



ReSport

Council For Responsible Sport

**The State of Sustainable Sport
Pilot Program Case Study**

December 2008

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
ReSport Pilot Program	5
ReSport Certification Standard	7
Waste	7
Climate	8
Equipment & Materials	8
Community & Outreach	9
Health Promotion	10
Innovation	11
Best Practices	12
The Value of Certification	15
Moving Forward	16
Appendix A	18
ReSport Certification Standard Review Team	
Appendix B	20
Pilot Event Assessments	
CB&I Triathlon	21
Keuka Lake Triathlon	24
Philadelphia Insurance Triathlon	26
Deschutes Dash	28
Urban Epic	30
Haulin' Aspen	33
City of Portland Triathlon	35
Peregrine Charities Triathlon	39
Hartford Marathon	41
Nike Women's Marathon	45
Marin County Triathlon.....	48
Appendix C	52
Carbon Offsets for Participant Travel	

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Executive Summary

The Council for Responsible Sport was formed in September of 2007 to develop an independent, comprehensive certification for sustainable athletic events. By defining realistic objectives and providing a framework for achieving them, the Council enables event directors to incorporate environmental and social responsibility into their events while informing consumers which events adhere to these standards.

The Problem

Two fundamental issues exist in the way sporting events are currently produced. The first is that they are inherently wasteful – a pastime activity practiced by large numbers of people has the potential for leaving behind a considerable footprint. Second, no significant incentives exist to encourage event producers to minimize this impact. Consider the 2007 Ironman World Championship in Kona, Hawaii as an example. The race attracted 1,787 participants from across the globe – only 68 were from the state of Hawaii – who traveled a combined 18,312,992 miles to the event. This translates into the equivalent of 10,853 metric tons of greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere – the same amount produced by powering and heating 972 average American homes for one year.

The Solution

A growing number of sporting events are taking steps to mitigate these harmful environmental effects. The Council for Responsible Sport legitimizes these efforts and creates an environment where market forces (i.e. consumer demand) can produce tangible incentive for event directors. The mechanism for identifying responsibly-produced events is a public certification based on known best practices.

Throughout 2008, the Council for Responsible Sport conducted a pilot study to assess the state of sporting event production in terms of environmental and social sustainability. This paper summarizes the findings of this study, including individual case studies of each participating event. The knowledge gained from the pilot program shape the Council's certification process and criteria for 2009, which will be open to all interested mass participation sporting events.

Major findings of the pilot study include:

- The sporting event industry has a need for the verification of "green" marketing claims. (For purposes of this report, "green" is defined as more environmentally responsible.)
- Creative, realistic, environmentally-minded solutions exist for common event production tasks.
- Incorporating environmental and social considerations into an event does not necessarily translate into steeper production costs.
- A number of events across the country are making significant strides toward "zero waste" and carbon neutrality.
- There is a willingness by participants to accept environmentally-friendly alternatives to traditional materials, products, and methods.
- Responsible event production opportunities exist regardless of event size or geographic location.
- With proper planning, producing a new event responsibly can be just as easy as greening an existing event.

ReSport Certification Standard

Modeled off the LEED standards administered by the US Green Building Council, standards set forth by the Council for Responsible Sport reward events undertaking initiatives in five different categories of environmental and social sustainability. Specific, measurable credits can be earned in areas of waste, climate, equipment and materials, community and outreach, and health promotion. In addition to providing incentive, the ReSport Standards also serve as a roadmap for events interested in developing a long-term sustainability strategy.

Best Practices

A comprehensive evaluation of participating pilot program events exposed a set of best practices for furthering the tenets of responsible production. Events were far more likely to reach their sustainability goals if they effectively engaged participants, integrated their chosen green initiatives into multiple facets of the event production process, exercised creativity, and identified ways that responsible event production could legitimately reduce their bottom line.

As a result of implementing these practices, events in the ReSport Pilot Program:

- offset 598 metric tons of generated CO₂, equivalent to the carbon sequestered by 15,332 tree seedlings grown for 10 years;
- directly engaged 35,960 participants with a message of environmental and social responsibility; and
- minimized landfill waste to levels below 1 pound per participant.
 - Marin County Triathlon generated 0.07 lbs/participant
 - Keuka Lake Triathlon generated 0.34 lbs/participant
 - ING Hartford Marathon generated 0.41 lbs/participant
 - Urban Epic generated 0.42 lbs/participant

Moving Forward

Sporting events are just beginning to lessen their environmental footprint. But the potential for adopted practices to effect widespread, societal change is vast – sport has the unique ability to incite passion, reach across social and economic classes, and affect behaviors in both those who participate and those who watch from the sidelines.

