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**Portland Community College – Rock Creek Campus
Portland, Oregon
Spring 2008, Waste Reduction**

BACKGROUND

Campus Profile

The Portland Community College (PCC) Rock Creek Campus is located on a spacious, 256-acre site in a high-tech corridor near Hillsboro, Oregon. It is situated about 12 miles west of downtown Portland, in the rapidly growing Beaverton-Hillsboro area of Washington County. The Rock Creek Campus sits amid farms, forests and wetlands, perfect for PCC's Veterinary Technology, Landscape Technology and Biology programs. It's also a fine venue for its Diesel Service Technology, Agricultural Mechanics, Auto Collision Repair, Building Construction Technology, Aviation Maintenance Technology and Biotechnology programs. The science-technology building, completed in 1995, houses up-to-date laboratories and classrooms.

The Rock Creek Environmental Studies Center (RCESC) is a natural area within Portland Community College's Rock Creek Campus that is considered to be an important natural history area by both the Portland Audubon Society and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. The natural area that comprises the RCESC includes about 44 acres of woodland, 11 acres of wetland and 44 acres of grasslands. Several smaller unique ecosystems are also present in this site, including several springs and a small pond ecosystem. There are two sections of Douglas fir–dominated forests that include such tree species as Western hemlock, Western red cedar, Pacific yew and Big leaf maple, in addition to a wide variety of shrubs and plants. The site contains some bottomland forested areas, which include Red alder, Oregon white oak, Beaked hazelnut, among other species. Several wetland plant communities and a large grassland area also occur within the RCESC. These areas provide habitat for several groups of wildlife including nesting areas for waterfowl, quail, pheasants and song birds; and they are homes to mammals such as deer, beaver, muskrat, mink, raccoon, fox and coyote.

The Rock Creek Environmental Studies Center is a vital and diverse grouping of habitats that occur on Portland Community College's Rock Creek Campus. While human endeavors such as farming and the construction of nearby housing, roads and parking lots have modified parts of this habitat and its hydrology, through outside grants, previously farmed and overgrazed lands are slowly being returned to a more natural state. We are monitoring changes in the quality of habitat throughout the restoration process, which includes removal of invasive plants and plantings of native vegetation. Changes are being monitored through data collection on plant and animal species, water quality sampling and photography. In addition, there are several ongoing studies being performed by PCC students and volunteers; these include microclimate studies and the surveying of wild flowers, lichens and amphibians.

The Rock Creek Campus serves some 15,500 students annually under campus President Katherine Persson.

Contact

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GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Goals

This idea for A Wave of Knowledge, a reclaimed-art project, started when the student government was redesigning the student center. We collaborated with art sculpture teacher Ben Buswell, who teaches a class in reclaimed art. We agreed to fund his class project if they would install it in our student center. The goal was to use 20 to 30 percent reclaimed material.

Accomplishments

We were presented with three different ideas and chose a project that would require a lot of work to finish, but would be well worth the effort and would use almost 90 percent reclaimed materials. The project planned for a wall to be stacked with books that were either being thrown away or recycled. The stacking would be on a wooden base and create a type of wave pattern on one of the walls in the student center.

Challenges and Responses

This project has not been without its bumps in the road. We were approached by a number of students who were angry that we were taking books and screwing them and gluing them to a wall. We had to explain that these books would have wound up in a landfill or recycling center and that both options would have produced carbon emissions. Reusing the books on campus, on the other hand, would create no extra carbon emissions. So this art project raises awareness about the trash we produce. The books were donated by the college library and individuals who were going to recycle or throw them away; most are outdated college textbooks.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

Leadership was provided by sculpture art instructor Ben Buswell, the Associated Students of Portland Community College (ASPCC)- Rock Creek Campus and the Student Government Association, particularly Matthew Blankenship.

Funding and Resources

Used old books were gathered from local libraries and recycling centers. Miscellaneous supplies were funded by ASPCC.

CLOSING COMMENT

This art piece in our student center is already opening people's eyes as to the creative ways we can reuse items. We want people to realize that recycling is not nearly as good an option as reusing. This art inspires people to think about what they can do with old stuff.