



SUSTAINABILITY

WORKBOOK

PRODUCED BY SUSTAINABLE STILLWATER MN

INTRODUCTION

Helping the environment by doing things differently can seem overwhelming. We suggest that if you're just starting out, pick one new idea per week. Get good at it! So good that you'll share it with others. Pretty soon your friends will share it with their friends, and there you have it — a big impact on the environment.

Read this Sustainable Stillwater MN handbook cover to cover, or open it up to a random page. You don't need to do everything in this handbook to change the world, but if everyone does something, all those little things add up. This book is intended to provide information and resources for citizens to address issues our planet is facing due to climate change.

If you feel overwhelmed with all the suggestions in this book, just know that the biggest two actions you can do are **vote with your wallet** and **vote at the ballot box**. Show your support to others that are working on changing social systems to have a positive impact on the natural environment. **You are more powerful than you think!**

Sustainable Stillwater MN volunteers don't just talk about reducing carbon, we are doing something about it. You can too! Join us by sending your tips, comments, concerns, and initiative ideas to hello@sustainablestillwatermn.org. OR join one of our many workgroups at www.SustainableStillwaterMN.org.

With climate change upon us, time is short to make a difference. Thank you for being a good steward of the earth!

GET STARTED TODAY!

SUSTAINABLE



STILLWATER
MINNESOTA



I Pledge...

This workbook is designed to help individuals recognize the steps each of us can take to be green, resilient, and sustainable. We hope you will be inspired to act and to encourage others to protect our earth, our home. While the challenge can seem overwhelming, if we each take steps, we will make a difference. **Read the statement below and pledge by signing your name on the line.**

"I commit myself to be a conscious consumer. My commitment includes undoing the damage of the past and finding new ways to live more 'lightly'. Future generations depend on the decisions that I and all of us make every day. I will not be discouraged by climate change, pollution, our limitations, or the enormity of the task. Instead, I will look for ways that I individually and we together can make a difference to take on the challenges before us."

Your Name Here _____

Challenges We Face

- Energy Conservation (business and residential)
- Water Conservation (pollution, invasive species, drainage)
- Transportation Pollution (fuel vehicles and traffic)
- Active Transportation Challenges (public, pedestrian, and bicycling)
- Excessive/Harmful Consumerism (over buying, single-use plastics)
- Waste Management (recycling, composting, litter)
- Land/Water Management (invasive species, habitat destruction)
- Political Divide and Apathy on Environmental Issues



CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to track your actions. “X” those you are doing and circle those to work on next. Once a month, review this list by circling new ones to add. Continue to seek ways to be sustainable in your life and community.

HEATING/COOLING

- ___ Schedule a home energy audit with your energy company.
- ___ Sign up for wind/solar-generated electricity with your energy company.
- ___ Once your electricity comes from renewables, replace gas appliances with electric.
- ___ Install energy-efficient kitchen appliances.
- ___ Install energy-efficient laundry appliances.
- ___ Install energy-efficient heating and cooling appliances.
- ___ Install a programmable/smart thermostat.
- ___ In winter, set the thermostat below 70-degrees during the day, lower at night.
- ___ Use less heat during winter. Wear warmer clothes or use more blankets.
- ___ In summer set the air conditioning thermostat to the upper 70s.
- ___ Use less A/C during summer; open more windows and wear lighter clothing instead.
- ___ Position fans to circulate air.
- ___ Run bathroom and kitchen ventilation fans only when necessary.
- ___ Use ceiling fans so air conditioning temperatures can be set higher to maintain comfort.
- ___ Open windows when the outside temperature is lower than your air conditioner setting.
- ___ Set the water heater at 120 degrees.
- ___ Clean/replace the filters in heating/cooling systems to operate more efficiently.
- ___ Close shades/drapes on the sunny side of the house during warmer months, reverse in winter.

