



2009 Fall Retreat Zero Waste Policy

At EGA we believe in walking our talk. Each year we work with the Retreat site to encourage the best environmental practices, during our Retreat and beyond. For the past five years, we have worked with a team of consultants to successfully reduce waste and environmental impact during the EGA Retreat, while also leaving behind increased knowledge and infrastructure for the host venue to keep working toward Zero Waste long afterward.

"Zero Waste" refers to a set of principles and systems to reduce both the volume and toxicity of waste. This means making less waste to begin with, and maximizing the reuse, recycling, or composting of any discards generated. Within the setting of our retreats, EGA has adopted a Zero Waste target of reducing waste going to landfill by at least 80% and ensuring no waste is incinerated from our meetings.

Beginning in the early stages of Retreat planning, we strive to design waste out of the system, greatly reducing the amount of paper, toxics, and other materials used, and to reuse and recycle as much as possible. Through avoided materials use and intensive recycling and composting, we have succeeded in reducing waste at previous retreats by as much as 83%! In 2004, EGA also began offering a carbon-offset program through which Retreat participants could invest in renewable energies to offset the environmental impact of their flights to the Retreat. For 2009 this carbon offset a standard part of registration for the Retreat.

Here are some of the additional steps we are taking:

Food

We pride ourselves in working with each Retreat site to achieve a menu that maximizes the use of locally grown, organic food, with delicious results. Captain Cook Hotel has created a partnership with the Anchorage Zoo, which will compost or use any food waste, and avoid single-serving items to minimize the amount of packaging used to produce our meals. We applaud our hosts for their commitment to sustainability!

Materials

We strive to reduce the amount of paper and materials used for the Retreat, producing fewer, shorter printed materials and relying as much as possible on web-based and electronic information. We also ask participations to refrain from bringing unrecyclable materials, such as disposable batteries or PVC plastic folders, on site. And as always, we re-use as many materials as possible, including the plastic name badges.

And the best part is you get to participate. At the Retreat site watch for clearly labeled recycling bins and instructions for helping to achieve our Zero Waste goal. And please bring your laptop or extra disks so that you can exchange information electronically at the Retreat (and save the weight of carrying all that extra paper back home). At the end of the Retreat, we'll calculate how much waste we have prevented and track our progress toward a Zero Waste Retreat.