

Sustainable Earthshine

Disclaimers:

By telling you all about this stuff, we aren't trying to toot our own horns. We think it is important to talk about our efforts so that *everyone* can see that sustainable living is not hard and it IS fun!

The information we provide here is based on an evaluation rubric by the Pollution Prevention department of MSU-Bozeman extension that administers the Montana EcoStar awards, which our non-profit organization MusEco Media and Education Project was awarded in 2007.

This document attempts to capture a variety of information about the way we live our lives. Our music and our work are integral parts of our lives, so the statement below represents a blend of the various aspects of our lives.

Warning: because our commitment to sustainability is so deeply integrated into everything we do, we frequently forget to mention a few things. Therefore, the below information is probably not exhaustive.

Also, this could get really dull and repetitive fast if we wrote about every last thing we do to live as sustainably as possible. So we are just trying to cover the biggies here.

Now, with all those caveats...

Operations and Practices:

We work to conserve our consumption of energy: we almost NEVER use A/C, keep overhead lights off during the day, use CFL's, keep office machines and computers and monitors off (and use powersave mode) when not in use, we don't plug in our instruments or our recording equipment until we need them, and we drive our biodiesel tour van and our other car slowly and efficiently to conserve fuel (55 mph, max!) And of course, we ride our bikes in town unless we have to shlep gear or other large, heavy and valuable goodies around.

We don't even have to heat about 40% of our house because it is so darn well insulated – due to the addition that Scott built out of 85% SALVAGED materials! (All except the roofing materials, the sheetrock and the ceiling fans!)

But, we revel in wearing warm, cozy clothing all winter so that we can keep the heat down (More comfy that way, too!). Kris even wears fingerless gloves to practice when it is cold!

We are also very resource-conservation oriented in our dishwashing and laundry practices. To save energy, we do laundry with cold water and hang dry our clothes – even in winter (in our laundry room with a drying rack and small line). We only do full loads of laundry and dishes to save lots of energy!

And we keep our water heater turned down to the low setting. We just got a device to connect to it that will turn it off over night, too! (Wish us luck on the install!)

We conserve water:

We seem clean but we don't shower as much as you might think! Tap aerators and low-flow showerheads, mindful flushing and the use of bathwater and rainwater to water our enormous collection of plants help us conserve. We also let our grass get fairly dry and sometimes even brown in the summer (and are always trying to replace the sod with native plants and garden space.

We refuse to use hazardous products or solvents:

We clean our home, ourselves, our guitars, our kitty, all our stuff and even our vehicles with natural, nontoxic products – most of the time just water, baking soda and vinegar. All our soaps and detergents are natural, nontoxic products. Any paints or coatings we use are low/no VOC, any heavier duty cleaners are citrus based. We have been cleaning this way for over 20 years.

We actively avoid and reduce waste:

We consistently (somewhat obsessively) avoid and prevent waste by fixing things, re-using things, investing in quality items instead of chincy stuff; by avoiding packaging wherever possible, reusing or recycling packaging we can't; and we avoid purchases unless absolutely necessary. We are careful about wasting food and other plant matter, too. We compost all our food waste (yes, all - we are vegans!), plus our houseplant, yard and garden waste. We also lick our plates and eat all our leftovers. (And if you aren't careful, we might eat your leftovers too – if you're a vegan.)

Purchasing and Procurement:

We consider the sources and methods of production of the materials/items we buy when we make purchases:

We buy products with the highest available postconsumer recycled content (paper and paper products, plastic items, fabrics). We choose products based on the behavior and values of the manufacturers, and the conditions under which items were produced. We choose local products and local materials whenever possible. And we purchase organic foods, seeds and plants, and organic/fair trade food, tea and coffee. Exclusively, unless the option is not available, which is rare these days.

When we cannot find non-edible goods with excellent pedigrees of the varieties mentioned above, we make every effort to buy used or reconditioned – or just make it ourselves.

We take steps to reduce packaging waste from materials we purchase:

As mentioned above, we are avid reusers, recyclers and reducers. This extends to every facet of our personal and professional lives. We not only purchase everything we can in unpackaged bulk from our local cooperative grocery, but we even reuse the bags and containers we put them in! This approach is typical of everything we do, and it would probably get really tedious if I tried to list every example here. We also often make pests of ourselves by pointing out excesses in packaging to retailers we patronize. And of COURSE, we always take our own canvass bags on shopping excursions. We ALWAYS remember them *or* we go without a bag!