Certification is a mechanism for promoting less harmful methods and materials. By identifying responsibly-produced events through a common set of standards, marketplace differentiation can occur and consumers can exercise choice. Over time, this model encourages a fundamental shift in the ways we practice sport.

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ReSport Pilot Program

Throughout 2008, the Council for Responsible Sport conducted a pilot study to assess the state of sporting event production in terms of environmental and social sustainability. Fifteen events were invited to participate, with 11 ultimately fulfilling the requirements of the program.

Interested events were identified in February 2008 through an RFP process. From the 35 mass participation events (running, cycling, triathlon) that submitted proposals, events were selected to participate on the basis of variety - a combination of large and small, new and existing, and geographically diverse events were desired. Participating events were asked to provide travel and lodging for an attending ReSport representative, and they were asked to document their sustainability initiatives in advance of race day according to a system of credits. At the event, ReSport gathered further documentation (including pictures) and verified that the event had fulfilled its targeted credits. In the weeks following the event, event directors were asked to furnish follow-up evidence (like the weight of trash generated) to further document requested credits.

Participating events ranged from new to established, represented a wide variety of geographic regions in the United States, and comprised large and small triathlons and running races. Pilot events included:

- CB&I Triathlon (Woodlands, TX), May 3, 2008
- Keuka Lake Triathlon (Keuka Park, NY), June 8, 2008
- Philadelphia Insurance Triathlon (Philadelphia, PA), June 22, 2008
- Deschutes Dash (Bend, OR), July 19, 2008
- Urban Epic (Portland, ME), July 26, 2008
- Haulin' Aspen (Bend, OR), August 10, 2008
- City of Portland Triathlon (Portland, OR), August 31, 2008
- Peregrine Charities Triathlon (Waterloo, IA), September 28, 2008
- ING Hartford Marathon (Hartford, CT), October 11, 2008
- Nike Women's Marathon (San Francisco, CA), October 19, 2008
- Marin County Triathlon (San Rafael, CA), October 26, 2008

It is important to note that all participating events expressed an initial interest in being a green event, and many of them had initiatives already in place. Thus, the pilot study does not represent a cross-section of marathons and triathlons nationwide; rather, it surveyed the most progressive end of the spectrum in attempts to document best practices.



custom medals made from recycled bike cogs at the Marin County Triathlon

Assessments of each pilot event can be found in Appendix B. The identified best practices form the backbone of the ReSport Certification Standards version 2.0, which will be released in December 2008, and events will be able to apply for certification starting in January 2009. As a result of credits earned during the pilot study, seven events achieved ReSport Certification valid for one year:



ReSport Certified (Evergreen)
Marin County Triathlon (San Rafael, CA) – 37 credits



ReSport Certified (Gold)
ING Hartford Marathon (Hartford, CT) – 31 credits



ReSport Certified (Silver)
City of Portland Triathlon (Portland, OR) – 29 credits



ReSport Certified
Nike Women's Marathon (San Francisco, CA) – 23 credits
Keuka Lake Triathlon (Keuka Park, NY) – 23 credits
Deschutes Dash (Bend, OR) – 22 credits
Haulin' Aspen (Bend, OR) – 22 credits

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ReSport Certification Standard

The ReSport Certification Standard consists of five categories of sustainability:

1. Waste
2. Climate
3. Equipment & Materials
4. Community & Outreach
5. Health Promotion

The first release of the certification standard (March 2008) defined 39 credits that events could target. One credit is awarded for each standard met, with three additional credits available for innovative practices not defined in the five main categories. Based on earned credits, events can qualify for four levels of sustainability:

Evergreen	36+ credits
Gold	31-35 credits
Silver	26-30 credits
Certified	21-25 credits

To be eligible for the certification review process, events must first meet three prerequisites. The event must:

1. create a written plan for addressing environmental and social sustainability;
2. notify the public that certification is being pursued; and
3. must recycle (with on-site stations) at least one of the following: cardboard, paper, metal, plastic, or glass.

