



An informative and inspirational bi-monthly newsletter from the Working Group Recycling Committee to MIT Recycling Ambassadors, colleagues, and the MIT community.

# the bale

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## Alana Levine

### MIT's new Recycling & Solid Waste Supervisor

**Welcome, Alana!** Alana comes to us from the University of Arizona, and arrived at MIT in early October. She recently took time out from her very busy schedule to answer some questions from the Editor.

#### *Q. Tell us a little about your background at University of Arizona.*

A. Fourteen years ago I went to Tucson to attend The University of Arizona. I got a student job with the campus recycling program hauling cardboard, aluminum cans, white paper, and newspaper from buildings. It was heavy work (and hot, too), but I really believed in sustainability and was happy to be making a huge difference in my new home. As my experience with recycling issues blossomed, I began organizing events such as Earth Day and America Recycles Day, and doing lectures and education on campus and in local schools. After being with the program for about 9 years, I was asked to become the Program Coordinator.

#### *Q. What brought you 3,000 miles across the country to MIT?*

A. The snow and rain. Just kidding. It was the desire to work at an institution that really supports recycling and the concept of sustainability. After applying for this job I cruised the MIT website and was very impressed with the amount and variety of actions being taken around sustainability issues. I was especially impressed with the Working Group Recycling Committee. To have a diverse group of individuals dedicated to the issues I have dedi-



Pictured: Alana in action at a waste audit at University of Arizona.

cated my life to was warming. It was the climate of sustainability at MIT that really made me want to come here.

#### *Q. What do you hope to bring to MIT?*

A. I would like to focus on increasing the recycling rate (although you all seem to have done an excellent job without me) and increasing the visibility of our efforts. The rate can be increased slightly through fine tuning operations, expanding what we recycle through new markets, and increasing each person's individual recycling rate. MIT is at the rare junction in the life of the program where we must mature the idea of recycling in the minds of the community. By this I mean making recycling part of the greater sustainability community on campus.

#### *Q. What are the challenges?*

A. Personally, the challenges lie in learning a whole new campus and a new culture. For the program, I think the greatest challenge will be the fine-tuning of an already successful program. I am up for the challenge

#### *Alana's contact information:*

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## America Recycles Day is November 15!

This year, The Working Group Recycling Committee will observe America Recycles Day by participating in the **Event Planner's Fair, which will take place in the Stata Center lobbies on Wednesday, November 15 from noon to 2 pm.** Stop by our table at Stata to learn how to "Green Your Event" including tips on how to reduce waste and

recycle at catered events. We'll also have full MIT recycling information and resources for you to take and post in your DLC. For more on America Recycles Day: <http://www.americarecyclesday.org/> For more on recycling at MIT: <http://web.mit.edu/facilities/environmental/reuse.html>



### DOWNLOAD NOW!

The Working Group Recycling Committee's Monthly Desktop Wallpaper Calendar!  
[web.mit.edu/wgrecycling/calendars.shtml](http://web.mit.edu/wgrecycling/calendars.shtml)

## MIT Debuts “Green Chemical Alternatives Purchasing Wizard”

By Susan Leite, EHS Officer  
Environmental, Health, and Safety  
Office

When MIT embarked upon the development of an Environmental, Health, and Safety Management System nearly five years ago, the vision was more ambitious than simply developing a structure and process for complying with regulations. The Institute’s vision was that the EHS-MS would foster collaborations between the academy and the administration, and it would provide tools and teaching opportunities within MIT and the larger research community. Most of all, the EHS-MS would put MIT on a path to sustainability by creating a structure for faculty, students, and the administration to work creatively and collaboratively on Institute EHS issues.



The EPA-funded project “Encouraging Toxics Use Reduction in Academic Laboratories” is an example of faculty and the administration collaborating to promote sustainability in research and campus operations. Through EPA’s People, Prosperity, and Planet (P3) grant program, Professor Jeffrey Steinfeld of the Chemistry Department and Bill VanSchalkwyk, Director of

EHS Programs at MIT, led a research team that sought to address an EHS issue that impacts many colleges and universities: reducing the hundreds of thousands of pounds of hazardous chemical waste that is generated annually as a byproduct of groundbreaking research. The “Encouraging Toxics Use Reduction in Academic Laboratories” project had three goals:

- Characterize chemical use – how chemicals are purchased, determine high volume use chemicals, identify common uses, and assess awareness of potential alternatives and possible barriers;
- Increase the adoption of more sustainable chemistries through demonstration projects, award programs, case studies, and a website/information clearinghouse; and
- Develop an electronic tool to enable the selection of more environmentally benign and less hazardous alternatives.

