

Make a New Year's Resolution to Go Green!

It's a new year and we're ready to take sustainability at the NIH even further in 2020! This time of year, it's very popular to make a New Year's resolution for the upcoming year. We're asking you to consider making a resolution to reduce your environmental footprint, whether it be at home, at work, or both! Below, we have listed a variety of initiatives that we covered from 2019. Our hope is that seeing what others accomplished last year will give you inspiration for this year. Even choosing to do something as easy as verifying the acceptable items for your home recycling or choosing to carpool once a week can have an influence on the environment.

Here's what others from the NIH worked on in 2019:

- [Report invasive species on the NIH campus!](#) If you are wandering an NIH campus and happen to notice an invasive species, like Canada thistle, you can report the location. This helps our grounds crew eliminate potential infestations before they get a foothold. There are also many volunteer programs for removing invasive species off-campus.
- [Promote proper recycling practices!](#) Only clean and empty items should be recycled. In addition, items must be placed in the correct bin. For example, the large recycling collections in the NIH cafeterias can accept plastic water bottles and aluminum soda cans, but not plastic bags or soiled paper plates.
- [Start a Styrofoam return program for your building!](#) A few companies, like Thermo Fisher, have begun programs to collect their Styrofoam packaging materials in order to reuse them. A return program was arranged in Building 50 and you can organize one in your building too!
- [Reduce the quantity of toxic substances in your lab!](#) Eliminating hazardous substances and replacing them with a safer substitute helps to increase your safety and reduce the impact of an accidental spill.
- [Gather your unused prescription drugs for a Drug Take Back Day!](#) Disposing pharmaceuticals down the drain at home introduces these substances into the environment. It is much safer to dispose of unused prescription drugs through a Drug Take Back Day so the DEA can properly dispose of these items. Remember: it is illegal to dispose of these items down the drain in the workplace; these should be collected as hazardous waste.
- [Participate in Bike to Work Day!](#) The NIH has routinely been the largest employer of participants in the D.C.-area Bike to Work Day. Join your co-workers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and get active.
- [Take a nature walk around your NIH campus!](#) Whether it's the NIH Stream on the Bethesda campus, Discovery Lake on the RTP campus or any other campus, there is a lot of nature around us. You can even turn your walk into a miniature clean-up activity.
- [Join the NIH Freezer Challenge!](#) This is a voluntary program that allows labs to choose the ways they want to go above and beyond the NIH Freezer Policy. The first challenge in 2019 provided promising results and we're looking forward to increasing participation for [the 2020 event](#).

- [Attend the Green Labs Fair!](#) This annual event is dedicated to improving sustainability in the labs at the NIH. The Green Labs Fair typically features vendors showcasing their green products, NIH staff discussing their green initiatives and DEP staff promoting their environmental programs.
- [Reduce your electricity use!](#) There are many ways each of us can reduce our personal electricity consumption, such as taking the stairs to lessen elevator use and turning off lights and equipment when they are not in use. Please consider these four easy methods suggested by the ORF/ORS Green Team.
- [Start recycling your plastic film!](#) There are approximately 20 collection sites for plastic films across the Bethesda campus. You can even begin a new collection for your office or lab.
- [Certify your lab with the Green Labs Program!](#) This program awards labs with varying certification levels based on their green practices. The 2019 program has closed, but details on the 2020 program will be shared once they are available.
- [Take part in America Recycles Day!](#) Every year, November 15 is recognized as the national day for improving and increasing recycling throughout America. The NIH has celebrated America Recycles Day for many years and often holds special recycling collections and tabling events to increase recycling knowledge. Stop by a table or collection during this year's event!
- [Claim free property using the Excess Product Catalog!](#) This online catalog lists the accountable surplus items available to be claimed by NIH staff. Utilizing this service helps save NIH funding while also reducing waste. Take a look at the catalog today to see if there is anything you can use.
- [Add some plants to your work area!](#) Spruce up your work space by adding some plants, which are thought to improve happiness and productivity. A group of NIH staff from NIAID added some planters for winter vegetables to their balcony area. See if you can think of another way to add plants to your work space.