



## Green Lodging Program - State of Florida

### Contact

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### 1. Overview

The Florida Green Lodging Program is an effort by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to encourage the lodging industry to conserve and protect Florida's natural resources. Hotels and Motels that implement a waste reduction plan can save money and get good publicity while helping the environment. The lodging industry is one of Florida's largest commercial sectors. In 2005, according to research conducted by VISIT FLORIDA®, 83.6 million people visited Florida with about 50 percent of those staying in a hotel, motel or bed & breakfast. With this many visitors, the lodging industry can have a significant and positive impact on Florida's natural resources. Properties of all sizes and types are encouraged to join the program, from the quaint bed & breakfast to the large resort complex.

The forerunners of the Florida *Green Lodging* Program have demonstrated their commitment to succeed in protecting Florida's resources while also saving money and garnering good publicity. There is an enormous collection of resources available to lodging facilities that become designated members of the Florida *Green Lodging* Program. Reduced costs through partnerships, free technical support and advice are available to help make the process as easy as possible.

### 2. Program Establishment

The Florida *Green Lodging* Program was established in 2004 by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) with the intent of recognizing and rewarding environmentally conscientious lodging facilities in the state. Through this rapidly growing program DEP encourages the lodging industry engage in an all-inclusive list of environmental initiatives that are specific to protecting and preserving Florida's natural resources.

On July 13, 2007, Governor Charlie Crist signed three executive orders to reduce Florida's greenhouse gas emissions, increase energy efficiency, and remove market barriers for renewable energy technologies such as solar and wind energy. Section 4 of Executive Order 07-126 required that as of January 1, 2008, state agencies and departments under the direction of the Governor could not contract for meeting and conference space with hotels or conference facilities that had not received the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) *Green Lodging* program designation for best practices in water, energy, and waste efficiency standards, except when certified to the Governor by the responsible agency head that no other viable alternative existed.

In June 2008, Governor Crist signed House Bill 7135, "The Energy, Climate Change, And Economic Security Act Of 2008", which built upon the framework of the executive orders and expanded the *Green Lodging* meeting and conference requirement of Executive Order 07-126 from state agencies under the Governor's direction to all state agencies. This comprehensive energy and economic development legislation also encompassed reducing greenhouse gas emissions as well as encouraging investment in alternative and renewable energy technologies.

**Green Lodging PROGRAM – Section 286.29, "The Energy, Climate Change, And Economic Security Act Of 2008" states:** *"Effective July 1, 2008, state agencies shall contract for meeting and conference space only with hotels or conference facilities that have received the "Green Lodging" designation from the Department of Environmental Protection for best practices in water, energy, and waste efficiency standards, unless the responsible state agency head makes a determination that no other viable alternative exists."*

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection outlines the following elements implementing a successful Green Lodging Program:

1. Identify an environmental champion.

A successful program needs an enthusiastic person with good communication and organizational skills who can get everyone working together as a team. The "environmental champion" does not necessarily have to be an environmental specialist; many champions have come from areas such as personnel, food and beverage, administrative offices and engineering. The environmental champion will serve as a liaison between the FGLC Program Office and the hotel/motel during the certification process.

2. Obtain top management commitment and submit the admission application.

The most important ingredient for a successful environmental initiative is General Manager commitment. Having official sanction will let employees know that resource conservation is an important work responsibility. Once upper management has decided to pursue certification, complete this application. Once received, the FGLC Program Office will assign a liaison to assist you in the certification process and/or answer any questions.

3. Create a Green Team.

A "Green Team" can be a formal or informal group responsible for ensuring that all environmental improvement practices in which the hotel is participating are being performed timely and correctly. A Green Team is usually comprised of individuals from each area of the hotel/motel, namely: housekeeping, engineering, kitchen, front office, maintenance and upper management.

#### 4. Conduct an environmental assessment.

How green is your facility right now? The Green Team should identify and evaluate opportunities to improve environmental performance by conducting a walk through of the hotel property. An Environmental Self-Assessment and Planning Checklist has been designed to provide guidance in obtaining baseline data ([www.FloridaGreenLodging.org](http://www.FloridaGreenLodging.org)). A review of product purchases, utility bills and hauling records will help determine environmental baselines.

#### 5. Establish goals and identify environmental improvement projects.

The Green Team should set goals for improvement. Goals should include short- and long-term benchmarks (e.g. reduce electricity usage by 10% during the next year; reuse or recycle all corrugated cardboard; and reduce water usage by 15% by implementing a sheet and towel reuse program). To meet these goals, refer to the list of best management practices at [www.FloridaGreenLodging.org](http://www.FloridaGreenLodging.org) for ideas on environmental improvement projects.

#### 6. Submit your environmental baseline data to the FGLC Program Office.

Once the Green Team has completed the Environmental Self-Assessment and Planning Checklist, submit it to the FGLC Program Office. Once received and approved, the hotel will be recognized as a Florida Green Lodge “candidate” on the FGLC Program website.

#### 7. Implement environmental improvement projects.

Begin implementing your environmental improvement projects. Remember staff training is a crucial part of a hotel’s environmental performance. Both new and veteran employees will benefit from ongoing training on resource conservation techniques.

#### 8. Evaluate and monitor the program.

Periodically monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the improvement projects and make any changes necessary to improve performance. Keep your staff informed about their accomplishments.

