

Oregon State Bar Sustainable Future Section

Photo: J. Michael Mattingly

The Long View

2012 Sustainable Law Office Leadership Award

By Ellen Grover

Stoel Rives is being honored for leadership in sustainable office practices. And for good reason. While its Portland office is located in one of the Meccas of sustainable living, the firm's culture is no tagalong. For over two decades, Stoel Rives has made sustainability practices and policies a cornerstone of firm culture.

This culture begins with all new employees receiving an orientation on the benefits of sustainability and an explanation of the firm's waste collection and composting system, as well as a tour of the firm's bike facility. For example, on each floor, employees are prompted to separate garbage among compost bins, recycling bins and—a necessary evil—landfill bins. Stoel Rives estimates that this effort removes 21 tons of material per year from landfills.

Further seeking to reduce waste, Stoel Rives has replaced disposable and plastic cups and service ware with durable ware. Also reducing waste are default settings for double-sided printing, saving an estimated 9 million sheets of paper annually. Reliance on electronic systems is also helping to reduce paper use, for example through electronic docketing systems, electronic court filings and conversion to a new document management system that will provide an efficient and easy way to save and organize emails and other documents, rather than printing them.

In the bike facility, bicycles can be securely stored and cyclists have access to a shower and locker room facility. The firm also actively encourages alternative transportation by offering a monthly incentive to every attorney or staff member who walks, runs or bikes to work. Public transit is encouraged through free TriMet passes offered to all personnel. The firm also purchases car sharing memberships for free or low cost use and owns two loaner bicycles available to all personnel at all times.

The firm has energy conservation policies that include, for example, computer default to energy saving mode when not in use, computer turn off policies, purchase of ENERGY STAR appliances and CFLs, and installation of motion-sensor lighting. Stoel Rives purchases renewable energy credits for an equivalent of 100% of the office electricity used in all of the firm's locations, and has initiated a carbon

offset program for its attorney recruiting program and other specified firm travel.

These efforts are impressive, yet they are only one part of the picture.

Stoel Rives believes that a continuation of culture requires ongoing leadership. The firm's sustainability team, the "Green Team", is institutionalized within the firm to advance sustainability policies and education. The Green Team includes attorneys and staff members, with a partner as leader, currently Tim McMahan.

Together, this Team hosts internal brown bag lunch and learn sessions focused on sustainability. "Go Green" pages on the firm's intranet site provide access to and updates on the firm's sustainability initiatives, Earth Day activities and green living resources. Extending its leadership outside

of the office environment, Stoel Rives, in 2009, created a Personal and Professional Sustainability Challenge (P2 Challenge) which encourages personnel to pledge to live more sustainability and provides tools to identify how a person can reduce his or her impact on the earth. For Earth Day 2012, the firm hosted activities through not only its Portland offices, but other state offices, also, including a tree planting project in Gresham. But, the firm is especially proud of its first firm-wide Electronics Recycling Day, held early in 2012, where the firm arranged for the collection of office and home electronics to be recycled or reused, along with batteries, Styrofoam, and other hard-to-recycle items. That required locating recyclers willing to partner with the firm in multiple states.

Through these many programs and efforts Stoel Rives aims to demonstrate and educate that sustainable living needs to be considered in all aspects of our daily lives. It is certainly part of everyday life at the Stoel Rives Portland office. Culture and leadership that meshes well with a Mecca. ■

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