The following sections describe the credits available and offer general approaches to address each category. The complete ReSport Certification Standard can be found in Appendix A.

Waste [credits 1.1-1.9]

For many of the pilot events, this category served as the primary focus for their green initiatives. Although sport has not yet seen a "zero waste" event, each pilot event made significant strides to reduce the amount of waste destined for the landfill. Trash was diverted to material recovery facilities (MRFs) for sorting and recycling, and an increase in composting of food waste and use of compostable service items further bolstered diversion rates.

The greatest success in the recovery of recyclable materials and compostables was achieved as a result of strategically-placed disposal clusters at the event site. These clusters needed to be highly visible, convenient, and clearly marked with instructions - including pictures. Clusters accompanied by knowledgeable volunteers were found to be the most successful method of educating participants and ensuring minimal cross-contamination.

The *ING Hartford Marathon* conducted analysis to determine the best locations for manned single stream collection containers in heavy traffic areas. It also distributed plastic, aluminum, and glass recycling containers throughout the race site, with collection points designed to accommodate areas where crowd traffic did not warrant attended, single stream stations.



ING Hartford Marathon's disposal instructions

In efforts to reduce total waste, events also used fewer materials from the start. The common practice of offering only online registration helped to avoid paper waste - a 1,000-participant event could save 900 sheets of paper or more through this simple step. The *CB&I Triathlon* in The Woodlands, Texas made specific requests to event sponsors to package post-race food items in bulk, recyclable containers rather than single-serve. At the *Nike Women's Marathon* in San Francisco, an innovative volunteer offered water bottle refills from a large water jug instead of handing out single-use cups. An increase in the use of digital communication (blogs, forums, emails, video, etc) reduced the amount of printed materials required to dispense instructions. And "giveaway" items such as energy bars were made available to athletes at packet pickup, instead of being placed in individual participant bags.

It is common for races to reuse or rent race equipment from year to year, but materials such as branded collateral, banners, etc. often make their way into the trash after each event. The *Nike Women's Marathon* creates freshly branded collateral annually. In 2008, however, these items were designed without grommets - which reduced their production cost and made them easier to reuse - and they were then donated to a local art non-profit to be used in student art projects.

Climate [credits 2.1-2.8]

With the rapid onset of global climate change, this category assumes increased importance, yet it was found to be the most difficult for events to achieve. Not surprisingly, the easiest credits to earn were most often applied for: replacing support vehicles on the race course with bicycles; providing secure bike parking and alternative-fuel shuttles; and facilitating carpools. Events were most challenged to source food locally and to obtain energy from renewable sources. Two events were produced "off the grid:" the *City of Portland Triathlon* and the *Marin County Triathlon* used mobile solar panels to furnish electricity. These two events were also the only ones able to source all food served from within 250 miles of the race site.

Two approaches were commonly used to offset an event's carbon footprint. One approach implemented by the *City of Portland Triathlon* allowed participants to offset their emissions generated during travel to the race through a module tied directly into the online registration system. This approach resulted in 40% of the competitors choosing to offset (see Appendix C). Another approach used by the *ING Hartford Marathon* was to calculate the entire carbon footprint of event-related activities, including athlete travel, the pre-race pasta party, race production needs, etc. and to purchase carbon credits to offset their equivalent emissions. The latter is more costly and does not engage the participant, but it has the benefit of dealing with all emissions produced by the event. A mix of the two solutions - providing athletes the ability to offset their travel at the point of registration, and the event offsetting all other emissions - would represent the best practice in dealing with an event's carbon footprint.



Marin County Triathlon award

Equipment & Materials [credits 3.1-3.8]

This category indirectly addresses the issue of waste generated by mass participation sporting events by encouraging advance planning and deliberate decision-making. By taking a critical look at traditional materials used and exploring viable alternatives, events can greatly reduce the amount of waste by sourcing more products that can be recycled, composted, or reused

Instead of providing finishers with the ubiquitous medal, the *Deschutes Dash* and *Haulin' Aspen*, both produced by Freshair Sports, employed local artists to create medals out of scrap sheet metal. Additionally, all age group winners received unique commissioned pieces of art as their award. The *City of Portland Triathlon* and *Marin County Triathlon* recycled bicycle cogs for medals. The *Nike Women's Marathon* made 147 age group awards