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## A year of progress on the environment

By [MARIBETH CRANDELL](#)

Whidbey News Times Contributor

Feb 05 2010, 1:18 PM

I don’t recommend this if you’re driving a car but New Year’s is a great time to look back while you’re moving forward. As I look back over 2009 I can see we’ve made significant progress.

Starting in January last year the Take it Back Network provided an opportunity to responsibly recycle computer monitors, laptops, computer towers and TV’s for free at the Island County Solid Waste Collection Site in Coupeville.

Like2Bike Whidbey offered a free repair clinic and beater bikes were given away at the Sustainability Fair. Mike Merickel won the most miles contest after cycling over 1,000 miles in the month of May.

The second annual Sustainability Fair was co-sponsored by Skagit Valley College, Sno-Isle Library and the City of Oak Harbor last May. Graham Kerr, the Galloping Gourmet, talked about eating locally. Demonstrations, presentations and kids activities were offered with marimba music to set the tone. This year’s Sustainability Fair on May 8 at Skagit Valley College, will feature Andy Wappler.

The new Junior Naturalist Program offered kids a chance to study ecology and participate in service projects

in our city parks. A new Jr. Waste Wise class was offered as part of Broad View Elementary's after school program. These collaborative efforts were co-sponsored by the WSU Extension Beach Watchers and Waste Wise programs.

The city opened its new Compost Demonstration Site at the Municipal Shops at 1400 NE 16th Ave. The site offers examples of three kinds of worm bins and five different composting systems. Get worms and composting information by calling 279-4762.

The city promoted the Backyard Wildlife Habitat campaign by getting Freund Marsh, Fort Nugent and Ruth Cohen Parks officially certified.

Oak Harbor powered City Hall with "green power." Altogether, Whidbey Island customers exceeded PSE's Green Power Challenge by adding 1,017 new green power customers. That's a 58 percent increase which means that PSE will give us \$25,000 for a new solar project.

Project Porchlight recruited over 100 volunteers who went door to door giving away 5,300 energy efficient CFL bulbs in Oak Harbor. Ace Hardware hosted one of PSE's Rock the Bulb events where 1,260 Oak Harbor households traded incandescent bulbs for over 12,000 new CFLs for free. These bulbs will save over \$21 million on energy bills, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions equal to taking over 10,595 cars off the road for a year.

The Puget Sound Starts Here campaign was perfectly timed with the new Oak Harbor Storm Water Ordinance which gives the city some authority to enforce storm water protection measures. A citywide public awareness effort was supported by regional TV, radio ads, and posters from the Puget Sound Partnership. A new street banner, placemats in local restaurants, displays at city hall and a survey included with utility bills conveyed the message. Rain barrels were given away for the top ten survey scores.

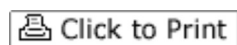
Each year, I schedule a new series of monthly Sustainable Living Seminars. This year we'll offer them at City Hall on the second Tuesday of each month at from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. You can attend a workshop or see it broadcast Island-wide on channel 10. For more information call 279-4762.

Maribeth Crandell is the environmental coordinator for the city of Oak Harbor.

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