

Chapter 4. Green Purchasing

Introduction: Why buy local, why buy green?

In this world of big box stores and “low, low prices” it is easy to forget how important it is to spend your dollar locally. However, the reality of the matter is that a sustainable, viable community includes small business. That means yours, and it means your neighbor’s. By supporting a local business, your dollar stays within the community, supports your neighbor, the local workers, and local activities, such as little league and scouts, food pantries and libraries; it supports what is important to your community. And eventually, it comes back around to support you in your business.

Having an economy with a strong variety of locally owned business steadies the community when the economy fluctuates. Generally speaking, locally owned businesses must be innovative and creative in order to compete. They often create more jobs that pay better and can offer more room for advancement than is available through large retailers. They are more likely to locate within an existing and workable downtown and thereby reduce sprawl, habitat loss and other negative impacts of “greenfield” development, or development in open space green areas.

Locally owned businesses are more able to supply products that meet the needs of the community, rather than fluctuate at the whim of national sales marketing campaigns. Locally owned businesses must provide better customer service in order to



*Buying from local farmers markets shows your customers you care about providing them with quality products.
(J. East)*

Rupununi: A Restaurant ahead of its Time

Michael Boland's first restaurant, Rupununi, was opened in 1995 when there were few people in the mainstream restaurant industry talking about sustainable business practices. Boland decided early on that his establishment would avoid things like farm-raised shrimp and Gulf of Mexico shrimp. Instead he opts, for example, to purchase seafood from EcoFish because of the company's sustainability and conservation goals. The restaurant also uses a large amount of locally and organically-grown foods and participates in the GE (genetically engineered) Free Maine program. Solar panels were recently installed on the roof of Rupununi to heat hot water. Though the initial outlay might have been significant, oil prices have been increasing dramatically and Boland expects that the panels will be paid off entirely within five years, at which time he will no longer have to pay anything to heat the considerable amount of water needed for the restaurant.

Boland has since started several other businesses in the area, continuing to infuse a sustainable business ethic. He is pleased to see other business around him begin to adopt sustainable business practices and sees this as a positive overall shift in culture. He strongly believes that if business owners looked at the investment vs. the savings they would realize, ironically, that many of the things they could do to “green” their business are actually very wise financial decisions. According to Boland, there are so many other rewards of owning a sustainable business - such as the self satisfaction, public relations, and the motivation co-workers and staff feel when they see their workplace is interested in more than the bottom line.

compete against the big box stores, and can do so with such things as free delivery, and hours of operation that meet the needs of the community.

Another way that you can make a difference is in the products that you buy. An amazing number of “regular” everyday household items cause air pollution (e.g., paint, carpeting, candles, new upholstery etc). A few minor changes in buying habits of local businesses can make a huge difference in the world around us, making it a safer, healthier, cleaner place to live.

This chapter outlines a number of sources where you can buy green products for your business. There is a growing global market for green products though you will notice that a vast majority of the ones listed here are still NOT locally available. This is where the power of local businesses may come in. Talk to the local supplier about the products you choose to use and not to use and why. It may be that you can convince him or her to begin to stock the products you need and prefer, the local products that are sustainably manufactured and are kind to the environment. A big benefit of working with local business owners is the potential for them to be very responsive to their customer’s needs. If more local and green products are made available, other businesses will also buy them. Customers also notice the products used by businesses during their travel and more and more want local and green products.

General Resource for Green Purchasing

- For more information on why and how to buy locally, check out the Institute for Local Self-reliance at www.newrules.org or Maine Business for Social Responsibility at www.mebsr.org.
- For more information on the products that pollute and how to avoid them, look at www.earth911.org, www.ecomall.com, www.eartheasy.com.
- Listing of environmentally responsible meeting planners, hosts, and suppliers, www.bluegreenmeetings.org.



