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Concessions operation does its part for the environment

Lassen Volcanic National Park in northern California has successfully partnered with its concessions operation, California Guest Services Inc., to replace many petroleum-based products with biobased products from renewable resources.

This environmental effort is part of a major new federal initiative. The Department of the Interior, which oversees the National Park Service, and the Department of Energy have joined together to promote energy efficient and renewable energy alternatives in the nation's park system. Lassen had the full cooperation of its concessionaire.

“Obviously, we're operating in a pristine environment and we wanted to do our part,” said California Guest Services Vice President Kris Koeberer. “We believe it is the right thing to do.”



A Lassen park ranger leads a Junior Ranger program.

Lassen Volcanic National Park is in the midst of mountains containing crystal clear alpine lakes. It was established as a national park in 1916 because of its active volcanic landscape. Lassen Peak began erupting in 1914, had the most significant activity in 1915, and had minor activity until 1921. All four types of volcanoes in the world are found in Lassen's 106,000 acres or 150 miles.

California Guest Services has had the current concessions contract at Lassen Volcanic National Park since 1982. A division of California Parks Companies of Red Bluff, Calif., California Guest Services provides food, operates the Drakesbad Guest Ranch, maintains

the hot springs pool, offers horseback riding and runs three stores for visitors. The California Parks Companies has more than 18 locations throughout California and Nevada.

Currently California Guest Services relies on biobased products to clean its concessions operations. The custodial staff uses a line of citrus oil cleaners from Sierra Environmental Technologies of Watsonville, Calif., www.sierraenvironmental.net.

At the Drakesbad Guest Ranch, the paper cups placed in the rooms contain a corn-based plastic that serves as a moisture barrier. Obtained from the Brenmar Company Inc., of Omaha, Neb., the ecotainer™ hot cup is made from fully renewable resources and can be composted in commercial composting facilities.

In 2008, the three retail locations will offer biobased soap from Sunfeather National Inc. (www.sunfeather.com). Along with an olive oil base, the soaps contain a mélange of herbs and essential oils.

The stores already sell Goodwood® fire logs composed of clean woodchips and sawdust from mill working and forest trimming that would typically end up in landfills. Campers in the eight campgrounds toss these logs onto their campfires. Most compressed logs sold in supermarkets contain petroleum waste wax as a binder while Goodwood logs rely on the resins in the densely packed wood waste to bind them together.

The products have numerous advantages when it comes to protecting the environment. They require less total energy to produce, plus the cleaners and soap do not pollute the many lakes or pose health hazards for visitors and park employees.

California Guest Services has been using biobased products at Lassen Volcanic National Park for more than seven years and plans to use soy-based inks to print its informational literature next season.

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