



WELCOME TO OUR

Monthly Newsletter

Welcome to the second issue of our monthly newsletter! We are thrilled to be able to share what we are doing at the Athens-Clarke County Sustainability Office with you. Join us each month as we explore all things sustainability and how you can get involved!

Putting Energy into Greener Spaces



In this newsletter you will find:

Latest projects, free resources, and upcoming events!

A SUNNY CELEBRATION

THE ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY COMMUNITY CELEBRATED
THE TRANSFORMATION OF DUDLEY PARK

HANNAH CHAFFEE

Community members and ACC staff gathered at Dudley Park Wednesday May 29th to celebrate the success of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Project (GOSP) Grant: Restore Our River Phase 2. In 2019 the Mayor and Commission approved the original Restore our River initiative, setting out to rehabilitate 70 acres of native habitat along the North Oconee River.

The ACC Sustainability Office, ACC Leisure Services Department and ACC SPLOST

(Special Purpose Local Optional Sales Tax) Office teamed up to apply for the GOSP grant with the goal of providing ecological restoration to Dudley Park while also establishing recreation amenities and furthering the preservation of areas designated through the first phase of the Restore Our River project.

Mayor Kelly Girtz, Leisure Services Director Kent Kilpatrick and Sustainability Officer Mike Wharton spoke at the event. Each expressed gratitude toward all who worked on the project and

admiration at the transformation of Dudley.

Before the project, Dudley Park had fallen to the wayside- it didn't serve our vibrant native ecosystem or the people of Athens despite being a greenspace full of potential located so close to downtown.

After the speeches, Stephanie Green the Sustainability Office's Ecological Resource Coordinator led a group starting at the Chimney Swift Towers. She explained that before western colonization

Restore Our River GOSP Grant:

- Restored native habitat on 80% of Dudley Park
- Planted over 10,000 native plants while removing invasive ones
- Installed:
 - 5 bat boxes
 - 8 Eastern Bluebird Boxes
 - 7 Chimney Swift Towers
 - 5 Owl Boxes
 - 4 Bee Hotels
 - 3 Small Bird Boxes
 - 3 Purple Martin Houses
- Restored 150 ft of streambank
- Installed 1 Trash Trap
- Built restrooms (the nearest restroom was previously 3 miles away), a pavilion and a connection to the Firefly Trail
- Built 2 kayak/canoe launches
- Built over 3,000 ft of natural surface trails

PHOTO CREDIT: ANDREW STICHA, ACC LEISURE SERVICES
ACC EMPLOYEES AT THE GOSP GRANT CELEBRATION



WE "BELIEVED IN THE VISION AND HAVE MADE A COMMITMENT TO NOT ONLY CREATE AMAZING AND BEAUTIFUL SPACES. BUT TO MAINTAIN THESE AREAS FOR GENERATIONS TO COME."

-MIKE WHARTON
ACC SUSTAINABILITY OFFICER



RIGHT: CHIMNEY SWIFT TOWER INSTALLATION
PHOTO CREDIT: STEPHANIE GREEN



ABOVE: CHIMNEY SWIFT SIGN
PHOTO CREDIT: HANNAH CHAFFEE

Chimney Swifts commonly roosted in hollowed out trees. Because they cannot perch the same way as most birds, they cling to rough surfaces like bats. Loss of habitat due to deforestation meant that Chimney Swifts almost fully transitioned to roosting in man-made structures: chimneys!

Chimney Swift towers provide a roosting alternative as chimneys have become less popular and those that still exist now often have covers—for good reason: no one wants a hundred uninvited roommates flying into their home!

Without the threat of unwanted guests, these birds can be appreciated for what they are—breathtaking. During migration season, hundreds of Chimney Swifts cluster midair around Chimney Swift towers before dive bombing in to roost for the night, a wild sight that could turn anyone into a birder.

The tour continued down to the trash trap (affectionately named 'Bandit'). The group ambled past a women walking her dog, just downstream from the Trail Creek Trestle bridge which was built on the remnants of a historic railroad bridge.

Two cheery bikers passed on the left as tour members eagerly discussed the potential for watching the Chimney Swifts at dusk come fall. Then, dead ahead a Giant Blue Heron glided effortlessly over the group through the tree line, leaving us with a eager reverence for this place.

The moment felt indicative of the words spoken earlier: Dudley park truly is a testament to what a community can do when we make a pledge to each other—and to nature.

AS ALWAYS, THANK YOU TO OUR BRILLIANT VOLUNTEERS!



PHOTO CREDIT: HANNAH CHAFFEE

Each attendee of the event received a commemorative Dudley Park Restore Our River seed packet with Lance-leaved Coreopsis, a native wildflower great for pollinators!

