildings on the property and retrofit them with extensive solar installations," said park owner Meaghan Bertram, adding that she will apply for LEED certification for all her new buildings, whose interiors and exteriors will be designed to green standards. "The office buildings and clubhouses will be primarily powered by solar and the pool will be heated

by a solar hot water heater," she said. Bertram also plans to landscape the property with native plants, and irrigate them with weather sensitive irrigation controllers, which automatically adjust their watering schedules as weather conditions change. "Our goal is to achieve LEED platinum certification for the buildings, but of course this will depend on budget and timing," she said. LEED certification is the green standard set by the US Green Building Council.

For more information about the "Plan it Green" program of the National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds, visit <http://www.arvc.org/planItGreen.a.spx>

# Getaway



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