




# EVENT SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

<b>EVENT SCOPE</b>	<p><b>Name:</b> Society for Ecological Restoration’s 5<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Ecological Restoration</p> <p><b>Date:</b> October 6-11, 2013</p> <p><b>Host City:</b> Madison, WI</p> <p><b>Venue:</b> Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center</p> <p><b>Attendance:</b> 1,231</p> <p><b>Room nights:</b> 1,769</p> <p><b>Elements:</b> 4 pre-conference training sessions, 2 “Make a Difference Day” activities, 14 Field Trips, 5 plenary sessions, 4 partner outings, 140 breakout sessions, 2 evening receptions, 1 awards gala</p> 
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<b>EVENT PURPOSE</b>	<p>The SER 2013 World Conference on Ecological Restoration: <i>Reflections on the Past, Directions for the Future</i> brought together more than 1,200 individuals and organizations from around the world interested in the science and practice of ecological restoration as it relates to natural resource management, climate change, biodiversity conservation, traditional ecological knowledge, environmental policy and sustainable livelihoods.</p> <p>Delegates came from 54 countries and included practitioners, researchers, planners/managers, students and volunteers with backgrounds in earth sciences, landscape architecture, ecological engineering, natural resource management, public policy, economics, indigenous cultures and community-based activities.</p>
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<b>EVENT SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY AND CHALLENGES</b>	<p>As an organization with a sustainability mandate, it was a natural step for SER to apply sustainability strategies to their annual conference. Although they did not have a formal Sustainability Policy for the Conference, the leadership stressed that the conference be as sustainable as possible and hired MeetGreen® to help with this endeavor.</p>
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**EVENT  
SUSTAINABILITY  
STRATEGY AND  
CHALLENGES**

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MeetGreen® identified several items that they recommended the group strive for including:

- Cutting back on printed material
- Registration materials made from sustainable materials
- Food and Beverage that was as sustainable as possible
- Trying to secure compostable service ware; composting/recycling box lunch materials
- Eliminating bottled water wherever possible
- Making signage be as sustainable as possible
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Some challenges the group faced were a very limited budget that did not always allow for being able to pay extra for any 'green' items. The group used several different facilities/caterers/transportation companies so it was time consuming to try to put sustainability initiatives in place with all of them. The location being in a mid-west city where no city wide composting programs were available made composting a challenge.

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**SUSTAINABILITY  
STARTS WITH  
THE PLACE**



**Madison, WI**, home to John Muir, Aldo Leopold and Gaylord Nelson, is centrally located within the continental United States. Many of the hotels and convention centers participate in "Travel Green Wisconsin" which was initiated in 2006 by the Wisconsin Department of Tourism to promote smart, environmentally friendly business practices. The program is the first state-sponsored sustainable tourism certification program in the nation and has become a model for sustainable travel efforts across the nation.

To earn certification, applicants must first supply the Department of Tourism with a Baseline Environmental Performance Assessment. The baseline collects information about the amount of energy, fuel, water, and solid waste that the business consumed during the last calendar year. Next, the applicants must commit to enough sustainable business practices found within the TGW checklist to accumulate 30 or more points.

SER attempted to secure the maximum number of hotel rooms within walking distance. Public transportation was promoted for those hotels that were not within walking distance.

Some of the hotel's sustainability efforts include:

- 55% of the hotels had linen reuse programs
- 100% of the hotels had a recycling program
- 55% of the hotels used energy efficient lighting in guest rooms/lobby/halls

**Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center** which hosted the majority of the conference achieved a silver level certification under the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Existing Buildings (LEED - EB) rating system. LEED promotes a whole-building approach to sustainability by recognizing performance in five key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water savings, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, and indoor environmental quality.

## **SUSTAINABILITY STARTS WITH THE PLACE**

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Some of the center's sustainability efforts include:

- 100 % of electrical power is sourced from renewable sources
- 53.4 % of waste material is diverted to recycling
- Supplies (office, building, office furnishings and construction materials) are environmentally preferable
- All video projectors are Energy Star rated
- 23.6 tons of kitchen scrap was composted in 2012 thanks to a pilot project with the University of Wisconsin
- 31% reduction in water use over five years
- 27.4% reduction in Greenhouse gas emissions

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## **FOOD AND BEVERAGE**



MeetGreen® worked with Monona Catering, the exclusive caterer of the center, to implement the following green practices:

- Most condiments were served in bulk instead of individual packages
- Fair Trade Coffee was served at all coffee breaks
- Registration system asked for attendance at meals to assure more accurate guarantees
- Vegetarian, Vegan, Kosher and Gluten Free meal options were offered
- Local and organic food was requested wherever possible
- 1,096 lbs. of food was donated to a local shelter from the SER Conference
- Switching to cups that were made from partially recycled content and then recycled them after use
- Water stations vs. serving bottled water at the center which resulted in:
  - Water bottles saved – 9,848
  - Oil use avoided - 101.9268 Kilograms
  - Energy use avoided - 14673.52 Megajoules


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## **COMMUNICATIONS AND REGISTRATION**



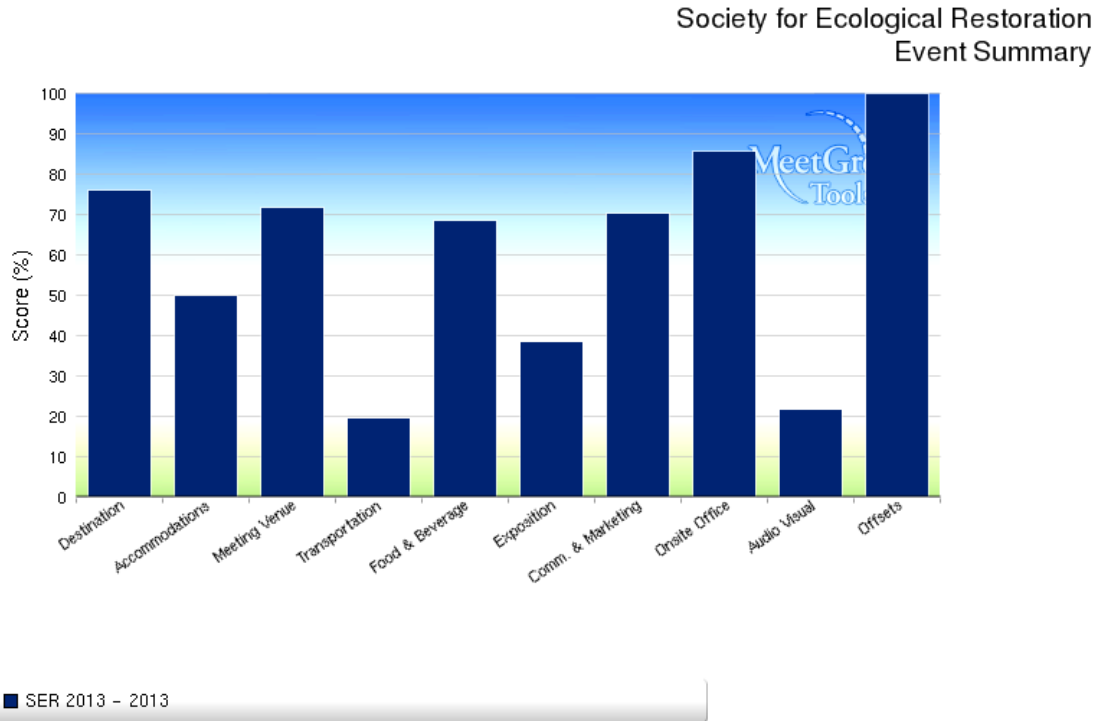
The goal was to source any giveaways from sustainable products and reduce the amount of paper at the conference. The following was achieved:

- 22 signs used for a conference with over 140 presentations plus directional signage. Signage could not be reused without incurring an additional carbon footprint. Recycled substrate was requested and all inks were water soluble
- Pens and awards contained sustainable materials
- Eliminated a 318 page 'Abstract book' and offered it on-line only
- Program book was printed on 50% Recycled Post-Consumer Waste content paper
- Very little 'inserts' for attendees
- SER opted not to offer conference tote bags
- Name tag holders were biodegradable and were also collected for reuse
- Sustainability information was included in welcome email to attendees.

