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Park prefers biobased products for new building

It's hard not to miss the 25,000 images carved by native people in the rocks at Petroglyph National Monument near Albuquerque, N.M. Not so obvious are the biobased products in the 2,400-square-foot storage building under construction.

The interior walls were recently painted with DuraSoy One™ from EcoSafety Products (www.ecosafetyproducts.com) of Phoenix, Ariz. The concrete floors soon will be stained with a soy-derived product as well, from the same company. When done, the facility will house a recycling center complete with compactors and a crusher.



Petroglyphs appear throughout the park.

Petroglyph facilities manager Andre Perara appreciates soy's benign nature, particularly the concrete stain that will replace a "very toxic" product. The paint doesn't have an odor and the workers didn't have to wear respirators, he said, adding he discovered the company from an Internet search. However, he would like the General Service Administration website, the government's main supplier, to have an expanded inventory of green products.

There is a drawback: the paint costs \$176.75 plus shipping for a 5-gallon pail. Perara found the dry wall required one more coat; he didn't use a primer because the company maintains it isn't necessary. He would use the paint again, though.

"If we have the money, I'll do it," Perara said. "If we don't have it, I'll use the cheaper stuff. That's the problem." He does like soy paint better than another firm's milk-based paint from powder that he described as looking like yogurt after it's mixed. He noted the milk-based paint has a limited shelf life. In fact, none of his staff wanted to use that paint because "they thought it would grow mold. It ended up on the walls of my office."

Petroglyph National Monument already has been using biobased products from The Clean Environment Co. of Omaha, Neb. (www.cleanenvironmentco.com) and Bio-O-Kleen (www.biokleenhome.com) for cleaning, following standards established by the city of Santa Monica, a national leader in replacing traditional cleaning products with nontoxic alternatives. (See the Environmental Protection Agency's case study for details, www.epa.gov/oppt/epp/pubs/case/santa.pdf)

Park staff also stock the outhouses on trailheads with an alcohol-free hand sanitizer from GentleCare (www.gentlecare.ws), containing aloe vera gel and citric acid. The active disinfecting ingredient is benzalkonium chloride. Perara chose this hand sanitizer because it won't catch fire in the New Mexico desert, where the temperature frequently soars to above 100 degrees. However, this cleanser will freeze in areas with colder climates.

Perara has worked in seven national parks—and he doesn't have fond memories of the old products, particularly the one relegated to restrooms.

“The stuff we were using was nasty,” he said. “It burned our eyes and throat. I just said, ‘There’s got to be something better.’” Every national park, said Perara, is beginning to become sustainable in different ways, but he maintained that switching to green cleaning products is the easiest step.

“It feels good at the end of the day to do something for the environment,” Perara said, on a break from supervising the stuccoing of the new building. “It doesn’t matter that it’s small.”

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