

Proposal to Unitarian-Universalist Association (UUA) for RRUUC
Candidacy of Green Sanctuary Re-Accreditation
Submitted August 2020

For Green Sanctuary Re-Accreditation, UUA requires an update on actions approved in RRUUC's original accreditation in 2006; and new actions demonstrating compliance in three categories—mitigation of global warming, adaptation to climate change, and climate justice. After UUA reviews our proposal, RRUUC will receive feedback and recommendations for further actions from UUA's Ministry for the Earth. When RRUUC completes actions in the final Action Plan, our congregation will be re-accredited as a Green Sanctuary, potentially a multi-year process.

2020 Green Sanctuary Action Plan

Mitigation

1. Support broad adoption of renewable energy throughout RRUUC facilities
2. Become a zero plastic water bottle congregation
3. Partially replace auto transport with online options for Sunday services and meetings
4. Reduce methane emissions by providing plant-based meals
5. Institutionalize composting and recycling practices

Adaptation & Resilience

6. Grow spiritual and emotional engagement with nature across RE spectrum
7. Promote sustainable grounds management

Justice & Activism

8. Partner with on-site projects to reduce risks associated with prolonged environmental racism
9. Reach across RRUUC to institutionalize environmental activism

MITIGATION

Actions to reduce the causes of global warming

1. REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS: Conduct an energy tune-up to support broad adoption of renewable energy throughout congregation facilities.

Project Description: Despite the addition of a building wing in 2008 and renovation work on our 55-year old building in 2015, RRUUC has not conducted a dedicated professional energy audit for its building since 2003 prior to its original Green Sanctuary application in 2006. As a 2020 Green Sanctuary goal, we will get a professional energy tune-up aimed at developing a list of recommended strategies to reduce the building's energy and water consumption. The next step will be to enact those improvements over a two-year period.

Timeline: a. Transition to buying cleaner electricity from renewable sources for RRUUC facility. **To be completed in September 2020.**

b. Choose energy consultant to conduct tune-up, September 2020. Submission to Pepco Energy Tune-up program to be completed in fall 2020.

c. Participate in long-term building planning to respond to global warming. Under way.

Leads: Marcie Meditch, Building Committee; Bruce Davis, Earth Ministry

2. REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS: Install a water bottle refilling station as a first step toward becoming a zero plastic water bottle congregation

Project Description: Beginning with fossil fuel extraction, refining and manufacturing plastics, the management of plastic waste and pollution has become one of the planet's most urgent crisis. Pollution caused by single-use plastic water bottles are not only a huge problem for the interdependent web of existence, but the lifecycle of plastic threatens the ability of the global community to keep global temperature rise below 1.5°C. RRUUC is addressing the problem by

installing its first water bottle refilling station and by providing Green Sanctuary stainless steel water bottles as gifts for donations to raise funds for additional Green Sanctuary projects.

Timeline: a. Weekly stainless steel water bottles sales at BLM vigil. **Completed August 2020.**

[Water Bottle Fundraiser1.mp4](#)

b. Installation of water bottle refilling station. **Construction completed; final installation, fall 2020.**

c. An ongoing program to educate the congregation about the serious environmental effects of plastic production and waste, and the importance of maintaining unpolluted waterways to protect wildlife. Spring 2021

Lead: Leigh Scott, Animal Ministry

In fall 2019, RRUUC's Earth Ministry hosted a powerful five-session workshop on Project Drawdown, an international step-by-step plan to reduce global warming. Among the lifestyle changes targeted by Drawdown and adopted as projects by Green Sanctuary are 1.) providing online meeting options; 2.) offering plant-based menus at RRUUC functions; and 3.) improving composting/recycling practices.

3. REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS: Meet Drawdown Goal #49

Reduce Fossil Fuel Emissions by Partially Replacing Auto Transport with Options for Online Sunday Services and Meetings

Project Description: Replacing car travel with online congregational meetings during COVID-19 has resulted in reduced fossil fuel emissions and improved air quality in our community. To keep our community connected during the pandemic, the 2020-21 budget for RRUUC calls for a significant investment to enhance audio-visual capacity needed to stream Sunday services and allow for on-line rather than in-person meetings. The Technology Committee will communicate the new streaming and meeting capabilities to ministers, lay leaders, committee chairs, and others to encourage the option of virtual rather than face-to-face meetings.

Timeline: a. Technical requirements evaluated: **Completed August 2020**

b. Adapt streaming to congregational events: Lead: RRUUC Staff; Glen Peppel, Board of Trustees

4. REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS: Meet Drawdown Goal #4

Reduce Methane Emissions by Providing Plant-Based Meals

Project Description: Because animals emit methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, in their waste, animal agriculture is a significant contributor to climate change. Project Drawdown has ranked increased plant-food consumption, and the associated decreased animal-food consumption, as number four in the top ten solutions for reversing global warming. Our intention is to switch the default menu at RRUUC to a plant-based menu with a meat-based option being available but not given top billing. The Animal Ministry team will develop guidelines for offering plant-based meals at RRUUC events and will be available to provide information and assistance to anyone who needs guidance in order to make the switch.

Timeline: Planning begins Fall 2020; Implementation begins Spring 2021.