The key project deliverable, The Green Chemical Alternatives Wizard, was the focus of the \$40,000 Phase 2 award from the EPA P3 grant program. In May 2005, MIT was one of seven schools selected from a pool of over forty applicants, an indication of the perceived need for this type of work. The Green Chemicals Wizard is a web-based tool that is designed to provide information on chemical alternatives for some of the most commonly used hazardous solvents

and substances in research laboratories. The Green Chemical Alternatives Wizard provides over 200 journal references and case studies that detail alternative chemicals and/or processes available for hazardous solvents, reagents, and cleaning agents and includes the following features:

- it is available at no charge, requires no password, and is directly accessible via a URL;
- it runs on both Mac and PC platforms;
- it may be viewed via multiple web browsers (Internet Explorer, Firefox, etc.);
- a “Filter” function allows search results to be narrowed down; and
- “Print” and “Email” buttons allow search results to be retained for future use.

The Green Chemical Alternatives Wizard is now available at:

<http://web.mit.edu/environment/academic/purchasing.html>.

MIT’s clearinghouse on green chemistry information may be viewed at: [http://web.mit.edu/environment/academic/green\\_chemicals.html](http://web.mit.edu/environment/academic/green_chemicals.html).

Questions or comments on the Green Chemical Alternatives Wizard, or the green chemistry website, may be sent to: [greenchem@mit.edu](mailto:greenchem@mit.edu). Information on EPA’s P3 award program is available at: <http://es.epa.gov/ncer/p3/>. 

## Green Catering @ MIT

*Catered events can generate a lot of waste, such as catering platters and lids, disposable plates and utensils, cans and bottles, and more. Consider the 3 R’s (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) when planning an event, luncheon, or conference.*

### Reduce:

- Rather than sending paper invitations, send email and/or set up a website. If you must use paper invitations, print them on recycled content paper. (Kinko’s has a good selection.)
- For handouts and agendas, use recycled content paper with post consumer content, (we recommend Office Depot Item # 940650) and identify the recycled content percentage on the handouts. Print and copy double sided.
- Ask your guests to RSVP so you can buy the appropriate amount of food based on the number of guests you expect. (28 billion pounds of edible food is thrown away during the holiday season alone. Source: Center for a New American Dream.)
- Avoid the wasteful “box lunches” that many caterers offer. These individual servings create piles of wasteful packaging. Often the attendees do not take the time to recycle items individually and then the whole mess gets trashed. Instead, opt for large platters of sandwiches and salads and make sure the containers get reused or recycled.
- Request that beverages, condiments, and other items be provided in bulk instead of individually packaged.
- Use cloth napkins and table cloths or buy paper products made with recycled content. Ask your caterer to do the same.

- Avoid Styrofoam plates: they cannot be recycled. If you can’t use paper plates or reusable ones, use plastic plates and recycle them in any MIT “cans and bottles” recycling bin.
- Some caterers offer biodegradable plates, utensils, and cups. These should all go in the trash after your event, not the recycling bin. See the article below about Basil Tree Catering for more about these products.
- Go organic! If organic is not available, the next best choice is local produce. Not only will you be supporting local farmers, but less energy and fossil fuels will be expended in transportation. Also, vegetarian options are more earth friendly than meat options and require less of the earth’s resources to produce.

### Reuse:

- Rent dishes and silverware. Dishes do not have to be returned clean, just

**continued on page 3** ►

## GREEN CATERING continued ▼

scraped free of food. Try Peterson Partycenter: 781-729-4000, Email: [sales@ppcinc.com](mailto:sales@ppcinc.com) or Be Our Guest Party Rentals: 617-427-2700.

- Request that your caterer take back their catering platters and lids and reuse them.
- Request that your caterer green their operations by recycling as much as possible, composting food scraps, reducing wasteful disposables, and donating leftovers to food pantries.
- Instead of using disposables, rent or borrow infrequently used items like punchbowls or large platters. If you must use disposables, reuse or recycle them afterwards. Catering containers are perfect for bringing a dish to your next potluck. Large catering platters make perfect saucers for large houseplants.
- Post leftovers to [free-food@mit.edu](mailto:free-food@mit.edu), giving the location, the quantity, and the type of leftovers.

