

Best Practices for Sustainable UMISC Conferences

Purpose

The Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference (UMISC) is committed to sustainability by minimizing environmental and economic impacts of our conferences, workshops and field trips. These “green conference” guidelines establish best practices to: 1) reduce solid waste, 2) increase diversion of solid waste to recycling and organics, 3) reduce miles traveled and fuel use, and 4) reduce energy consumption.

Guidance For Planning Sustainable Conferences and Associated Events

Meeting/Event Design:

- UMISC organizers, speakers, sponsors, exhibitors, and conferees travel to our conferences from across the Upper Midwest and beyond which presents unique variables to consider when planning sustainable events. Conference planning will emphasize discretion to determine the appropriate application of this guidance; some items may not apply depending upon location, property, vendor availability and other circumstances.
- UMISC is committed to accessibility and to providing a hybrid option in support of the mission and purposes of our conferences. We are committed to an in-person format because we know that conferences are more effective when colleagues meet and can network. For featured associated events, we will do our best to provide accommodation, including field trips.
- Whenever possible, conferences will be held at facilities that offer recycling and composting, use green cleaning practices, follow stormwater management best practices, and offer water refill stations as well as kitchens with sinks to wash reusables.
- Based upon our partnership agreement, conferences will be held along the Minnesota – Wisconsin border to provide the best accessibility for all involved and with regard to out-of-state travel policies for state staff. While this arrangement may not be ideal to support sustainability, there are only a few conference properties located in cities near the border. When possible and practical, we will emphasize use of public transportation, walking, and biking options.
- Notify attendees of public transportation options and recommend that they bring reusables, including refillable water bottles.

Event Materials:

- Reduce waste by printing only the materials necessary in the quantity needed. Use recycled paper and use duplex printing, when feasible. During registration, conferees are asked if they would like to opt out of receiving a paper program to reduce waste. Recently, conference planning moved away from printing biographical sketch booklets because our on-line conference platform app provides that function.
- Technology often improves efficiency, collaboration, and accessibility to conferences. When feasible, we share conference documents electronically and use electronic advertising, promotion, registration, confirmation, reminders, thank you messages and follow-up e-post conference conference and exhibitor surveys.

Transportation:

- Choose primary conference hotels that offer shuttle service including airports.
- Encourage conference attendees to drive the most fuel-efficient fleet and personal vehicles to reduce fuel consumption and emissions.
- For field trips, planning will match to the extent possible the most appropriate size coach and minibuses to the number of registrants.
- All conference participants are encouraged to carpool when traveling to and from the conferences and use transportation offered through conferences.

Food and Beverage:

- Conferences and associated activities can generate a lot of waste, especially when food is provided. Follow these guidelines to reduce food and beverage related waste:
 - Work with conference property staff and vendors to plan to minimize use of single use plastic products, bottled water, and Styrofoam products. Offer beverages in bulk carafes or sustainable beverage dispensers. Encourage attendees to bring their own coffee cups and refillable water bottles. Provide compostable service ware (cups, plates, utensils, straws, coffee stirrers, etc.), when possible.
 - Strive to provide locally sourced food for meals and refreshment breaks.
 - To reduce food waste, order only the quantities necessary. When registering for conferences, options are provided to identify who desires a lunch and if there are any food allergies or dietary restrictions to determine safe and

- appropriate options available from caterers. Planning will emphasize donation of leftover food to local organizations in need.
- UMISC recognizes the movement away from box lunches due to the significant waste they produce. Boxed lunches produce multiple layers of individual packaging and food is often left uneaten. However, due to timing and convenience, field trips will continue to provide box lunches on the day of the field trip. Planning will emphasize ways waste can be reduced by working with coach and minibus operators to provide for separate collection of recyclables, when possible. Planning will continue to consider viable alternatives to box lunches.

Waste and Recycling:

- Ensure waste and recycling (and organics, where available) containers are conveniently provided throughout the venues. Containers will be clearly labeled and include instructions for how to use them.
- Throughout conferences, announcements will emphasize waste and recycling container availability, multiple locations, and use.

Energy and Water Considerations:

- Turn off lights and monitors after leaving conference rooms, when feasible.
- Close window blinds to reduce heating/cooling needs at the end of conference sessions, if feasible.
- Choose conference venues that use low flow fixtures (faucets, toilets, showers, etc.), whenever possible.
- Use energy efficient electronics including laptops, projectors and power bars.

How You Can Help

Conference Partners:

- Lead by example by planning and implementing these best practices during conferences and associated events.
- Ensure all attendees are aware of and follow these best practices when hosting events.
- Encourage actions that reduce conference environmental impacts beyond the suggested best practices.

Attendees:

- Follow these best practices when attending conferences and associated events to the extent possible.

- Identify additional actions that reduce conference environmental impacts beyond the suggested best practices.