

DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT:

Environment / LA



BY YVONNE LIU
Office of Finance

Toward a Green L.A.

Environmental Affairs Dept. continues striving to make L.A. a world leader in environmental responsibility.

By Yvonne Liu, Office of Finance

The City's Environmental Affairs Department seeks to protect and enhance the environmental quality of life for residents, communities, workers and visitors in the City by: recommending environmental policies and programs to the Mayor and City Council; implementing and coordinating Citywide environmental initiatives; securing and assisting others in securing resources for the implementation of environmental initiatives; facilitating public education; providing assistance to businesses; responding to requests for information on environmental issues; and ensuring that solid waste facilities in the City are operated in a manner that protects the public health, safety and environment.

Four of the department's main focuses are green enforcement, managing and slowing climate change, sustainability and green building.

The Environmental Affairs Dept.'s new Assistant General Manager, Beth Jines, is helping to forge a new future for the City.

Beth Jines came to the City in August 2007 from California state programs, having worn hats as the Chief Deputy Director of the State Water Board and the Assistant Secretary for Water and Waste Management at Cal/EPA.

"[The biggest difference between] a state position and a City position is that the environmental issues are much more personal to the Councilmembers, to the employees and to the residents of the City," she explained. "At the state, the issues are, for the most part,



Detrich Allen,
General Manager



Beth Jines, Environment / LA Asst. General Manager (left), talks to *Alive!* correspondent Yvonne Liu.

more regional, less personal and take longer to have an effect. At the City, the effects of government action are more immediate and more personal," she said.

She is frequently impressed by the quality of the work her employees produce and the level of expertise that they possess.

"Environment/LA employees have shown me that incredibly talented and well-educated people work here in the City," she said.

In October 2007, the City Council convened for two days to discuss the future of the environment for Los Angeles. Two major themes emerged from those hearings – the need for City-wide strategies to address climate change, and sustainability. The department of 35 employees went through a thorough reorganization and realignment to meet these new research objectives that focus on climate change, air quality, sustainability, adaptability and vulnerability. As part of the reorganization, EAD has changed to Environment/LA and has developed a new portal to environmental information for the City: EnvironmentLA.org

Mainly, these topics are interconnected in the sense that poor air quality and a climate change of increasing temperature will cause increased draughts and wildfires, as well as storms, to become more severe. Adaptability means how humans and wildlife will adjust to these changes, including rising sea levels, hotter temperatures and the use of more energy to cool or warm our habitat. More severe fires, doubled number of heat waves per year and more intensive storms mean public health is exposed to new threats.

"We want to make the City of Los Angeles the leader in environmental change," Beth said.

So far, 15 departments have completed Climate Change Action Plans, and all departments have completed Sustainability Plans. These departments, including large ones such as the DWP and Rec and Parks, have pledged to become more sustainable in their operations. Specifically, they will curb their carbon emissions and increase more green space in future planning.

Saving the environment sounds like a daunting task. Can we really stop global warming dead in its tracks?

"If we act together as a world, we can effect the severity of global warming," Beth said.

Environment / LA

Established:
June 28, 1989, by ordinance

Number of employees: 45

Leadership:
Detrich Allen, General Manager
Beth Jines, Assistant General Manager
Wayne Tsuda, Enforcement
David Thompson, Enforcement
Gretchen Hardison, Climate Change Initiative
Craig Tranby, Climate Change Initiative, Green Building
Karin Christie, Sustainability Initiative
Melinda Bartlett, Sustainability Initiative

Mission statement:
"Leading Los Angeles to protect and improve our environment."

Purpose:
To manage the City's Local Enforcement Agency that is responsible

Profile

for regulatory permitting, inspecting, and enforcement of all landfills and solid waste facilities in Los Angeles City; to implement the Los Angeles Brownfields Initiative to redevelop underutilized and contaminated properties for economic, residential and green space uses; to assist City departments and businesses in developing cost-effective strategies for regulatory compliance with federal, state, and local air and water quality rules and regulations; and to administer the City's Mobile source Air Pollution Trust Fund to promote projects that reduce mobile source air pollution emissions.

Headquarters:
200 N. Spring St.,
Suites 1905 and 2005

Website: www.environmentla.org

Phone: (213) 978-0888

Los Angeles as Environmental Leader

Los Angeles pioneered many of the most innovative environmental improvements in the country. Southern California's notoriously poor air quality has forced local governments to invest in clean air technology.

As proprietors of the largest port complex and municipal utility in the country, Los Angeles has also been able to institutionalize environmental improvements beyond City boundaries. Finally, there is an "environmental consensus" among civic leaders, community organizations, non-profits, and the business community. Working as allies, this broad coalition has helped advance sustainability initiatives.

• **Fuel-cell vehicles:** Los Angeles is the first city in the country (second in the world) to incorporate hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles into its municipal fleet.

• **Ultra-low sulfur diesel (ULSD):** Los Angeles was the first large city to demonstrate ULSD (15 parts per million sulfur or less) in heavy-duty applications. General Services (GSD) converted to ULSD for all diesel engines, including those in vehicles and stationary generators, three years before required by regulations.

• **Solid waste diversion/recycling rates:** Los Angeles established the nation's first curbside combined ("blue-bin") recycling program and has surpassed the state-mandated municipal solid waste diversion rate of 50 percent, currently boasting a 62 percent rate.

• **Alternative-fuel refuse trucks:** The City owns and operates the largest municipal alternative-fuel refuse truck fleet in the United States, with 262 vehicles

operating on natural gas.

• **Green city buildings:** All new City buildings of more than 7,500 square feet must be built to standards under the LEED system. The City has constructed, or is in the process of constructing, 47 LEED-certified buildings. Including completion of the first LEED Platinum public building in the country, the Lakeview Terrace Public Library, Los Angeles has invested more than \$890 million in green building construction.

• **Solar roofs:** The DWP has provided more than \$50 million in customer incentives to install photovoltaics to generate electricity, representing about 10 megawatts of solar capacity.

• **Traffic signal controls:** Los Angeles boasts an extensive ATISAC system at 3,226 intersections, which provides real-time ability to monitor and modify signal timing according to current traffic conditions. Studies show the system reduces vehicle idling time, and associated pollutants, by 10 percent.

• **Green power purchases:** LAWA purchases 15 percent of its electrical power through the DWP's Green Power program, helping to fund the purchase and installation of renewable energy for the City.

• **Biogas to energy:** The Hyperion Treatment Plant, the largest wastewater plant on the West Coast, sends methane gas produced during the digester process to the City's Scattergood Generating Station, producing 80 percent of its electricity.

• **Building energy retrofits:** Los Angeles has completed energy efficiency retrofits on 63 City-owned buildings, generating savings of nearly 731,000 kilowatt-hours to date, or the equivalent reduction of 502 tons of CO₂.



Environmental Affairs, front row, from left: Heloise Froelich, Felicia Truong, Nellie Abrot, Tess Gan, Keylaundra McClelland, Belkis del Valle, Elissa Jackson, Kim Yapp and Carolyn Lin. Second row: Paul Teensma, Melinda Bartlett, Karla Cortez, Wayne Tsuda, Craig Tranby, Andy Kao, David Thompson and Martin Rosen. Behind Paul and Melinda is Billy Henderson. Behind Karla and Wayne is Jose Gutierrez.