



## **Appalachian State University Campus Race to Zero Waste Case Study**

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### **Focus of Case study:**

To increase the number of Zero Waste Basketball games and expand zero waste effort and education in Holmes Convocation Center.

### **Detailed description of campaign or effort:**

This season Sustainability & Energy Management were able to host five Zero Waste Basketball Games with the main goal of diverting waste generated from the landfill. There was emphasis on recycling and compost while educating attendees on the importance of proper waste disposal. Volunteers worked alongside student employees to ensure our waste streams were clean from contamination. Once a game was over, volunteers and student employees participated in a post-game recycling sweep of the stands, collecting all the cans and bottles left behind by fans.

In the planning for this event five home games were selected: January 8<sup>th</sup>, January 11<sup>th</sup>, January 29<sup>th</sup>, February 1<sup>st</sup>, and February 5<sup>th</sup>. Through discussion with App State convocation staff, App State Landscape Services, and App States Sustainability & Energy Management team, it was organized that Sustainability Ambassadors would manage the building waste operations during the game and the post-game clean up. Landscape Services delivered compost bins and aided in waste pick-ups post-game, and convocation staff were able to focus on their designated roles.

Volunteers really make this program successful. Engagement emails were sent and posts were generated on social media platforms to showcase this volunteer opportunity. While volunteer engagement started slow, the last game of the season had 28 volunteers which significantly sped up the process.

The office's Sustainability Ambassadors played a major role in making these events successful. Aside from waste management, there was also an info table set up to offer a waste sorting game for any fans that were interested in learning more about what zero waste means to App State. The table also offered stickers and upcycled bookmarks to attendees for free where we just mentioned this was a zero waste game.

Post game, students would assist with the post-game recycling sweep in the stands. Sustainability Ambassadors gained leadership skills by working with volunteers through pulling bags, weighing them, and ensuring waste made it to its correct location for pick up.

### **Planning steps & timeline to implement:**

Pre season:

January:

There was a lot of communication with the App State staff members who are traditionally responsible for operations of the building. Through these discussions:

- It was established that attendance was way down from last season
- A walkthrough of the arena to establish compost and recycling locations was completed
- App State Landscape Services provided compost bins while recycling and trash bins were already in place

Sustainability Ambassadors were responsible for waste management during games and played a role in volunteer engagement and education. Through their roles:

- A volunteer engagement email was crafted for sharing between networks
- Waste stations and correct zero waste signage was placed along the concourse with an emphasis on accessibility and traffic flow
- An informational waste game was organized to engage fans

Upon return from winter break, sustainability ambassadors began hosting Zero Waste Basketball games January 8th and continued through the last home game of the season on February 5th.

### **Resources and stakeholders involved:**

App State staff within the Convocation Center played a major role in making this event successful. It was through their buy in and student support that Sustainability Ambassadors were able to use the loading dock for waste movement and place a table for engagement opportunities for fans.

App State Landscape Services helped supply compost bins and aided in compost removal and processing at their onsite compost facility.

It was the Sustainability & Energy Management office that funded the student employees for their time and dedication, as well as purchasing all materials including bags, gloves, and PPE for volunteers.

The list of volunteers include both App State and Boone community members who were able to give their time to make the events happen.

**Describe the Results of this campaign component:**

There was a total of 7 volunteers for most of the season, but many returned for a few. This was a decrease in the number of volunteers from last season by about half. An outlier would include the 28 volunteers that showed up for the final game. It is likely this was due to the accumulating awareness and intensity around the final game of the season. Students wanted to participate whether it was for extra credit or in affiliation with a student group. There was much emphasis put on recruiting volunteers for this game. There is something to be said about the need for planned and intentional marketing around volunteer attendance. Diversion rates were successfully recorded for four out of the five zero waste basketball games. Recycling and landfill numbers were collected by hand by the Sustainability Ambassadors using luggage scales, while compost weights were collected by Landscape Services at their on-site compost facility. One game had windchill of negative seven degrees which created hazardous conditions for volunteers. While the game itself was still managed as a zero waste game, there are no recorded number for weights. The average diversion rate for the other four games was 56%. The total number of landfill collected was 394.44 pounds, total recycling was 435.78 pounds, and total compost was 85.22 pounds. This shows that most of the waste coming out of the convocation center is landfill or recycling. It is likely that work will need to be done in concessions to reduce the amount of waste that is deemed as landfill.

