Considering – and Countering – our Footprint

Gustavson invests in offset projects to go carbon neutral

by Rich Taylor

_Neutrality doesn’t_ often factor into the Gustavson vocabulary. We’re passionate advocates for social responsibility, sustainability and innovation, and staunch critics of chasing profits at the expense of people and the planet. We’re believers in international education, research and experience, and strive to cross boundaries in ideas, culture and society.

Because of this passion, however, we are now neutral on one thing – our impact on the environment. This spring, Gustavson officially became carbon neutral by investing in carbon offset projects to counter the impact of our air travel – and what’s more, we are now neutral on one thing – our impact on the environment. This milestone follows almost a decade of research into, and ongoing efforts to reduce, Gustavson’s carbon footprint, tracking environmental impact.

In 2009, guided by Dr. Basma Majerhi, Gustavson began collecting data on its carbon footprint, tracking Scope 1 (natural gas for heating), Scope 2 (electricity) and Scope 3 (travel and commuting) emissions. The following year, the University of Victoria became mandated by the province to offset its Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions, and in 2011, with the launch of Gustavson’s Centre for Social and Sustainable Innovation, the business school formally set a goal to become completely carbon neutral.

This goal came into focus late last year following the release of Gustavson’s 2016 carbon report. The report found that over 80 per cent of Gustavson’s carbon footprint was produced by the school’s travel and transport related. (See details on facing page.)

These stats led to a new question: how can Gustavson reconcile the environmental impact of its focus on international education with its commitment to sustainability and social responsibility? The logical solution was to counter the emissions produced by the school’s travel through responsible investment in carbon offset projects.

To achieve this, a Carbon Neutrality+ committee, comprising faculty, staff and students, was created to develop a shortlist of offset projects that not only reduce emissions by enabling more sustainable alternatives for existing carbon-producing activities, but also provide other social benefits for the communities in which they are located. After consultation with the school community, five projects were selected for investment – three that will improve living conditions in communities in Uganda, Thailand and Honduras, and two that focus on environmental conservation in BC.

Acting on and championing our values is an ongoing and evolving process, however. Investing in these projects is not the final stop on Gustavson’s road towards carbon neutrality. The Carbon Neutrality+ committee will continue to develop strategies and encourage initiatives that help the school further reduce its carbon footprint, such as low-emission commuting methods. As Gustavson Dean Saul Klein says, “It’s important and timely to demonstrate leadership to our students and to the world. If our actions have a negative impact, we have a duty to do something about it.”

**GUSTAVSON’S 2017 CARBON FOOTPRINT BY THE NUMBERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carbon Emission Sources</th>
<th>Overall Emissions Reduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee commuting</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TRAVEL**

- BCom student travel – 35.4%
- MBA and MSG student travel – 22.3%
- Employee travel – 15.6%

**EMPLOYEE COMMUTING**

- 40% of commutes done by low-emission methods in 2017, up from 27% in 2010

**OVERALL**

- Since the baseline year of 2010, emissions have been reduced by 26%, including a decrease of 33% in electricity usage due to lighting upgrades and educational initiatives

What we’re investing in

- **A CHLORINE DISPENSER PROJECT IN EASTERN UGANDA** that provides rural communities with safe drinking water, replacing the need for communities to boil water with wood-fuelled fires
- **A WASTEWATER TREATMENT PROJECT IN THAILAND** that reduces fossil fuel use by 4,700 litres a day by capturing methane from wastewater at a starch manufacturing plant and converting it to heat for the starch drying process
- **AN AFFORDABLE, ENERGY-EFFICIENT** cooking stove distribution project in Honduras that provides communities with stoves that are 50 per cent more efficient than traditional wood-burning open fires
- **THE GREAT BEAR FOREST CARBON PROJECT**, which helps support the ecosystem-based sustainable management model in which coastal First Nations, environmental groups, forest companies and governments co-manage the Great Bear Rainforest to sustain biodiversity and create jobs for Indigenous communities
- **THE QUADRA ISLAND FORESTLAND CONSERVATION PROJECT**, which helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions, preserve important site-specific environmental and cultural features and protect the Quadra Island Forestland Conservation area for recreational activities