### Recycle:

- Recycle ALL plastics in your local “cans and bottles” bin: including catering platters and lids, plastic plates, and plastic utensils. These items do not have to be perfectly clean, just wipe or scrape them free of food and drop them in the bin.
- Plastic bags and plastic wrap are not recyclable at MIT.
- Make a friendly announcement at the beginning of the event, instructing attendees which items are recyclable and which items are trash, and what bin each item should go in.
- When planning your event, consider your trash can and recycling bin needs. For additional recycling bins, please

contact MIT Recycling at 3-6360. Each trash bin should have a recycling bin next to it. Make it easy for your guests to recycle by identifying the recycling bin (and the trash bin!) with a sign.

### Green the transportation for your event:

- Encourage attendees to take public transportation. Directions for getting to the MIT campus via public transportation: [http://whereis.mit.edu/map-jpg?section=directions#by\\_t](http://whereis.mit.edu/map-jpg?section=directions#by_t)
- MIT has a partnership with PlanetTran, a taxi service based exclusively on the hybrid electric/gas Toyota Prius. Round trips from MIT to Logan Airport are \$64 including tips and tolls, while other destinations provide the MIT Community a 15% discount and MIT students receive a 25% discount. Payment options include cash, credit card, or monthly billing. For MIT-specific quotes or reservations, call 877-ECO-TAXI (326-8294) or visit <http://mit.planettran.com/>
- Purchase carbon offsets for attendees traveling to/from a conference or event: <http://cee.uiuc.edu/research/bondresearch/carbon-neutral.htm>

### More Resources:

- Bluegreen website for greening events and conferences: <http://www.bluegreenmeetings.org/HostsAndPlanners/index.htm>
- Read about how they “greened” the Democratic National Convention in Boston (2004) [http://www.cerc04.org/pdfs/cercoffsetflier\\_80604prnt.pdf](http://www.cerc04.org/pdfs/cercoffsetflier_80604prnt.pdf)
- EPA’s “Greening Your Meetings and Conferences” page: <http://www.epa.gov/oppt/epp/pubs/meet/greenmeetings.htm> **b**

## Basil Tree Catering Steps Up Earth Friendly Approach

Basil Tree Catering has always been committed to recycling and minimizing waste and they are happy to announce a new offering to reduce wasteful disposables in drop-off catering. Basil Tree now offers the option of purchasing Earth Friendly Papergoods with your order, a combination of corn-based clear cups, sugar-cane based plates, potato & corn based cutlery and recycled non-chlorine bleached napkins. These products are biodegradable and break down faster in landfill than traditional plastics. The other advantage to these alternatives is that they do not depend on petroleum based products and are thus cleaner in their production. (These should all go in the trash after your event, not the recycling bin.)

In addition to the Earth Friendly line, Basil Tree Catering offers the choice of either reusable coffee carafes that require pick-up after the event, or disposable coffee boxes. The cardboard from the boxes can be recycled if you separate it from the plastic inner lining. They also offer a service to pick up your platters, bowls and lids after your event so they can be cleaned, sterilized and reused. Just ask to have a pick-up bag sent along with your delivery. After the event, wipe the bowls and platters free of food, throw them in the bag, and Basil Tree will pick them up. They try to avoid special trips for pick-ups to conserve gas but generally can make it within the next day or two along their delivery routes.

As always, Basil Tree Catering continues to recycle paper, cardboard, plastic and aluminum at their Somerville office and commissary. They have instituted using earth friendly cleaning products for the good of the employees as well as the environment. If you have any suggestions or questions feel free to contact them at 617-776-9100 or [catering@basiltree.com](mailto:catering@basiltree.com). For more information: <http://www.basiltree.com/>



## Did you know?

Aseptic containers are recyclable at MIT! Soy milk containers, juice boxes, and wax-coated paper containers, such as quart milk or OJ containers, can be recycled in any MIT paper recycling bin. Please rinse them out.