#### 9. Schedule on-site certifying visit.

Once the Green Team feels they have satisfied the certification criteria, a brief on-site visit from a trained assessor is required. Fill out and submit the Request for On-site Certification Review form. A visit won’t be scheduled until a completed application is received. The purpose of the visit is to determine if all the criteria have been met. A hotel will be notified of the decision within 30 days of the visit. Upon receiving certification, the hotel’s name and accomplishments will be posted on the Florida Green Lodge web locator and the hotel will receive all the benefits outlined in Section IV.

#### 10. Practice continual improvement.

A Florida Green Lodge strives for continual improvement. After receiving certification, new goals and improvement projects must be established. After the first year, the hotel simply performs a self-assessment by evaluating utility and other bills to document changes in environmental performance since becoming a Florida Green Lodge. After the second year, the hotel will be re-certified by brief visit from a trained assessor.

### 3. Goals and Benchmarking

The Florida *Green Lodging* Program (FGLP) is an effort initiated by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to encourage the lodging industry to conserve and protect Florida's natural resources. Hotels and motels that implement “green” practices have found that they can save money and generate good publicity while helping protect the environment. Benchmarks are set by documentation of baselines and current usage of water consumption, generated wastewater, energy used, waste disposed and generated hazardous waste.

Becoming a designated member of the Florida *Green Lodging* Program means more than simply implementing a few environmental activities. The designation process has been designed to help encourage and reinforce sustainable behaviors that lead to positive results both for the environment and your hotel's bottom line.

The following list represents the typical sequence of activities a hotel must pursue to achieve *Green Lodging* designation. A certain degree of flexibility has been built into the process to allow hotel management the ability to choose environmental efforts to best suits their needs and situation. The journey to the first level designation (One Palm) can take up to a year. Afterwards, continuous environmental improvement will be required to move on to Two Palm or Three Palm Status levels.

The main purpose of the designation program is to encourage hotels to understand and improve their environmental performance rather than simply implement a few green practices. To become a designated member of the Florida *Green Lodging* Program (FGLP) at any level, a hotel must satisfy the following criteria:



#### **One Palm Status**

Organization and Commitment: Activities include obtaining support from top management, forming an active multi-disciplinary “Green Team”, and operating in compliance with all applicable environmental regulations.



#### **Two Palm Status**

Maintain One Palm Status: You must maintain the facility's One Palm status for at least 12 consecutive months prior to applying for Two Palm status.

Performance Improvement: Activities include conducting an environmental baseline assessment, developing and implementing performance improvement goals, implementing green projects and evaluating progress.



### **Three Palm Status**

Three palm status occurs when a hotel is designated as Two Palm and has shown continual improvement for three consecutive years. To retain this status level, the facility must maintain or improve its high level of commitment to the Florida *Green Lodging* program.

#### **4. Outcomes and Environmental Benefits**

The benefits of energy efficiency are not financial alone. 2001 Energy Star® Award Winner Hilton Hotels' energy management plan resulted in a savings of nearly 43 million kWh of electricity per year and the prevention of 65 million pounds of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions - the equivalent of removing 6,450 cars from the road in the year 2000.

#### **5. Relevance to Traveler or Travel Industry**

Hotels will seek to become a designated member of the Florida *Green Lodging* Program for different reasons. Some will implement environmental improvements to reduce operating costs. Others will recognize an opportunity to generate additional revenue by attracting environmentally-conscious business travelers, meeting planners and vacationing families. And yet others will regard it as simply the right thing to do. Over the past few decades, clean air practices have become increasingly important in progressive hotel management. This is directly related to energy efficiency and reduced exposure to health related liability, as well as other positive impacts on the "bottom line," not the least of which is employee and guest relations.

- Hotels who reach the "applicant" stage will be posted on the FGLP Web site. They will be eligible for certain promotional items such as towel reuse door hangers (while supplies last), and be eligible for group purchasing discounts on "green" supplies through FGLP business partners.
- In addition, hotels that go on to become a designated member will have their contact information placed on the Florida *Green Lodging* Designated Properties Web site. Designated members will also receive a Florida *Green Lodging* flag to fly on the property and other promotional materials to show commitment to the environment.

#### **6. Real World Example**

The Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort and Spa in Bonita Springs has implemented many of the Florida Green Lodging Program designation strategies to conserve water and energy and reduce waste. With 454 rooms, practicing conservation and recycling has had a huge impact on the environment and saving money.

Water reuse is practiced in several areas, including washing machines, and water from the cooling tower is used for irrigation. Fountains re-circulate water during normal operations

and are turned off during high winds to prevent water loss. In one year, these and other conservation strategies have saved more than 15.2 million gallons of water.

By using preventative maintenance schedules, an energy management system and other simple tactics like curtaining walk-in coolers and weighing laundry for maximum loads, the resort has saved over 200,000 kilowatts of electricity. With today's energy rates, this amounts to over \$14,000 a year.

Through recycling and diverting materials from the waste stream, 24,000 pounds of recoverable materials were prevented from ending up in a landfill.

The Palm Plaza Oceanfront Resort and Beachside Motel in Daytona Beach has risen to the challenges required to become Florida Green Lodging Program designated property by implementing several green practices that are already producing significant savings.

One of the changes, installing high efficiency air conditioning filters to replace the old less efficient filters, resulted in savings of \$10 a month, per room.

And they are saving \$529 a month on their waste bill after implementing a recycling program that decreased the volume of trash produced and, in turn, reduced the number of trash pick-ups required.