Lead: Leigh Scott, Animal Ministry

5. REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS: Meet Drawdown Goal #60

Upgrade and institutionalize our composting and recycling practices

Project Description: Composting at RRUUC began informally in 2008 as an outgrowth of the RE vegetable garden. However, with its active program of community gatherings, including rentals, the need to focus more intentionally on disposing of organic material has grown at RRUUC. In addition, RRUUC will adopt policies to eliminate the use of Styrofoam on our premises and will modify its rental agreements to ensure that our composting/recycling practices are followed at non-RRUUC events. A dedicated volunteer effort will be conducted to train the RRUUC kitchen crew in composting and recycling procedures.

Timeline: Survey composting services and explore adding new bins, fall 2020; volunteer and staff education after COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. Leads: Sarah Price, Youth; Mandy Wimmer, Kitchen Crew

ADAPTATION & RESILIENCE

Making the most of positive responses to the climate crisis

6. DEEPEN CONNECTIONS WITH NATURE: Grow spiritual and emotional engagement with nature across the RE spectrum

Project Description: RRUUC grounds consist of 4.5 acres of natural forests, a dirt path, a stream, and a largely unused outdoor amphitheater with log seating. Premised on the belief that people will value and protect what they understand and love, RRUUC is developing a “Sense of Wonder” program for nature for children and adults. Activities will include monthly nature walks, hands-on RE activities, such as tree plantings, and conducting small group discussions for youth and adults on timely nature topics. To reflect RRUUC’s congregational mission to support “*Fellowship, Spirit and Service,*” monthly Spirituality in Nature Group (SING) contemplative walks will continue on RRUUC grounds as part of the Adult RE Spiritual Development program. Opportunities for virtual participation in outdoor rituals will be explored.

Timeline: Fall 2020, on RRUUC grounds if possible while COVID-19 restrictions are in place; Spring 2021, Leads: Joe Saliunas, Sarah Price, Charlotte Moser

7. SUSTAINABLE GROUNDS MANAGEMENT: Promoting native ecosystems

Project Description: This project models sustainable grounds management for the RRUUC community. In the Potomac River watershed where RRUUC is located, many native plant species have successfully adapted to climate change, evidence of the ability of nature to adapt to environmental changes. This project aims to maximize the return of native plantings to RRUUC grounds to maintain healthy ecosystems that reflect the interdependent web of life between

plants, pollinators and animals. It also demonstrates healthy mosquito control measures (especially for on-site day care) through elimination of standing water in containers, proper maintenance of gutters and drainage, use of organic/non-chemical controls that eliminate or minimize the need for use of chemical-based sprays that kill all insects non-selectively (like current Mosquito Patrol vendor used by the day care); and reduce stormwater run-off by taking advantage of existing ground to slow down, spread out, and soak up stormwater on-site. Recently purchased battery-powered lawnmower and other tools, replacing fossil fuel powered lawn equipment, will be used.

Timeline: On-going maintenance and improvements. Lead: Joe Saliunas, Grounds

JUSTICE & ACTIVISM

Working in partnership with communities undergoing environmental stress

8. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: Partner with Engaging Communities Pathway of RRUUC's Racial Justice Task Force

Project Description: To engage RRUUC members in building relationships with marginalized Maryland communities, we will work with two communities to advance environmental justice where they live: in Baltimore with Amazing Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, and in Silver Spring with Clifton Park Baptist Church. The projected outcome will be to reduce ecological damage, pollution, and health risks associated with prolonged environmental racism. The process will be supported by community organizing, political advocacy, and financial resources from RRUUC members. In April, during Earth Month, we will solicit contributions for our work in these two communities from the RRUUC congregants through an all-congregation coffee hour and the Extend the Offering (ETO) for that month.

Timeline: When COVID restrictions are lifted, the projects will begin with resident-directed environmental assessments of both communities, followed by creation of plans, including timelines, to reduce environmental degradation in the neighborhoods. Plans will be executed

under the direction of each of the two communities. Leads: David Ward and Lynn Donham, Engaging Communities of the Racial Justice Task Force

9. CLIMATE ADVOCACY: Reach across RRUUC to institutionalize environmental activism

Project Description: RRUUC voted in 2018 to affiliate with MC-FACS, the Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions, a county-wide coalition of faith-based organizations actively involved in climate advocacy. In 2018 and 2019, RRUUC's Earth Ministry committed to environmental advocacy as its highest priority. This includes continual workshops for congregants on obtaining renewable energy and energy efficiency for their homes.

Timeline: a. Conduct intergenerational lay-led service advocating for climate action. Completed: Moral Responses to the Climate Change Emergency, August 2020

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F45_0Xbte04

b. Encourage our Youth Group to become involved with student-led climate activism through MoCo Students for Climate to grow a passion for environmental activism.

c. Ongoing: Participate in MC-FACS climate advocacy

d. Ongoing: Letter writing to Congress on environmental issues through UUSJ Advocacy Corp

Leads: Jack Lebowitz and Walter Weiss, Earth Ministry. Sarah Price, Youth

If you would like to help RRUUC achieve any of these goals, please contact the project leads or send an email to the address below.

Have other ideas of what RRUUC's Green Sanctuary goals might include?

Send your thoughts in an email to GreenSanctuary@rruuc.org