



**Contact:**

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**1. Overview**

Sokol Blosser Winery, family owned and operated, is one of the pioneering vineyards in Oregon. The winery planted its first grapes in 1971 and produced its first vintage in 1977, bottling 3,000 cases. Currently Sokol Blosser has 25 full-time employees and employs up to 40 seasonal workers to help in the vineyard and the tasting room during harvest season. The winery now produces 85,000 cases of wine per year. Susan Sokol Blosser has run the business since 1991 and has recently retired from daily operations. Alex and Alison, two of her three children, now run the business as co-presidents. Although the winery founders considered themselves environmentalists, they began by farming conventionally. In doing so, they tried to choose the most benign chemicals, but nevertheless used synthetic fertilizers and herbicides. Gradually, the founders have integrated their environmental values with their farming and business practices. Now, the winery is certified organic by Oregon Tilth and sustainable practices are at work in all of its operations.

**2. Goals and Benchmarking**

Sokol Blosser Winery publishes a sustainability report for its staff and board of directors. It is made available to the public on its Web site, [www.sokolblosser.com](http://www.sokolblosser.com). Once its vineyard is certified as organic, all of its Pinot Noir wines will be made from organically grown grapes. Pinot Noir wine is Sokol Blosser's flagship product. Because Sokol Blosser purchases grapes from other vineyards for other wines, only 10-15 percent of its wines will be eligible for an organic label. Its accomplishments by category are listed below:

## Company

- Has incorporated sustainability into its mission statement.
- Has three of the five board members driving hybrid vehicles.
- Has become a spokesman for sustainability, speaking at wine industry events, such as Oregon Pinot Camp.
- Joined the Climate Registry as a Founding Member to record and publish carbon emissions
- Joined the Governor's Carbon Neutral Challenge in 2007

## Production

- Farms organically, using no synthetic chemicals or fertilizer. 2005 is the last year of organic transition and full organic certification is expected in 2005.
- Uses 20 percent bio-diesel in vineyard tractors.
- Is part of the Prescott Western Bluebird Recovery Project with a dozen bluebird houses in the vineyard. It now has a small flock of about 25 bluebird residents that help to control insects.
- Recycles used engine and hydraulic oil from vineyard equipment and shrink wrap from bottling.
- Builds annual compost piles from grape stems and skins produced from crushing grapes at harvest, organic cow manure, and organic straw.
- Uses its compost and cover crops to build up the soil so that plants can feed themselves. Soil samples show significant microbial life
- Was the first vineyard to be certified Salmon-Safe when the program began in 1996 - certified by L.I.V.E. (Low Input Viticulture & Enology), an international sustainable certification program.
- Provides health care for seasonal vineyard employees through the Tuality Healthcare Foundation's Salud Program.
- Uses no chlorine (one of the standard procedures) in winery sanitation.
- Constructed a barrel cellar that was certified by the US Green Building Council as LEED silver in 2002 It was the first winery in the nation to achieve this certification. This building cost significantly more to build, but its energy use has been estimated by the Oregon Department of Energy to be more than 50 percent less than a standard building.
- Purchases wind power through PGE (1167 kWh per month). This covers between 4% and 19% of total usage, depending on the month.
- Eliminated foil capsules to simplify packaging and eliminate a mined material.
- Produces 30% of energy need through an onsite 25KWH solar array
- Continues to use cork, a renewable resource as the most sustainable wine closure.
- Required their label-printing company to use recyclable backing on pressure sensitive labels.

## Facilities

- In the remodel used marmoleum flooring, no- and low-VOC paints, wheat board

shelves, and FSC wood (Forest Stewardship Council certified).

-Uses unbleached paper products such as wine bags and bathroom towels.

Office

-Uses 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper for copier and fax.

-Has a paper recycling receptacle in every office.

-Purchased new desks and shelves from Herman Miller, known for its sustainable practices.

These accomplishments have been acknowledged by others. In 2004 Sokol Blosser was honored by Food Front Cooperative's Board of Directors for its part "in creating sustainable community." The winery was one of 38 recognized in 2004 by Portland General Electric and the Bonneville Environmental Foundation for its support of renewable power in Oregon. Susan Sokol Blosser was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Public Service from the University of Portland for business entrepreneurship within the context of sustainability and community service. In 2007 awarded the City of Portland, BEST award for Small Business, a Finalist in State of Oregon Sustainability Awards and the winner of the Sunset magazine's "Green Winery of the Year Award."

### **Lessons Learned**

- Switching from traditional farming practices to organic takes time. "It's like trying to move a patient who is on life-support (in this case, plants being force-fed fertilizer), to one that can live and eat on its own. If you try to do it all at once, the system can't handle it, and you'll have problems." Similarly, switching from an unsustainable organization to a sustainable one must also happen slowly. "Over time, sustainability drills down, and you get new insights about what you must do."
- Don't expect your customers to pay more for organic or sustainability. "I don't think most customers care right now. Maybe someday more will. We do it because it's just who we are. As Jane Emrick said, 'Once you 'get' sustainability, there's no going back.'"
- Balance the cost of choices. Some things may save you money; some sustainable options will cost more. Try to balance these choices so that you are at least no worse off economically.
- It is critical to have the whole staff on board and willing to look at everything they do (at least at work) through the lens of sustainability. This takes not only sustainability training but also reinforcement and continuing education.

### **3. Outcomes and Benefits**

The benefits for the environment are numerous and the focus of our practices but it's the unforeseen benefits that are the surprise. When we reduced our bottle weight for

example we saw a decrease in worker's comp claims for back strain. The lighter cases made it much easier on the staff. Our community outreach and encouragement for our staff to participate in charities or non profits adds a sense of value and purpose to what we do. We provide 2 paid days a year for volunteer work and it's programs like this that help rank us as one of the top 100 companies to work for in Oregon by the Oregon Business Council.

#### **4. Relevance to Travelers**

One of the biggest benefits to travelers is visiting a place and supporting a business that is doing good for the environment. We believe wholeheartedly that our business of wine, food and hospitality can have a positive impact on the world around us. Visiting Sokol Blosser our guests get an opportunity not only to experience world class Pinot Noir but also learn about the good to the earth way in which it is produced and feel a part of it. We offer extensive tours of the property focusing on many different topics from sustainability, wine making, organic vineyard practices and Oregon's wine history. We work with different travel organization to set up these tours and always welcome new ideas on how we can improve and broaden our scope.