Your additional ideas:

HOME ENERGY CONSERVATION

- ___ Change incandescent light bulbs to LEDs indoors and outdoors.
- ___ Turn lights off when not in use.
- ___ Use natural light when possible.
- ___ Control outdoor lights with photocell or timers so they only operate at night. Control indoor lights and appliances with smart plugs to reduce energy flow.
- ___ Draw energy from renewables by installing windmills or solar panels on your property or sign up for a wind or solar energy program with your utility.
- ___ Manually or automatically put computers to sleep when not in use.
- ___ Plug in rechargeable appliances like mobile phones and toothbrushes only as long as needed to recharge.
- ___ Limit your technology upgrades. By reducing the number of devices (such as TVs, computers, and phones) that you own or upgrade each year, you can reduce your demand for fossil fuels in the production, use, and disposal of those products.
- ___ When shopping for new appliances for your home, compare the energy consumption of each device and include the cost of energy in the final decision.
- ___ Turn TV/electronic devices off when not in use. *Suggestions: go outside, read a book, write a letter, chat with a friend, start a project, exercise, play a sport, meditate, garden, or do something artistic!*
- ___ Dry clothes outside or on racks inside to avoid running the dryer.

Your additional ideas:

LEARN MORE ABOUT SAVING ENERGY

<https://sustainablestillwatermn.org/homeenergy>

<https://mn.gov/commerce-stat/pdfs/home-energy-guide.pdf>

<https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/your-home/save-energy-money>

<https://conservationminnesota.org/energy-efficiency>

<https://rewiringamerica.org>

<https://energy.gov/energysaver/energy-saver>

<http://www.energy-grants.net/minnesota-energy-grants-rebates-loans-incentives>

<https://vox.com/energy-and-environment>



WATER

- ___ Install faucet aerators and water-saving shower heads.
- ___ Limit your shower length to no more than 3-5 minutes daily or shower every other day.
- ___ Fix leaking faucets – just one drip per second wastes more than 3,000 gallons per year.
- ___ Install low flow/low flush toilets.
- ___ Install an electric tankless water heater.
- ___ Run the dishwasher and clothes washers only when full and at cooler temperatures.
- ___ Operate dishwasher and washing machine during non-peak hours (not 4-6 pm).
- ___ Turn the faucet off when you brush your teeth.
- ___ Turn the faucet off when soaping dishes before rinsing.
- ___ Water the lawn less (or not at all).
- ___ Shrink lawn or have "No Mow" areas.
- ___ Plant lawn grasses that are drought-tolerant and slow-growing; plant native plants/flowers.
- ___ Use fertilizers sparingly especially if living near a stream or body of water.
- ___ Avoid herbicides and pesticides that pollute our ponds, lakes, and streams. All our water flows into the St. Croix River and eventually into the Mississippi River and then the Gulf of Mexico.
- ___ Place a rain barrel under your home's gutters to collect rainwater.
- ___ Use water from the rain barrel or from the waste tray of a dehumidifier to help water flower beds.
- ___ Adopt a storm drain near your home and clean debris from it regularly to ensure water flows.

Your additional ideas:

LEARN MORE ABOUT SAVING WATER

<https://epa.gov/watersense/start-saving>

<https://burnsvillemn.gov/684/Water-Conservation-for-Consumers>

<https://conservationminnesota.org/water>

https://dnr.state.mn.us/waters/watermgmt_section/appropriations/conservation.html

FOOD WASTE, EATING HABITS, FOOD PURCHASES, AND PREPARATION

- ___ The EPA says 21% of all waste in landfills is food waste. When filling your plate, don't take more than you can eat. A good way to do that is to use a smaller plate and fill only one plate with food.
- ___ When grocery shopping, make a list of the items you need before you leave. This will reduce the purchase of unnecessary items you might have at home.
- ___ Avoid shopping on an empty stomach. It can lead to excess purchases.
- ___ Limit the amount of food that goes bad by eating what you have first before buying more.
- ___ Plan your meals ahead of time based on what you have in the refrigerator and pantry.
- ___ Eat fresh vegetables on the verge of expiring before using frozen food or going out to eat.
- ___ Purchase bulk foods.
- ___ Look for minimal packaging to reduce waste.
- ___ Reuse plastic bags before cleaning and recycling them.
- ___ Purchase local produce, eggs, and meat from farmers' markets or CSA.
- ___ Learn to cook and bake your own foods to reduce excessive packaging.
- ___ Learn to garden and grow your own vegetables.
- ___ Can, freeze, and dehydrate food from the garden or local farmers' markets.
- ___ Eat less meat and more vegetables, legumes, whole grains, natural fats, and fruit.
- ___ Sign up for a composting program or compost at home.

