



2006 - 2007 Award Winners

The Government Recycler of the Year *Montgomery Bell State Park*

Montgomery Bell State Resort Park, located just outside of Nashville, in Burns, Tennessee is a well-visited park. The variety of activities and lodging options they offer makes Montgomery Bell a popular destination for visitors from across the nation. The proximity to Nashville also means that State agencies often host training seminars and conferences at the park. In fact, from July through June of last year there were 612,107 visitors. They ate 128,113 meals, played 26,038 rounds of golf, and attended 359 park programs. Montgomery Bell sold 21,391 room nights in the inn, 1,991 cabin nights, and 37,106 campground spots. The group camp had 15,490 overnight guests.

Now, picture each visitor having a soda or a bottle of water. Imagine weekly supply shipments delivered in cardboard boxes. Think of the vegetables that are packaged in steel cans and buffet food served in aluminum steam trays. Opportunities to recycle abound across the park and Montgomery Bell is answering the challenge and setting the pace for recycling in the State Park System.

Park Manager Pat Wright said the park began recycling at least fifteen years ago, describing the first recycling effort as collecting aluminum cans at the picnic shelters. After the Inn was remodeled the park looked at the recycling program and decided that it could be expanded. Receptacles were placed around the park to collect aluminum and plastic beverage containers. This allowed the offices, campgrounds, conference facility, pro shop, and ranger residences to participate. Using three wire mesh trailers they also began recycling cardboard at the inn, the golf course, and the maintenance shop.

Recycling really took off at the golf course. They placed recycling bins where golf carts are returned and the golf course volunteers handle the recyclables that are left in the carts. Golf course maintenance staff also removes recyclables from the trashcans located throughout the course. The golfers have access to the recycling bins and many of the golf course regulars are dedicated recyclers. All of the cardboard from the golf operation is recycled as well. Because of the success of the recycling program at the pro shop, the golf course began taking the lead on the park's recycling program.

Seeing the volume of the materials that could be collected, Mike Massey and Derrick Webster wanted to expand the program. They knew that more material could be captured from across the park, but worried that the extra volume would be more than the current system could handle. A new recycling area was sited adjacent to the golf course maintenance shop. The area was leveled and covered in gravel. Bays were constructed to sort and store the food cans,

aluminum, plastic bottles, and cardboard. A baler was installed and a small shed was constructed around it to protect it from the elements.

Baled recyclables are picked-up by recycling vendors, alleviating the park of the time consuming task of bringing the materials to a county recycling center. The Office of Environmental Assistance worked with the park to purchase the equipment using monies from the Solid Waste Management Fund. The revenue generated from selling the recyclables will return to the park after the cost of the baler is reimbursed to the fund. Montgomery Bell will likely repay the cost of the baler in less than five years. When asked about the recycling program Derrick said, "Earth's natural resources are being depleted, so as stewards of 3,500 plus acres we are always looking for ways to be environmentally conscientious. We should all be doing something to give back."

The quantity of recyclables coming from the Inn grew in the past year as well. Inn Manager Pam Barfield says that broadening the recycling program has been a positive experience. "Sometimes when we introduce a new program the staff can be a little resistant. That hasn't been the case with recycling. They have been so willing to take the extra steps- like flattening boxes and rinsing cans. It has been a really good thing to see everyone so involved. Our supply truck comes every Tuesday and Friday, so cardboard has to be processed at least twice a week. Everyone here is really willing to make sure that the recyclables are properly processed, sorted, stored."

Some product changes have increased the amount of material that can be recycled from the kitchen. Many condiments like mayonnaise, olives, and salad dressing that were once packaged in glass now come in easily recyclable, plastic bottles. In addition to the condiments the kitchen also recycles milk jugs, aluminum steam trays, steel food cans, and cardboard. Keeping the process running smoothly means training new hires on the process. Restaurant employee Jesse Tipping has been active in keeping the new staff trained on the recycling program, explaining that the steel cans have to be rinsed and both ends removed, cardboard has to be flattened and kept dry, and the plastic, steel, aluminum, and cardboard are each gathered separately.

Park visitors are an integral component in the recycling program. They use the bins across the park- picnic areas, campgrounds, conference center, etc. to recycle their aluminum cans and plastic beverage bottles. Cardboard boxes left in meeting rooms and guest rooms by the guests are recycled as well. Further program expansion may include a small recycling station when the new cabins are completed and adding steel can recycling at the campgrounds and group camp. Park maintenance staff pick up the recycling from these locations and bring it to the park recycling center.

At their shop, the maintenance staff utilizes the standard cardboard and beverage container recycling, but also recycle and reuse specialized materials. They work on mowers, tractors, and vehicles used on the park and recycle the related wastes- lead acid batteries, antifreeze, used oil, oil filters, and the plastic bottles the oil and antifreeze are packaged in. In addition to recycling, they also take reuse very seriously. When buildings are remodeled they salvage usable parts like plumbing fixtures and fittings, appliances, and building materials. Maintenance Supervisor Carl Buckner enjoys participating in recycling and reuse activities, saying, "Conservation is the reason we're all in the parks system. Reducing the amount of waste we landfill gives the staff and the visitors a way to contribute."

Mr. Wright praised the entire the park staff, saying, "Having all the operations- the natural side, the golf course, the resort operations, and park maintenance- participating in the program has really been the key to the success. All of our people have been very committed to the program." Although Montgomery Bell recycles for the same reasons as other groups- conserving natural resources, reducing their trash hauling costs, and possibly generating a little revenue- their level of commitment and pride in their program is what really sets them apart.

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