

# Region to see green initiative launch this summer

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This summer, the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission plans to launch a green awareness campaign, which will consolidate its other green initiatives into one "HR Green" effort.

The commission has awarded a contract worth \$100,000 for research and campaign brand development to Cahoon & Cross Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations. The Chesapeake-based firm was hired in July by the commission to implement a five-year marketing plan.

HR Green aims to educate residents on sustainability and good environmental practices.

HRPDC has created a blog, [www.HRGreenblog.com](http://www.HRGreenblog.com), which will serve as an interim online resource until a comprehensive website is launched.

The initiative will create one, central campaign for HR Clean, HR FOG, HR Storm and HR WET – previous environmental programs of the commission – for the more than 1.6 million people represented in the organization's region.

The HRPDC represents the

## To learn more

Find details about the research for the campaign by visiting [www.cahoonandcross.com/hrpdc/research.html](http://www.cahoonandcross.com/hrpdc/research.html).

cities of Chesapeake, Franklin, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach and Williamsburg, and the counties of Gloucester, Isle of Wight, James City, Southampton, Surry and York.

"The blog is the main vehicle right now," said Julia B. Hillegass, public information and community affairs administrator for HRPDC. "In addition to several postings a week, there are some different sections with info on tap water in Hampton Roads."

The blog will feature information on recycling and reusing, as well as how to keep pollution out of the storm water system.

"We also have a service learning project with a class at ODU," Hillegass said.

The project with Old Dominion University started this spring se-

mester. HRPDC has done presentations with the students, most of whom are studying to be educators.

ODU instructor Katherine Jackson, a guest blogger for the HR Green blog, is a senior lecturer for the English department.

Hillegass said that there will be ads for the campaign too although HRPDC hasn't confirmed whether the ads will be online, on television or radio because it's waiting for recommendations from Cahoon & Cross.

The official start of the campaign will be at the end of June or beginning of July.

Margaret K. Cahoon, a partner at Cahoon & Cross, talked about the findings of the online survey conducted in November and a focus group held in October. EAB Research, a Richmond-based firm, conducted the studies as a subcontractor of Cahoon & Cross.

"On the online survey, we found that there are a number of people that say they have knowledge or are very knowledgeable [about environmental practices]," Cahoon said. "But when we did the focus group, we found there was a disparity" between what respondents actually knew and what

they thought they knew.

"One thing that came across loud and clear, is [residents] really do want the information," she said. "When they were exposed to messages they didn't understand, they were open to learning."

For instance, most people assumed that garbage disposal use was fine, while it actually puts waste into the system that can't be processed, Cahoon said.

"The reality is you shouldn't be putting anything down there," Cahoon said. "Fats, oils and grease can clog the drain and [contribute] to problems with our infrastructure in this region. They have a direct impact on what we have to do in sanitation [treatment]."

Convenience was also a major factor among respondents in the focus group, she said, with some participants saying their recycling would stop once their recycling bin was full.

Overall, Cahoon said that the studies "really gave us a window into how people are behaving at this point in time, and what they know."

The group plans to target women for the marketing campaign, followed by all adults in the region. ■

## CHAT

# Interview promotes Engineering Unplugged conference

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there should be government grants for anybody in the private sector that wants to do something that good. There should be an 'atta-boy' in a big meaningful way with assistance in doing that.

"When you take into consideration that \$500 billion leaves this country every year because of imported oil, that is money that I would like to see stay here," Begley said. "I think there should be some of the most robust government subsidies to do this sort of thing."

Regardless of the size of an organization, Begley said the best place to start a green initiative is with less expensive items such as weather stripping, energy-efficient light bulbs and high-grade insulation before moving on to more costly changes. Those initial savings can be put toward other improvements.

"Every dollar that you spend on energy efficiency in your home is going to save you \$5 toward the cost of putting up a wind turbine or solar panels," Begley said.

Property owners should consid-

## If you want to go

**What** Engineering Unplugged 2011

**When** April 12, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Where** Ted Constant Convocation Center, Norfolk

**For whom** Engineers and business owners who are designing, building, operating and maintaining green buildings, shipping facilities, watercraft or future supply chains for wind energy

**Keynote speaker** John Paul Woodley Jr., former assistant secretary of the Army – 8 a.m.

**Special guest speaker** Ed Begley Jr., actor, environmentalist – noon

**Educational tracks** Green building, energy conservation, greenhouse gases and wind energy. Also, possible roundtable discussions with representatives of green companies. First come, first served.

**Cost** \$195

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er getting an energy audit, Begley said. These can be free for homeowners and reasonably priced for businesses.

"I cut my natural gas bill in half," he said. "I cut my electric bill in half. I know there is a lot of low-hanging fruit out there for people and maybe some medium-hanging fruit for a guy like me."

Those types of energy-efficient changes could be recommended through an energy audit.

Other tips Begley offered include seeking Energy Star labels on appliances, riding a bike or walking when possible, and plugging nonessential electrical items into surge-protector power strips that can be turned off with one click.

Woodley, who now is consulting director with Richmond-based Advantus Strategies LLC, said the conference will offer ideas on how government can become more energy-efficient and how companies can calculate the return on their investment in green infrastructure.

"One of the points we are going to be addressing," he said, "is the absolute necessity to consider in-

vestments in terms of their life cycle costs. The whole life cycle should be looked into in terms of determining what the true initial cost should be.

"We were finding in the defense department that the ROI is pretty robust for energy-efficient technologies and techniques," Woodley said.

Another significant development has been the creation of the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure, which had its first board meeting in February, Woodley said.

The institute is a joint venture of the American Public Works Association, the American Council of Engineering Companies and the American Society of Civil Engineers, which are working to create a rating system for sustainability for infrastructure such as bridges, dams, water treatment plants and other facilities. The system for civil engineering projects would be similar to the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED-certification program for buildings.

"As someone with a background in civil works, that is very exciting to me," he said. ■