

# EPI Co-Hosts First Annual 'Green Impact' Conference for Local Businesses

On September 10, 2008, EPI's public relations representative Beth Graser attended a dinner at Jackson Bottom Wetlands on behalf of the company, along with other high-level supporters. She happened to sit next to Mark Jockers, government and public affairs manager for Clean Water Services (CWS). There, she took the opportunity to tell him about EPI's acceptance to the Salmon-Safe program and ask his opinion on how EPI might go about getting some ideas for implementing low-impact storm water management projects. He generously offered the services of two of his environmental engineers, Carrie Pak and Tony Gilbertson, who came and toured EPI's campus the following month. During their visit, Carrie mentioned that Mark was interested in exploring the idea of partnering with Epson to offer a storm water management workshop for businesses to make them aware of best practices and the free services available to them.

A chance encounter with Mark outside the Hillsboro Chamber of Commerce in late January re-sparked the conversation, and a few e-mails later resulted in Beth, EPI's environmental specialist Kimberley Sackman, and representatives from both CWS and the Chamber sitting at a table brainstorming what a potential conference would look like.

Kimberley came up with the conference name and Beth further developed the concept, which was enough to convince the others to move forward.

What's notable about the partnership and the manner in which the event was planned is that not only were the organizers operating on a very short time-frame (the "go" meeting was held on March 9), but none of the organizations wanted to invest a large

amount of money in the face of the current economic downturn. Beth agreed to design all messaging, which included a welcome letter encouraging businesses to attend, an event sheet that gave all details

about the conference, comment cards, posters and directional signs. She also created a press release, which was picked up by the local newspaper, *The Hillsboro Argus*.

CWS took the lead in securing presenters: Energy Trust of Oregon; Portland General Electric (PGE); City of Hillsboro, office of sustainability; Recycle at

Work and others to answer attendee questions about new environmental regulations, emerging incentives and rebates, and low-impact development.

They also arranged for free use of the Hillsboro Civic Center's auditorium

and foyer, and created colorful post cards that were bulk-mailed out to all the agency's Hillsboro-area customers.

The Chamber helped get the word out by including the event flyer in their monthly newsletter mailing to all members, and summarizing information about the conference in their bi-weekly e-mail newsletter.

Door prizes of a new Epson C120 printer with two sets of ink (donated by Epson), as well as \$500 toward the creation of a rain garden, swale or pervious parking lot project (donated by CWS), provided an additional draw for attendees.

The event was held on Thursday, April 16, and although attendance was a little light, that was to be expected for a first-time event. Those who did go felt the conference was very informative and all the presenters want to build and expand on the conference in the future.

Something that started out as a casual conversation grew into a full-scale event that was made possible because of strategic partnerships, common interests and teamwork—in all, it was a great start and great success.



**Clockwise, from top:** A looping slide show displayed examples of local low-impact design projects; Tony Gilbertson of CWS tries to entice passersby into checking out the event; and Wells Fargo Bank representatives (foreground) get information on saving energy from the PGE booth.