Your additional ideas:



COOKING

- ___ Open the oven door only when necessary.
- ___ Use small pans or the right size of pan for the amount of food you are cooking because they take less energy to heat.
- ___ Cover pots when heating liquids. This triples energy efficiency.
- ___ When possible, use the microwave and stovetop rather than the oven – this saves energy and time.
- ___ Convection ovens use up to 40% less energy than conventional ovens.
- ___ Embrace leftovers. Cook in bulk and eat/freeze leftovers.
- ___ Keep refrigerated leftovers in sealed containers.
- ___ Only use as much water as needed – boiling extra water wastes time and energy.
- ___ Never put hot food directly into the fridge or freezer, allow it to cool first.
- ___ Turn off the pan a little early and let the residual heat finish cooking the dish.
- ___ Invest in a pressure cooker, air fryer, or slow cooker. These appliances use less energy to cook food and can be unplugged when not in use.

Your additional ideas:



TRAVEL

- ___ Limit air travel. Purchase carbon offsets when flying at <https://clear.eco>
- ___ Prioritize emissions reduction when purchasing a vehicle
 - choose an electric or hybrid vehicle.
- ___ Use and support public transportation whenever possible.
- ___ Carpool more to work, school, and/or events.
- ___ Drive within the speed limit posted on roads.
- ___ Plan trips to minimize the miles. (Change your Google map settings to Eco-Friendly Routing at <https://tinyurl.com/eco-friendly-routing>)
- ___ Walk or bike more to work, school, and/or for fun.
- ___ Support bicycle-friendly and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.
- ___ Support public EV charging station infrastructure.

Your additional ideas:

GET INVOLVED WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

- ___ Explore sustainable opportunities available via city/ county/ state/ federal government levels.
- ___ Keep informed on legislation/ government/ business actions.
- ___ Participate in advocacy efforts.
- ___ Contact local elected officials to encourage sustainable actions.
- ___ Arrange/attend educational programs about climate change.
- ___ Talk with family and friends about the climate crisis.
- ___ Support and promote clean energy infrastructure.
- ___ Plant trees, prairies, and native plants in public spaces.
- ___ Volunteer your time and energy to environmental organizations.
- ___ Volunteer with Sustainable Stillwater MN.
- ___ Share this workbook with others!

Your additional ideas:

IMPORTANCE OF ADVOCATING

Protecting the environment doesn't need to be partisan. In order to heal the damage done to the earth and sustain life for future generations, humanity has no choice but to come together and care for the planet. To restore the environment and our climate, we don't need 100% agreement, but we do need critical mass.

You are more powerful than you think!

Emailing or calling your elected officials about your stance on issues can make a difference. It is said that lawmakers *only need ten personal emails or phone calls* to persuade them that an issue is important.* Do your part today and contact your officials! Tell them how important it is to establish a Climate Action Plan and do everything they can to fight climate change.

Find Elected Officials' Contact Information:

City of Stillwater

www.ci.stillwater.mn.us/city-government/mayor-council

Minnesota Legislature

www.conservationminnesota.org/mn-legislator-votes/find-legislators

*Advocating information is from the book Advocating for the Environment by Susan B. Inches, 2021



REDUCE, REUSE, ROT, RECYCLE, TOSS

Follow these steps to better manage your trash:

1)Own/purchase less. **2)**Reuse and/or fix. **3)**Compost organic material. **4)**Recycle. **5)**Throw what's left in the trash to be burned in incinerators or buried in a landfill. By doing the first four options first, the last option should be limited. **Ta-da!**



REDUCE

REUSE

ROT

RECYCLE

TOSS

**"Live below your
means but within
your needs."
~ Suze Ormen**

Reducing waste starts with refusing items you do not need. This takes restraint and willpower to say **"NO"** to impulses. Just because you can afford an item does not mean you should buy it. Every item has a history and impacts the world no matter the size. **Ask yourself:** Is it needed? Is it necessary? Will it bring me joy?

