

HIGHLIGHTS

Doing some spring cleaning? Check out [this article from The Verge](#) which has links to resources to help you responsibly dispose of all kinds of would-be waste.

Prairie State College (PSC) is **developing a Sustainability Strategy!** Developed by the Sustainability Committee, this strategy will help the college prioritize sustainability-related initiatives and track progress toward our goals. Take [this short survey](#) to let the committee know what you think of this strategy.

We're trying to understand the PSC's environmental footprint better and need your help! **Tell us how you get to and from the college** [through this survey](#) and you will be entered to win a gift card. More importantly, you'll give us valuable information that could help the college enable more sustainable commuting options.



UPCOMING



On April 12, the South Metropolitan Higher Education Consortium (SMHEC) will host the annual Student Sustainability Summit at Governors State University. This will bring students from around the Chicagoland area together to share ideas about and experiences with sustainability. It also will connect them to sustainable companies and organizations who offer volunteer or employment opportunities for students or graduates. [More information and registration is available here.](#)



On April 6, the Homewood-Flossmoor Area Green Committee is holding its annual Community Clean Up Event with various project sites including the Prairie State College Nature Preserve. [More information about the sites and sign-ups is available here.](#)



Earth Week is April 22-27. This year PSC has a different event each day relating to a variety of topics from electric cars to sustainability in Native American cultures. All PSC students, staff and faculty are welcome at all events. Check out the schedule on page 5.

SPOTLIGHT

A collaboration between the Corporate and Continuing Education Department, the Business Office, and Enrollment Services has led to the adoption of set of processes that require much less, if any, printing! In the past, forms would often be filled out on paper and then be photocopied several times to be sent to multiple parties. The new processes rely heavily on electronic forms or paper forms which are then scanned and sent to relevant parties electronically. This is helping the school reduce the cost of our paper needs, while also saving trees and all of the energy and emissions associated with turning them into paper and getting them to PSC.

Interdepartmental collaborations, like the one that made this shift possible, can require a lot of time spent up-front to understand the current process and each department's interaction with it. But in the end, an effort like this can make a real impact on our college, its efficiency, and its ecological footprint.



Printing



Digital Files



Got Ideas?

If you have ideas for helping our campus run more efficiently, produce less waste, offer sustainability-related courses or programs or generally be more sustainable, contact PSC's Sustainability Coordinator Joel Nightingale at jnightingale@prairiestate.edu or extension 3727.

FORWARD THINKING: How do I know if my electricity comes from renewables?

There are lots of different ways to produce electricity: burn coal or natural gas, dam a river, put up a wind turbine or a solar array, or even [put a generator on a hamster wheel](#). **But where does your electricity come from?**

That ends up being a complicated question, partly because electricity is essentially moving electrons, and there's no way for us to track electrons to find out if the ones that are running through your lights originated at a coal plant or a solar panel. The Energy Information Agency makes it easy to see how much fuel Illinois (or any state) burned in a given year or even [how much of the electricity produced in the state came from different sources](#), but where does your home's electricity come from? For that, you'll need to turn to your electricity bill.

If you are billed directly from Commonwealth Edison (ComEd), you can see what the energy mix for their electricity was for the previous year online. [Here is their disclosure](#) for the year ending on March 31, 2018 (36% nuclear, 32% coal, 27% natural gas, 3% wind, etc.). Also disclosed are the emissions produced in the process on a per unit basis. You can use those to calculate your electricity-related carbon footprint by filling in the following equation:

Carbon Footprint (lbs)=your electricity usage (kWh)*(947.6 lbs Carbon dioxide)/(1000 kWh)

If you aren't billed directly from ComEd, it probably means that you have chosen a different electricity provider. This may mean that you have opted to purchase electricity from renewable sources in which case you probably don't need help answering the question in this section's title. But it could also mean that you have opted into a program that was less expensive than the standard ComEd rate. The good news is that all electricity producers are required to report their annual fuel mix and emissions rates, just like the one for ComEd linked to above. Agera Energy, for example, [reported slightly lower carbon emissions rates](#) for 2018 than ComEd.

So, **what if you are not pleased with the emissions that your provider is producing or the type of fuel they use?** Well, in Illinois (for Hoosiers it's a bit different*), we electricity users are given the freedom to shop around for electricity producers. Which means if you want your electricity to come entirely from wind or solar, more power to you (pun fully intended)! There are many providers out there who are more than willing to sell you renewable energy. [This is a sheet](#) with all of the certified energy suppliers in the ComEd distribution network, many of which have [Green-e certified](#) renewable energy plans at competitive rates.

What about your natural gas provider? We (inclusive of Hoosiers this time) also have a choice in our gas suppliers. You can compare rates between different suppliers and some even offer carbon emission offsets bundled into their plans which allow you to claim fewer, or no, carbon emissions from your gas use. [Here is a list of gas suppliers](#) from which folks within Nicor's coverage area can opt to purchase. According to CMAP and Elevate Energy, the average household in the Chicagoland area uses about [1,044 therms of gas each year](#). Burning that amount of gas creates [about 1.66 tons of CO₂](#). If you round that up to 2 tons, [Green Mountain Energy](#), for example, offers two tons worth of carbon offsets for \$28. That's \$28 per year to ensure that your footprint from natural gas use is offset by [carbon-negative](#) activities.

Allowing energy users to vote with their dollars is one way to let the market decide how much value renewable energies have. And when [83 percent of Americans](#) believe that it is "important to create a world fully powered by renewable energy," the market may really push the needle towards that reality.

* In Indiana, electricity customers are not allowed to choose their electricity producer, but they can opt to [bundle renewable energy certificates \(RECs\) in their NIPSCO bills](#). NIPSCO says that to purchase 100% renewable electricity, their average customer would only see a \$3 monthly increase in their bill

CELEBRATE

2019
PSC

EARTH WEEK

Mon., April 22

Pollinators and Native Planting

Tue., April 23

BioBlitz

Wed., April 24

**Native American Sustainability and Foraging 101
Climate Change Poster Session**

Thur., April 25

**Geological Resources Poster Session
Hands on with Electric Vehicles
BioBlitz (rain reschedule date)**

Fri., April 26

Urban Agriculture Site Tour/Volunteering

Sat., April 27

Kids@College Go Green!

More information on event times and locations to be announced.

Contact Joel Nightingale at jnightingale@prairiestate.edu with any questions.

 **Prairie State College**

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