<b>COMMUNITY SERVICE</b>	<p>Sponsored by Weston Solutions, The University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum and the University of Wisconsin Madison Lakeshore Nature Preserve hosted a day of habitat restoration work at their respective locations, both local and renowned ecological restoration sites. This work was an important component of the ecological restoration plans at both sites.</p>
<b>CARBON OFFSETS</b>	<p>In an effort to make the 5th World Conference on Ecological Restoration a carbon-neutral event, SER partnered with ClearSky Climate Solutions to support offsets for conference-related greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>As part of the group’s commitment to combating ecological degradation, SER donated \$20 from each conference registration fee to the Native Species Reforestation and Restoration Project in Panama.</p>
<b>EXHIBITS</b> 	<p>The conference had 25 table top exhibitors. Exhibitors were sent all information through email and were sent ‘Tips and Resources for sustainable exhibits’ to offer suggestions to make their experience as green as possible.</p> <p>The SER Decorator, Valley Expo, was committed to preserving the environment and had several programs in place from their manufacturing processes and services to their people and corporate culture.</p>
<b>MEETGREEN® CALCULATOR</b>	<p>MeetGreen® prepared an event calculation for SER using the MeetGreen® Calculator. Those events that score highly are run by planners who not only request sustainable practices, but also ensure that these requests are implemented through systemic processes, that procedures are tracked and that a high level of performance is achieved. For example, to score highly in the venue category a planner would request and implement recycling through contract procedures, in addition to measuring a high percentage of waste diversion from landfill. Practices and measurements tracked by the MeetGreen® Calculator meet or exceed United States Environmental Protection Agency purchasing policies and Convention Industry Council Green Meeting Guidelines. The calculator tracks practices in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination Selection</li> <li>• Meeting Venue Selection</li> <li>• Accommodation Selection</li> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Carbon offsets</li> <li>• Food &amp; Beverage</li> <li>• Exhibit Production</li> <li>• Audio Visual</li> <li>• Communications &amp; Marketing</li> <li>• On-site Office</li> </ul>

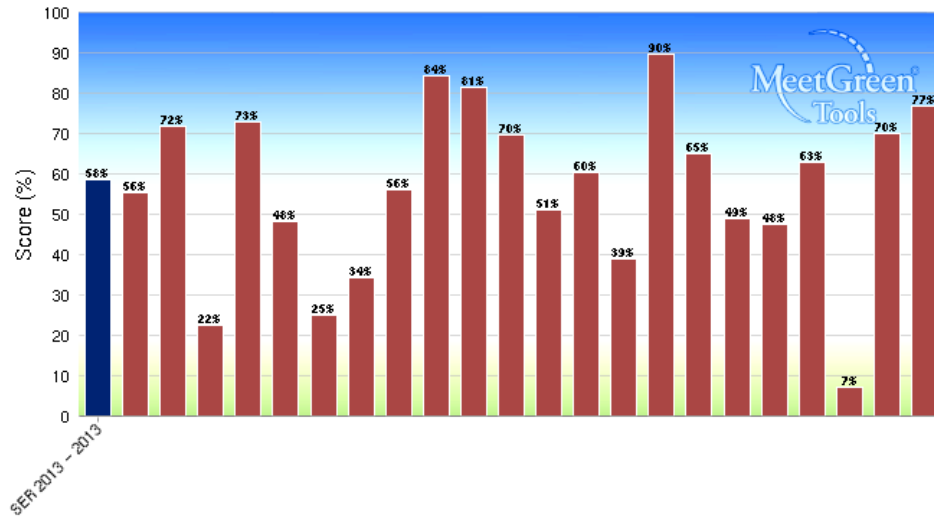
## Conference Category Summary

This report shows the total score for each category across your event.



**Total Conference Comparison Report** This report shows the total calculator score for your conference next to the total scores from other 2013 conferences

Society for Ecological Restoration  
Event Comparison



**MEETGREEN®  
CALCULATOR  
SUMMARY &  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

Overall, the conference incorporated many sustainable practices. In some cases, the scores may look low. This is because the Calculator is set up to award maximum points to planners who communicate their intention to hold a sustainable conference through language in their request for proposals and contracts then follow through with implementation and measurement. Since MeetGreen® was engaged after SER was well into the process, many decisions were already made that affected the ability to maximize points.

The 'Accommodations' category score is probably lower than it actually was because MeetGreen® did not receive surveys back from many of the hotels so we are unaware of their sustainability offerings.

Since SER had a limited 'Exposition' and basic 'A/V' needs these categories look low as many of the calculator questions did not apply.

**Develop a written Sustainable Meeting Policy for the next World Conference**

SER should develop a formal written policy to establish commitment and ensure that green meeting practices are incorporated into all meetings. This process should be finalized and communicated to all stakeholders. The Policy would include:

- Sustainability priorities
- Minimum guidelines for cities hosting the SER Conference
- Minimum guidelines for meeting venues and accommodations
- Minimum guidelines for food and beverage
- Minimum guidelines for marketing and communications practices

**Develop a Strategic Plan for Implementing the Green Meeting Policy**

- Determine what components SER wants to start with and build on.
- Identify the measurable indicators to be tracked
- Establish the time frame
- Establish areas of responsibility including staff and vendors
- Determine how to communicate this information to all stakeholders

Overall, the SER conference contained many initiatives to make the conference as 'green' as possible. It should continue to show a commitment to raising the bar by developing a written policy and sharing their successes.

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# Interested in More?

Ask questions and share your ideas

We welcome your feedback and questions at any time.

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#### Photography Acknowledgements:

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