Pros of owning/needing less: save money, save time, save energy, save water, less headache, less responsibility, less cleaning, less organizing, and smaller impact on the world.

REDUCE

- ___ Before buying, ask "Do I need it?"
- ___ Purchase less plastic (including bags and products wrapped in plastic).
- ___ Purchase less decor, kitchen gadgets, electronic devices, clothes, personal accessories, shoes, makeup, and other material items.
- ___ Purchase fewer video games, movies, music, and books. Stream online or borrow from a library.
- ___ Have fewer hobbies and purchase fewer items for hobbies.
- ___ Own/ rent/ lease a smaller home. Don't own a second home.
- ___ Purchase fewer souvenirs during trips. Consider taking photos or videos instead. (Memories are not kept in things, they are kept in our hearts.)
- ___ In lieu of giving gifts, consider gifting recipients by donating to an environmental organization or a charity in their honor. Some other gift ideas:
 - Memberships or entertainment tickets
 - Consumables (bar soaps, food, drinks, etc.)
 - Seeds, flower bouquets, potted plants
- ___ Choose paperless billing for financial transactions.
- ___ Limit printing of documents – store documents in the cloud or on a hard drive. When printing is necessary, print on both sides.

Your additional ideas:

REUSE/FIX

- ___ Invest in durable/quality products that will last many years. Go easy on items you own to increase their longevity.
- ___ Bring your own bags and containers when shopping.
 - mesh produce bags
 - cloth bags
 - glass mason jars
 - tin boxes
 - cardboard boxes
- ___ Invest in a single reusable travel mug and fill it with your favorite beverage rather than use a disposable cup.
- ___ Invest in a single reusable water bottle that is made from either glass, metal, or durable plastic.
- ___ Invest in durable stainless steel straws, safety razors, tea strainers, lunch containers, kitchen utensils, etc.
- ___ Wash and reuse plastic storage bags or containers.
- ___ Purchase second-hand items.
- ___ Reuse the boxes shipped to your home.
- ___ Fix broken items and try to give them away or sell them before throwing the item away.
- ___ Sew up rips or holes on clothing and continue wearing them.
- ___ Refinish old decor items instead of throwing them away.
- ___ Regift or donate items that you no longer need or use.

Your additional ideas:



RECYCLING

- ___ Adopt city/county/state recycling guidelines into your lifestyle.
- ___ Buy recycled products.
- ___ Avoid single-use plastic items, i.e., straws, cups, and utensils.
- ___ Recycle plastic bags (at Target, Cub, or Washington County Environmental Center).
- ___ Clean all items before recycling. Waste haulers might not take them otherwise.
- ___ Don't put batteries, hoses, string lights, or fabrics in recycling bins – take to Washington County Environmental Center in Woodbury.
- ___ Recycle cell phones and electronics at Best Buy.
- ___ Donate clothes, household items, and other items to Goodwill or Valley Outreach if in good condition.

Your additional ideas:



SOURCES FOR NATURAL/SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS:

Use the **Green Business Directory** at GreenStillwater.org to shop local, green businesses. The directory, a project of Sustainable Stillwater MN, hosts many businesses throughout the St. Croix Valley that are doing great work at being green, resilient, and sustainable.



GOOD NON-LOCAL COMPANIES

Grove Collaborative - wellness and home goods - Grove.co

Earth Hero - certified B Corp, carbon offset shipping - EarthHero.com

Thrive Market - shop sustainable grocery brands - ThriveMarket.com

Done Good - clothing, home decor - DoneGood.com

Brandless - home goods - Brandless.com

HOW CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECTS OUR HEALTH

Climate change is caused by increased levels of carbon in the earth's atmosphere. From there, the consequences cascade outward, affecting the health of people in Minnesota and across the globe.