**What would you do differently in the future?**

As noted above, there was a significant decrease in the number of zero waste volunteers this season. For the 2024 season the office was able to connect with community groups such as the sustainability club from the local high school, etc. There is a need to evaluate how the office is generating volunteers for these events to increase the turnout and volunteer experience.

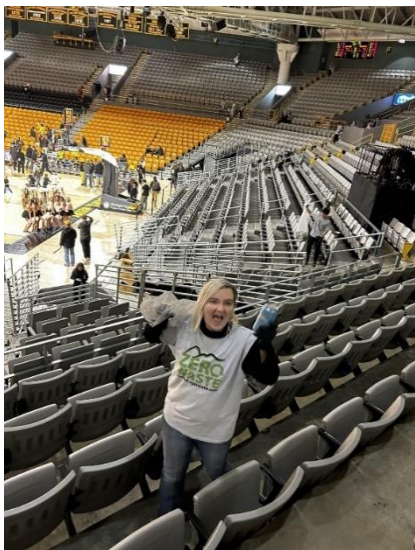
There is also work to be done around concessions in the venue. Most materials in the venue are landfill items such as souvenir cups, candy and chip wrappers, as well as give aways and single use plastics/items. It will remain a priority to encourage the use of compostables or shifting to less wasteful operations around concessions in the convocation center.

Social media engagement is another area that may turn out some beneficial engagement for fans and volunteers.

**What advice would you give to another college that wanted to do a similar effort?**

In hopes of recreating this experience, other universities should nurture their campus partnerships. There may be limitations or misinformation that prevent the ability for different departments to engage with zero waste events. Focusing on leadership opportunities, student support, and healthy campus partnerships helped make these events successful.

**Photos and Graphics:**



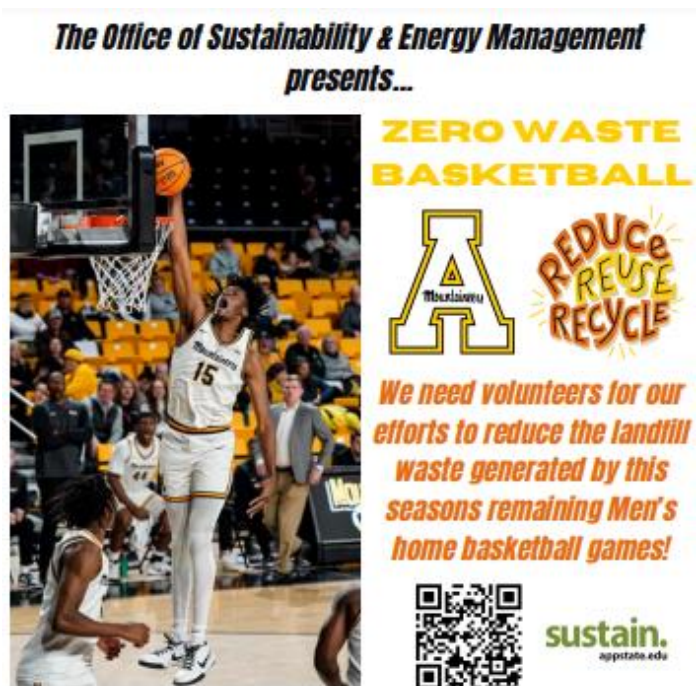
Student employee participating in the post game recycling sweep through the stands.



University mascot Yosef stopping by the table to learn about Zero Waste.



Sustainability Ambassadors hosting the Waste Wise game.



Graphic posted on Instagram for volunteers.