

## **Interface: Reducing the “Ecological Footprint” of their World Meeting at the Grand Wailea Hotel (Hawaii)**

**Summary:** EcoMetrics, Interface, Inc. and the Grand Wailea teamed up to significantly reduce consumption and waste during Interface’s six day World Meeting Held at the Grand Wailea Hotel in Hawaii in May 1997. 1,100 Interface employees participated.

**Audits.** The meeting was preceded by two eco-audits of the facility conducted by Paul Hawken (author of *The Ecology of Commerce*), John Picard (principle of E2-Environmental Enterprises), Bill Browning (Director of Green Development at the Rocky Mountain Institute) and Jim Hartzfeld (Interface’s global coordinator of sustainability programs).

**Meeting Footprint Reduction.** Interface was determined to significantly reduce the “footprint” of the meeting on the local environment and use the meeting as a teaching metaphor for how a petrochemical based operation could progress toward ecological sustainability. Utility and waste saving measures were implemented throughout the six day meeting. The hotel was responsive in their commitment to implement various measures ranging from altering standard resort operating procedures to implementing wide ranging source separation and capital improvement projects. The resort is committed to implementing many of the measures recommended in the eco-audit beyond the end of the conference.

**Monitoring Metrics.** Detailed metrics of utilities and waste collected each day, analyzed, and reported to the plenary session the next morning. The results of the final day are compared below with the average of a similar convention (baseline) held during the previous April. Similarities between the two meetings include the facts that both used the entire facility, both were held during the same month, and a similar number of individuals attended. The major difference between the two was that the baseline conference lacked an environmental agenda.

### **Results**

**Electricity.** After implementing all of the planned energy saving projects, total electricity consumption for the final day of the meeting was 60,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh) compared to an average consumption for the baseline conference of 75,771 kWh per day, resulting in a savings of 15,771 kWh or 21%. At an average of 12.3 cents per kWh, the Grand Wailea saved \$1,940 on the final day of the Interface conference compared to the baseline. If this improvement were maintained over an entire year, the Grand Wailea could save \$708,000 per year, and 42 acres of tropical forest would be able to absorb carbon dioxide from other than the Grand Wailea.

**Propane.** The majority of propane used on the property is consumed by the laundry. Overall, a 48% reduction in propane consumption was observed versus the baseline—about 740 gallons per day. If the hotel maintained this reduction for the entire year, they could save over \$270,000, and another 13 acres of tropical forest would be able to absorb carbon dioxide from sources other than the Grand Wailea.

**Laundry.** Interface guests were asked to minimize their use of towels and sheets, and used sheets and towels were only replaced upon request. These behavioral changes resulted in a 48%

reduction in water consumption for the laundry versus the baseline convention—nearly 27,000 gallons per day. If this reduction were maintained over a year the resort would save about \$37,500. Though this water savings is only about 5% of the total Grand Wailea consumption, annualized it represents the total average rainfall of the Grand Wailea property of 8.6 inches.

**Solid Waste.** A number of source separation, recycling and waste reduction projects were implemented. The baseline convention generated an average of 8.77 tons per day while the Interface meeting averaged 5.8 tons per day. Although this level of waste still represents a major burden on the island ecosystems, when compared to the baseline the Interface conference reduced the solid waste impact by an average of 34%, saving nearly 3 tons of solid waste per day. A similar annual reduction could save the Grand Wailea \$8,000 in fewer trips to the landfill (33% reduction) and \$40,000 in landfill tipping fees for a total of about \$48,000.

**Conclusions.** The potential economic impact of these improvements is over \$1 million in annual savings for the resort. Beyond the economic impact is a significant reduction in the ecological footprint of the resort in terms of carbon dioxide and landfill space. Major conferences bring large numbers of visitors to the islands. With forethought and commitment, the ecological footprint of these meetings can be significantly reduced, while making the hospitality industry more profitable, which embodies Interface’s motto, “Doing well by doing good”.

Interface’s Footprint reduction: (% reduction from Baseline, potential annual economic savings)

1. Electricity: 21% \$708,000 42 acres of forest
2. Propane 48% \$270,00 13 acres of forest
3. Water 48% \$37,000 8.6 in. annual rainfall
4. Solid Waste 34% \$48,000