Here are examples:

- Extreme heat causes heat stroke and cardiovascular issues.
- Polluted air intensifies asthma and heart disease.
- More severe weather causes injuries, increased anxiety, and mental health concerns.
- Mosquitoes, ticks, and other insects are expanding their geographic range due to longer seasons.
- Extended pollen seasons are intensifying allergies. In Minnesota, the pollen season is about 21 days longer than it was in the 1980s.
- Water and food scarcity lead to malnutrition.
- Increased exposure to serious diseases and critical health issues.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Minnesota Department of Health



WHERE TO SEND UNWANTED ITEMS

Recycling was always meant to be easy and convenient. It is. But quite often materials cross your path without an obvious solution.

Washington County Environmental Center

Provides residents with free and convenient disposal of household hazardous waste, electronics, and recyclables. They also have a free product room and food drop-off. Proof of residency, such as a driver's license, is required. Co.Washington.mn.us/604/Environmental-Center

TerraCycle

A social enterprise "Eliminating the Idea of Waste." They have found that nearly everything we touch can be recycled. TerraCycle collects non-recyclable items through national, first-of-their-kind recycling platforms. TerraCycle.com/en-US/

Johnson Junk Removal

Locally owned, sustainable junk removal company. They offer full-service junk removal for Stillwater and surrounding areas. JohnsonJunkRemoval.com

Washington County Disposal Directory

Quickly find local disposal and recycling options for items you no longer want or need by searching Washington County Disposal Directory. RecycleSearch.com/wcdd

ABOUT SUSTAINABLE STILLWATER MN

OUR VISION: We seek to preserve our environment and champion a healthy and resilient community.

OUR MISSION: Create and support local initiatives that promote sustainability in the Stillwater, Minnesota area.



The idea for Sustainable Stillwater MN kicked off in 2013 with a community-wide visioning session led by high school students with a passion for a greener community. In 2019, SSMN officially became a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

Projects include:

- A climate action plan for the City of Stillwater.
- The Green Business Directory and Awards at GreenStillwater.org, a shopping guide for eco-conscious consumers.
- Habitat restoration, protection of local waterways and wild places, rain gardens, and advocating for open spaces.
- Creating a bicycle-friendly city by sponsoring education, events, and civic action.
- Civic engagement — we monitor and work with our city officials as they go about their day-to-day business, making sure their efforts are sustainable.

We invite you to join us! www.SustainableStillwaterMN.org



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<https://pca.state.mn.us/living-green>

<https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence>

<https://ipcc.ch>

<https://climate.state.mn.us>

https://dnr.state.mn.us/climate/climate_change_info/climate-trends.html

<https://regionalindicatorsmn.com/city-summary>

<https://climatecommunication.org>

<https://skepticalscience.com>

<https://globalchange.gov>

<https://beforetheflood.com/explore/the-solutions>

<https://carbotax.org>

<https://nrdc.org/demand-climate-action>

<https://mprnews.org/story/2015/02/02/climate-change-primer>

<https://climatechangeresources.org>

<https://vox.com/climate-change>

A REGENERATIVE WORLDVIEW

"Human and environmental health are intricately connected. You can't do anything to one of them without having an impact on all of them and within them up and down the system. It is seeing the world as a whole and not fragments. It is holistic and not reductionist. It is about recognizing that we are connected to nature and that we have to co-evolve with it... I just really feel like we're on the wrong track with the way we're doing things and if we keep going the way we're going the planet is in big trouble. The problem is our lifestyles, and I'm really focused on how we can modify our lifestyles to make sure that we live in harmony with everything else on the planet." ~ **Richard Piacentini, President and CEO of Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens**

This booklet was designed by Kelsey Depew Design (www.kdepewdesign.com/sustainability-policy) and uses 100% solar energy for electricity. Kelsey also uses Canva (www.canva.com/sustainability/which-is-carbon-neutral) and is committed to being 100% climate-positive. This booklet was printed using uncoated 100% recycled white paper from Stillwater Printing Company, located in Stillwater, Minnesota (www.greenstillwater.org/minnesota/stillwater/publishing-printing/stillwater-printing-company).



A decorative green vine with leaves and bubbles. The vine starts at the bottom left and curves upwards and to the right, ending at the top right. It has several leaves and small circles (bubbles) along its length.

LIVE GREEN

Caring about the
environment is beautiful.