*St. Andrews, New Brunswick in November; as more businesses purchase local products, more can stay open year round.
(N. Springuel)*

- **Canada’s Environmental Choice Program and EcoLogo** is intended to encourage the demand and supply of environmentally responsible products and services. In addition to being a certification program, the Web site lists hundreds of green products in a variety of clearly organized categories ranging from cleaning to building

to packaging to marine and much more. www.environmentalchoice.com/

- **The Green Store** in Belfast, Maine offers a full range of products for an environmentally sustainable lifestyle, including: organic cotton clothing, energy conserving lighting, recycled and tree-free paper, waterless toilets, non-toxic paints, air and water filters, items for camps and much more, www.greenstore.com/.

Products for the Home and Office

- **Environmentally Preferred Purchasing:** www.maine.gov/dep/oia/p2/consumerepp.htm.
- **“Reduce Hazardous Products and Cleaners in Your Home”** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) guide to commonly used, hazardous household products and proper handling techniques, www.epa.gov/seahome/housewaste/house/house.htm.
- **GreenSeal** Non-profit organization providing standards and recommendations for some products and services, www.greenseal.org.
- **Ecomall Cleaners**, www.ecomall.com/biz/cleaning.htm.
- **Environmental Home Center**, www.environmentalhomecenter.com.
- **Green Earth Office Supply**, store.yahoo.com/greenearthofficesupply/.
- **The Green Guide** Tips for healthy living, eco-friendly product reviews, and more. thegreenguide.com.
- **Green Home**, www.greenhome.com/.
- **The Green Marketplace**, www.gaiam.com/greenmarket/.
- **Paints**, www.metrokc.gov/procure/green/paint2.htm#4.

**Chet’s Camp:
Small Changes Net
Big Savings**

Sue and Al LaPlante have operated Chet’s Camp for about five seasons now. This past spring, they decided to make some improvements. They installed a new hot tub, and were a bit nervous about what that would do to the electric bill. Around that same time, they wrapped all five of the cabin hot water heaters, and they replaced all of the interior bulbs with compact fluorescent ones. Guess what? The electric bill went down instead of up – substantially down, according to Sue!

Energy and Water Conservation products

- The Maine Department of Environmental Protection lists several resources for purchasing water saving products, such as low-flow toilets, www.maine.gov/dep/oia/p2/restaurant.htm.
- **Energy Star™** (www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=find_a_product.) lists products including clothes washers and dish washers that have secured the Energy Star™ label because they use less energy and are friendlier to the environment. In Canada, the Energy Star™ list can be found at <http://oee.nrcan.gc.ca/energystar/english/consumers/appliance.cfm?text=N&printview=N>
- Beginning in 2007, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is labeling toilets that have achieved high efficiency ratings in water savings. Look for the “WaterSense” label. According to the EPA, toilets are responsible for 30% of all household water consumption www.epa.gov/owm/water-efficiency/pubs/het.htm.

Pollution Prevention

- The US EPA’s Vendor Information (VendInfo) search page is a repository of more than 1200 listings of pollution prevention equipment, products, or services, <http://es.epa.gov/vendors>.

Marine Suppliers

Environmentally friendly products for working in the marine environment: cleaning agents, paints, absorbents, filters, waste water treatment/tanks, fuel handling, and more (this list is partially taken from the “Environmental Resource Guide,” a compendium to *Brightwork: A Best Management Practices Manual for Maine’s Marinas & Boatyards*, available at www.maine.gov/dep//blwq/docwatershed/marina/bmp.htm).

- Bactain Environmental Products, www.bactain.com.
- Bio-Kleen Products, www.biokleen.com.
- Captain John’s Boat Brite “Meets EPA National Clean Marina Guidelines,” www.captainjohnsboatbrite.com.
- Fluid Environmental Services, Inc., www.fluidenvironmental.com.
- Tri Synergy Inc. “Pioneering Evolutions in Environmental Solutions,” <http://trisyn.com/>.
- WORX Environmental Products Inc. “Green Seal Certified,” www.worx.com.
- Solvent Kleene, Inc., www.solventkleene.com.
- E Paint Company, www.epaint.net.
- The Paint Project, Inc., www.paintproject.com.
- A&A Industrial Supply “Safety and Environmental Solutions,” www.spillkit.com.
- Ben Meadows Co. “Serving Outdoor Professionals,” www.benmeadows.com.
- DAWG “The Spill Control People,” www.dawginc.com.
- Enviro Marine Inc. “Innovative solutions for preventing marine pollutions,” www.enviromarine.com.
- New Pig Corporation “Your partner for a clean and safe workplace,” www.newpig.com
- Spill 911 www.spill911.com.
- Spilldam, Inc. “Providing Environmental Protection Systems,” www.spilldam.com.
- Highland Tank, www.highlandtank.com.
- W.H. Shurtleff Company “Stormwater solutions, Environmental Products and Systems,” www.whshurtleff.com.