Earthshine's CD's and any other recorded media that we sell or distribute are packaged in post-consumer content (PCC) recycled fiber cases or PCC plastic cases, and information inserts are printed on PCC paper (always as near to 100% as we can find, irrespective of cost.)

We work to reduce other forms of purchasing and procurement related waste:

As mentioned earlier, we are vigilant about avoiding spoilage of perishables at all times. We are mindful of expiration dates. We avoid buying stuff that is overly packaged or is in packaging that is non-recyclable or non-reusable. We avoid buying stuff we don't need.

Reduction, ReUse and ReCycling

We actively reuse materials and products:

We reuse paper (print on the back, make notepads, etc), we reuse envelopes of all sizes, we reuse folders and files, we reuse CD and DVD cases, boxes, packing materials of all kinds, we repair things instead of discard them, we refill pens, pencils, printer cartridges and toners. We are always having appliances, lights, stereo and video equipment and other mechanical things FIXED instead of discarding them.

We are always mending clothes, shoes and other apparel-related items. We even make handwarmer rice bags out of fabric cut off of jeans for shorts, and flax/lavender eyebags from cutoff sleeves or removed pockets! We are totally into this stuff!

We buy ALL our clothing, shoes, bags, accessories (and even certain types of undergarments) second hand. We buy nearly everything for all our recreational needs used as well – backpacks, sleeping bags, skis, snowshoes, etc... If you can buy it used, we buy it used.

We also make a lot of things, like almost all of Kris's jewelry (much of it made by my artist dad!) some of our apparel, lots of this and that around the house, etc. If we need something we try to jerry rig before we even think about buying (or borrow from someone!)

We are avid recyclers:

We not only recycle all our paper, plastic, glass, metals, boxboard, cardboard, aseptic, packaging, batteries, toner cartridges, filters, and recycle all our no-longer-useful electronics of all kinds (from our home and collected from others, too) but we also recycle all our recordable media: CD's, DVD's, video and audio tapes, DAT tapes, and digital data disks of various types! We even recycle the challenging stuff like off-number plastics, clothing, footwear, metal odds and ends, pallets, and various and sundry bits and pieces.

We reuse all kinds of stuff very creatively, too. Like pottery shards for soil drainage in houseplants, for example. Way too much of that kind of thing to list here.

We constantly reduce our demand for products:

We make a concerted effort only to purchase or acquire things when they are TRULY needed. This works great for us since we have absolutely no money to speak of (yes, we are at about half the federal poverty level for two adults!) We don't update our equipment or buy new versions of things until we absolutely must. We wait a few days to make a purchase just to make sure there is a real need, not just a desire. We factor in the impact of the decision to buy when we evaluate a need.

Transportation:

We avoid the use of fossil fuels:

Staff bike to work, to church, to social events and to meetings almost all of the time. Exceptions include out of town obligations, video shoots and GIGS that require us to haul equipment, or if there is just way too much ice on the road, or if we have to get dressed up. When vehicles are used, we work very hard to conserve our use of fuel (slow driving, proper maintenance, etc.) We avoid flying and we take the train or greyhound when we need to travel great distances. One of our personal vehicles runs biodiesel and is used for out-of-town trips (and camping!).

We are also amazing errand planners, meaning that we ALWAYS are thinking of combining errands and making the most efficient route to minimize the amount of time the car is in use. And we avoid using the A/C (only one car has it.)

We also pester our friends and relatives about their vehicular practices.... making us enormously popular of course.

Food Choices:

Kris is a VEGAN and Scott is a mostly VEGAN VEGETARIAN! This means that our food choices CONSTANTLY conserve water, cropland, reduce pollution and toxins and spare other living things from being abused, tortured and maimed.

Not just that, but we also buy all organic foods (except for the very few items that aren't available organic) and fair trade, too!

We buy primarily unprocessed foods. We cook and bake and generally make stuff from scratch almost all the time. We even make all our own backpacking/hiking foods and breakfast/protein/trail bars. And our own nut butters, too! Crazy!

Housing

We co-house with two other family members with whom we bought our home. We have separate living and eating quarters, but sharing the home reduces the use of electricity, water and other resources, allows us to share many items like appliances or tools, reduces our general housing footprint and is a wonderful experience of community.