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

CLASSIC CITY ROTARY, ATHENS-EAST PIEDMONT CHAPTER OF THE GEORGIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY, THE LILLY BRANCH AUDUBON SOCIETY, UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA SERVICE-LEARNING CLASSES, MLK DAY OF SERVICE VOLUNTEERS, RIVERS ALIVE VOLUNTEERS AND LEISURE SERVICES TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE TRAIL TEAM VOLUNTEERS

AND COUNTLESS OTHERS!



WE DEEPLY APPRECIATE ALL THE
VOLUNTEERS WHO CAME OUT TO HELP
MAKE THE GOSP GRANT A REALITY! YOU
CREATED REAL CHANGE IN YOUR
COMMUNITY. WE HOPE EVERYONE CAN
APPRECIATE NATURE IN ATHENS THANKS
TO YOUR CONSERVATION EFFORTS!

TIPS FOR A GREENER LIFESTYLE!

How can we live sustainably?

IN THIS SERIES WE EXPLORE HOW WE CAN BE SUSTAINABLE TOGETHER,
RIGHT HERE IN ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY!



THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

ENERGY SAVINGS AT HOME

WHAT IS ENERGY CONSERVATION AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY?

“Energy efficiency is the use of less energy to perform the same task or produce the same result” ([source](#)) whereas **energy conservation** is reducing energy use all together. Energy efficiency and energy conservation efforts often overlap or compliment each other; with thoughtful implementation, energy efficiency and conservation efforts can reduce both costs and greenhouse gas emissions.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY IS ONE OF THE EASIEST AND MOST COST-EFFECTIVE WAYS TO REDUCE ENERGY COSTS AND COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE

-US Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

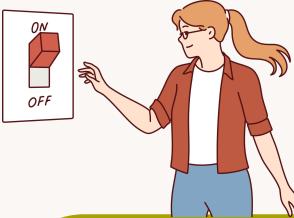
BUT HOW CAN YOU SAVE ENERGY (AND MORE IMPORTANTLY MONEY) IN YOUR HOME?

WE PULLED TOGETHER A FEW TIPS FOR YOU!

Don't worry: none of them require you spend any extra money!

Note that these tips won't work for everyone, so use those you can.

AT HOME ENERGY TIPS



USE THE WEATHER TO YOUR ADVANTAGE!

When the weather is nice, turn off the AC/heat and open your windows.

(SOURCE: [GA POWER](#))



TURN OFF YOUR LIGHTS!

Turning off just one 60-watt incandescent bulb before you head to work can save you \$15 a year.

(SOURCE: [ENERGY STAR](#))

LEAVING FOR WORK?

Turn your AC up a couple degrees when you leave for work (but don't forget the comfort of your pets).

(SOURCE: [GA POWER](#))

CLOSE YOUR BLINDS IN THE SUMMER!

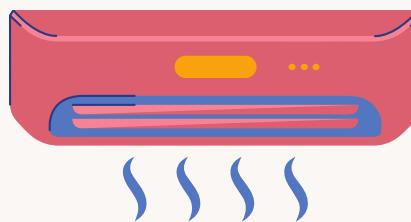
Sunlight heats up your home, so by closing your blinds or curtains you can significantly decrease your AC's load.

(SOURCE: [GA POWER](#))

TURN ON A FAN!

Experts recommend setting your thermostat to 68 in the winter and 78 degrees in the summer for optimized comfort and energy use. Fans can decrease how hot a room feels by 4 degrees Fahrenheit!

(SOURCE: [GA POWER](#))



HELP YOUR VENTS HELP YOU!

Your vents circulate temperature and humidity controlled air throughout your home. Make sure they are not blocked by furniture.

(SOURCE: [GA POWER](#))

CHANGE YOUR FILTER!

Clean or replace your air filter every 1-2 months during the summer.

(SOURCE: [US DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY](#))



Many power companies offer various reduced payment programs, rebates and incentives to qualifying residential customers. We created a survey below to help you figure out which resources you may qualify for.



CLICK

LEARN MORE 

HERE

Want to learn if you qualify to reduce your power bill?



Amping It Up

THE ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY DOWNTOWN LANDSCAPING CREWS SWITCH TO ELECTRIC

HANNAH CHAFFEE

Athens-Clarke County (ACC) has been piloting electric tools across departments. This change was spurred by concerns over noise and air pollution caused by gas-powered landscaping tools, particularly in our bustling downtown area. Central Services' Landscape Management uses more small tools than any other department in ACC, so they have been the major focus of the initiative. However, two other departments including Fire & Emergency Services and Transportation & Public Works' Streets & Drainage Division have also been piloting the replacement of various gas-powered equipment with electric alternatives.