Using green products protects the waters of the Gulf of Maine, maintaining a healthy environment and fishing and tourism-based economy.
(N. Springuel)

- Stormdrain Solutions, www.stormdrains.com.
- Contech Stormwater Solutions, www.contech-cpi.com/stormwater/13.
- Martin Walter Co., Inc., www.walterco.com.
- Pan America Environmental, www.panamenv.com.
- Parker Hannifin Corporation, www.parker.com/racor/fas.html.

In addition, local and national marine stores sell many environmentally friendly products

- Hamilton Marine, <http://hamiltonmarine.com>.
- Lewis Marine Supply of Maine, www.lewismarine.com.

Composting

- **Coast of Maine Organic Products, Inc.** operates a composting facility in Washington County. They work with salmon and blueberry processors and others in both Maine and New Brunswick to create organically certified plant food and compost-based soil. Kelp, shrimp, crab and lobster are all part of the ingredients. For more information, see: www.coastofmaine.com/.
- Composting pet waste (consider these options if your customers travel with pets)
 - Composters.com www.composters.com (including pet waste digesters)
 - LIPA USA, Inc., www.dogtoilet.com.
 - Pet Street Mall, www.petstreetmall.com.

Food

Tourism businesses are in the unique position of being able to showcase the best agriculture and fisheries products from the region. The following is a partial list of food products available for purchase in the region:

- **The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association** Web site includes a searchable database that includes approximately 20 organic farms in Hancock County, ME and 16 in Washington County, ME., www.mofga.org.
- **Get Real Get Maine** is a program run by the Maine Department of Agriculture that “celebrates the rich bounty of Maine-grown, Maine-caught, Maine-made and Maine-raised products. From fresh fruits and vegetables to farm-raised salmon, venison and lamb, to unique and high-quality specialty foods. Our land also yields products that add beauty to our lives, such as wool, flowers and Christmas trees.” The Web site also has a searchable database to help you find farm stands and other resources throughout the state, www.getrealmaine.com/index.shtml.
- **Ecofish** provides seafood from what the organization considers sustainable fisheries and promotes marine conservation and biodiversity. A portion of the proceeds



Maine Dep't of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, Division of Market and Production Development; 144 pgs, organized by County, 2003
www.getrealmaine.com/buy/farmers_markets.htm

goes to marine conservation and education work, www.ecofish.com.

- **The Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch** has educational tools available for restaurants to use with chefs and staffs regarding sustainable fisheries and alternative choices for fish selections that are endangered, www.montereybayaquarium.org/cr/seafoodwatch.asp.
- **Local seafood** is something many visitors to the region want to sample during their visit. This ranges from lobster and the many fish species caught in our waters to locally harvested seaweed and shellfish. Many local tourism businesses work directly with the harvesters for a supply of their product. Also, fish markets can be found in various towns throughout the region. Check for the source of the product before you purchase and try to buy local fish.

Meetings

Tourism businesses can become part of a larger movement to become green destinations for meetings and conferences.

- The Oceans Blue Foundation offers a Web site, “Blue Green Meetings” (www.bluegreenmeetings.org) that provides environmentally friendly tips and resources for both meeting planners and suppliers, including how to prepare to host groups that are interested in holding a conference/event with fewer negative environmental impacts.
- Environment Canada (www.ns.ec.gc.ca/greenman/help.html) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (www.greenbiz.com/toolbox/reports_third.cfm?LinkAdvID=2392) also offer downloadable guidebooks or reports on greening meetings.