## EVENTS • EVENTS • EVENTS • EVENTS

### Working Group Recycling Committee Meetings:

Nov. 2, 16; Dec. 7

1-2 pm, Room 12-090

Join Us! All welcome: RSVP to [staffrecycles@mit.edu](mailto:staffrecycles@mit.edu)

### “Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life of Garbage,”

a talk by Heather Rogers

Thursday, November 9, 7:00 pm

FREE!

At the Center for New Words

7 Temple Street, Cambridge

617-876-5310

[www.centerfornewwords.org](http://www.centerfornewwords.org)

The United States is the planet's number-one producer of trash. Each American throws out 4.5 pounds daily. The Pacific Ocean is today six times more abundant with plastic waste than zooplankton. How did we end up with this much rubbish, and where does it all go? Journalist and filmmaker Heather Rogers answers these questions by taking readers on a grisly, oddly fascinating tour through the underworld of garbage.

More info: <http://www.alternet.org/story/27456/>, <http://www.alternet.org/story/27116/>

### CAC Event Planners' Fair

Wednesday, November 15

Noon – 2pm

Stata Center Lobbies

In honor of America Recycles Day, WGR will host a recycling and Green Catering-themed table.

See article on page 1.

### Mass. Climate Action Network's 5th Massachusetts & New England Global Warming Action Conference

Sunday, November 19

8:30 am - 6:00 pm

MIT's Stata Center, 32 Vassar St, Cambridge, MA

Hosted by MIT's Technology & Culture Forum (TAC)

Co-sponsors: Clean Water Action, Conservation Law Foundation, Environmental League of Mass., MassPIRG, Mass. Sierra Club, Mass. Technology Collaborative

[www.MassClimateAction.org](http://www.MassClimateAction.org)

### MIT Energy Club Lecture Series

More info: [http://web.mit.edu/mit\\_energy/index.html](http://web.mit.edu/mit_energy/index.html)

#### November 15:

##### “Energy Law”

*Don McCauley*

Partner, McCauley Lyman

6-7pm in E51-149

#### November 29:

##### “Energy Politics”

*Daniel Rice*

Managing Director, BlackRock Advisors

6-7pm in E51-335

#### December 13:

##### “Advanced Electrochemical Energy Conversion: Fuel Cells and Batteries”

*Prof. Yang Shao-Horn*

MIT Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering

6-7pm in E51-145

## Read the Union of Concerned Scientists' newly released

## *Northeast Climate Impacts Assessment*

at <http://www.ucsusa.org/>

A new study by the Northeast Climate Impacts Assessment (NECIA), a collaboration between the Union of Concerned Scientists and a team of independent experts, shows that today's emission choices will determine the severity of changes in the Northeast's temperature, precipitation, seasons, and sea levels. This report is focused specifically on the nine northeast states and details projects impacts in this region. One of the most startling results of this study is the sheer volume of greenhouse gas emissions that the Northeast produces- this area alone is responsible for the 7<sup>th</sup> highest emissions in the world, greater than Canada, Italy, and the United Kingdom!

## ASK THE EXPERTS

Ruth Davis, Manager of Communications, Facilities, will answer your questions about recycling at MIT. Please send your questions to the editor: [staffrecycles@mit.edu](mailto:staffrecycles@mit.edu). Your question may be publicized in the next Bale! Amy Donovan, Editor of The Bale, and Co-Chair, Working Group Recycling Committee, steps in to answer this month's question.

**Q: There used to be a Technotrash container in the Drefoos Lobby of the Stata Center. I went by there to drop off some old disks and noticed it was gone. Will it be replaced?**

A: Unfortunately, it became necessary to prohibit the reuse and techno trash items from being dropped off in the Stata Center's 1st floor Dreyfoos lobby. This location, although convenient for users in the building and nearby buildings, was becoming a safety hazard due to the size of materials being dropped off. The technotrash bins are just for small computer-related material that fit inside: <http://web.mit.edu/facilities/environmental/reuse.html#technotrash>

There are still two technotrash containers in public areas: first floor of the Stratton Student Center, (W20) and on the fourth floor of Building 9. The Department of Facilities is currently looking at a few other public locations.

Currently, there are still items being dropped off at the Stata Center even though the bin is no longer there. We ask the community for their cooperation and to discontinue leaving items on the first floor of the Stata Center.

The Facilities Recycling team will provide Techno Trash bins for any department that requests them. You should email [recycling@mit.edu](mailto:recycling@mit.edu) to make such a request. **b**