

August 10, 2011

To all past, present and future RI Green Hospitality Certificate recipients,

There are some exciting changes underway with the Green Hospitality Certification program! As you know, the Program is a partnership between the Hospitality & Tourism Association as well as the RI Department of Environmental Management, working together to help Rhode Island's hospitality industry to not only keep our air, oceans and people healthy but also to cut operating expenses and increase revenue.

At the Department of Environmental Management, we have been hard at work on a new self-certification workbook and on quantifying the impacts of your green activities and guess what? **The 28 hotels that have been certified save at minimum a yearly total of \$654,000, half a million lbs solid waste and 3 million lbs of greenhouse gasses just by being green!**

Now, what do we mean by "green" and how can it help you save money? The biggest bang for your buck can be found in reducing water and energy consumption. Most of you already have in place linen re-use programs and many of you have water saving fixtures and energy saving light bulbs. Low flow showerheads alone are saving certified hotels 14 million gallons of water and almost \$100,000 per year. The 24,000 CFLs and 1000 LED exit signs installed have reduced your yearly electricity draw by over 1 million kWh and saved \$100,000.

Those numbers are so impressive that you might think that is as far as you can go in savings, but there are always more ways to save. Technology gets better – there are new toilets that are even lower flow than the 1.6 gallon toilets and LED's are getting more affordable and use half the energy and last six times longer than CFL's. However, many ways to go green are low-tech and require little to no money. For example, consciousness raising among staff and guests not only helps influence their behavior in the world, but also increases your business's green reputation. Studies have shown that not only do hotel visitors prefer green hotels, all things being equal, but that many are willing to pay a premium for green.

Besides finding all these numbers, we have also revised the workbook to make it more comprehensive. A brand new section of the workbook this year is the "Storm Water" section. Most storm drains drain directly to local bodies of water, washing garbage and pollutants straight into the ocean with no filtration. This new workbook section will help give you ideas for how to decrease the impact of that storm water drainage. For more information on storm water, you can visit <http://ristormwatersolutions.org/>. There will also be an expanded "Kitchens and Food" section for facilities with restaurants. Because more points will be available to those facilities, more points will be required for certification.

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With the changes to the workbook, changes in technology and best practices, and the increased prevalence of “green washing” all of this green stuff can be confusing. That is why the RIDEM’s Office of Customer & Technical Assistance is here to help. You can contact the office any time for advice and technical assistance on all aspects of pollution prevention. We are also available for site visits for more in depth help. This assistance is given free of charge, so ask away! Remember also, that if you cannot reach the requisite number of points in the workbook for certification, we can help you obtain those extra points.

We are planning an awards ceremony in April 2012 for all newly certified and re-certified facilities where you will be treated to a delicious breakfast and receive your plaques (made with Forest Stewardship Council certified wood, of course). The deadline for submission of the workbook for inclusion in the ceremony is November 15, 2011.

We hope that all of you are as excited about these new changes as we are, and we can’t wait to reconnect with all re-certifiers as well as welcome new hotels to the program. See you at the awards ceremony in the spring!

Sincerely,

The Green Hospitality Certification Team

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