The goal of the program is to evaluate how the county can transition to electric tools. Most tools traditionally used by the county have been gas-powered. By releasing proportionally large amounts of toxic pollutants, these devices, sometimes referred to as Small Off-Road Engines (SORE) directly contribute to global warming and not in a small way; during the summer, gasoline-powered landscape maintenance equipment (leaf blowers, trimmers, edgers, and brush cutters) account for a majority of SORE emissions (source). Unlike their construction and

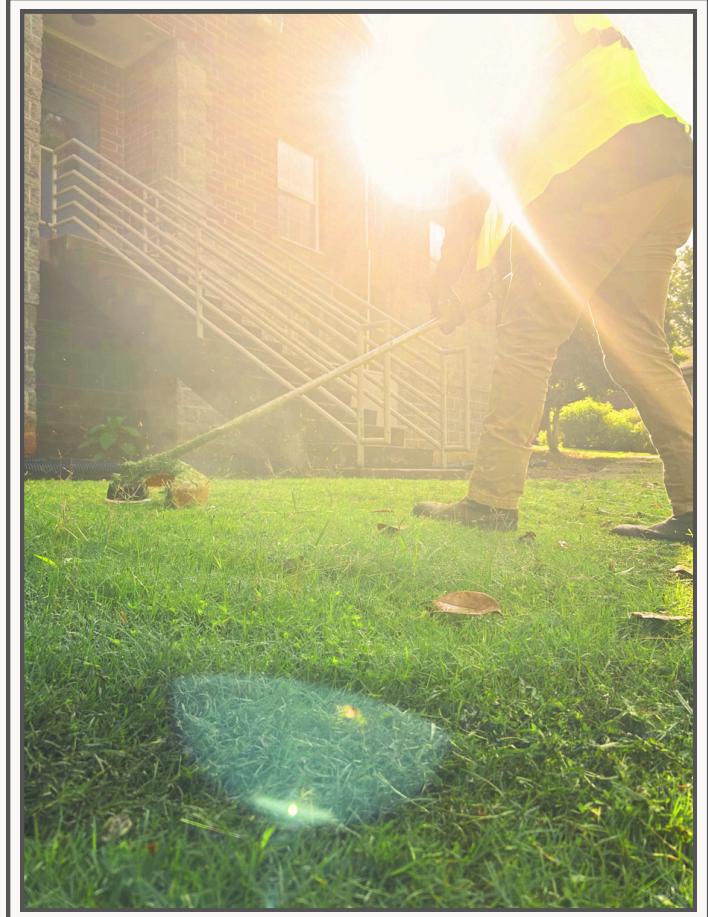


PHOTO CREDIT: HANNAH CHAFFEE
LANDSCAPING CREW LEAD 'KEY' USING AN ELECTRIC WEEDEATER

farming SORE equipment counterparts, powered lawn and garden equipment emissions are not federally regulated (source).

These emissions are made of volatile organic compounds and fine particulate matter; exposure to these can contribute to both short-term adverse health effects as well as long-term reverberations



including cardiovascular diseases and cancer ([source](#)). Those who are immunocompromised including children and older adults are particularly susceptible. Moreover, workers regularly using gas-powered equipment face these potential health risks compounded by the threat of hearing damage.

Also, small tool electrification often makes financial sense in the long run. Despite higher initial investment cost, electric equipment tends to have lower maintenance expenses and decreased fuel costs.

However, battery powered tool technology is still evolving and current products are not without their own sets of limitations. Everyone involved in the project's coordination really appreciates the landscaping staff for dealing with the growing pains of testing new, unfamiliar equipment.



PHOTO CREDIT: HANNAH CHAFFEE
LANDSCAPING CREW MEMBER EARLIE
DUNLAP USES ELECTRIC MOWER

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE ACC
CENTRAL SERVICES LANDSCAPE
MANAGEMENT DIVISION FOR THEIR
COLLABORATION!

The ACC Sustainability Office has worked to facilitate this pilot by collecting data and feedback from user surveys and focus groups to determine performance measures such as average run time and charging time of the tools.

A common reported drawback of the electric tools is their comparatively shorter run time which requires batteries packs to be switched out often. Power and weight are another factor in considering operating performance; electric backpack blowers tend to be significantly heavier than their gas-powered counterparts, leading to back strain and fatigue.

That's not to say that the tools haven't also received favorable reviews: the crew members really like the two recently purchased zero-turn electric mowers which have a ten hour run time. Crew members appreciate the mowers' responsiveness, how quiet they are and the reduction in vibration (which affects physical impact on the operator).

It's important to note that Landscape Management is seeing quality improvements with releases of new electric tool models. "We're not there yet, but we're getting closer," wrote Jeanne Connell the ACC Landscape Administrator. Landscape Management plans to continue to expand small tool electrification as it tests more models. Safety and wellbeing of the team is the number one priority which means a continual process of evaluating which new electric tools can efficiently replace gas-powered ones till the crew has a complete set of dependable and comparable alternatives.

PUTTING ENERGY INTO GREENER SPACES

Athens-Clarke County Sustainability Office

www.accgov.com/green

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