

‘Sustainability’ Becomes a Watchword for the Aggregates Industry



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Following a strategic session on the topic, NSSGA’s board of directors unanimously approved new “Guiding Principles for Sustainability” at its annual summer meeting in Stowe, Vt. These guiding principles, developed by a multi-divisional task force, define sustainability for the aggregates industry as a business approach that integrates environmental, social and economic aspects to ensure the long-term supply of aggregate materials. The board further recognized that sustainability is a developing issue in the markets where NSSGA members operate, and sustainable practices in the industry are necessary today to provide a high quality of life for future generations.

NSSGA’s sustainability principles address the three pillars of sustainability – environmental, social and economic – in the mining life-cycle context of an aggregates operation.

Overarching practices describe the commitment of the industry to reinvest in the communities in which it operates, to adhere to the highest ethical business standards, to minimize life-cycle impacts and to demonstrate a strong and unwavering commitment to safety, health and the environment at all operations. The guiding principles also encourage specific, sustainable practices during the planning, operational and closure phases of the life of an aggregates operation.

Lastly, the document describes the business case for implementing sustainability practices. Public resource agencies are now implementing frameworks based on sustainable development. NSSGA member companies will increase their ability to compete effectively by implementing NSSGA’s sustainability principles. These guidelines emphasize the efficient use of resources,

which reduces costs and contributes to profitability. Implementing sustainability guidelines will help to coordinate and improve the effectiveness of multi-disciplinary programs such as community relations, environment, safety, health, operations and legal at NSSGA member companies.

NSSGA's president and CEO, Joy Wilson, said of the board's adoption of the principles, "The long-term viability of the aggregates industry is dependent on obtaining and maintaining a social license to operate. These licenses are based on discretionary decisions by local government bodies that are heavily influenced by political and public opinion. NSSGA member companies will enhance their ability to obtain these licenses when applying NSSGA's sustainability guiding principles."

For the rest of 2007, NSSGA will analyze implementation suggestions from the board's strategic workshop and will continue to educate the industry about sustainability and the new guiding principles, with an eye toward developing an implementation plan, obtaining industry case studies and possibly developing an annual report of industry metrics in the coming years.

National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association's Guiding Principles for Sustainable Aggregates Operations

The members of the National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association (NSSGA) identify sustainability as a business approach that integrates environmental, social and economic aspects to ensure the long-term supply of aggregate materials. NSSGA recognizes that sustainable practices are necessary today to provide a high quality life for future generations.

Overarching Practices

- NSSGA members sustain the communities in which we operate by providing raw materials as natural building blocks for quality of life.
- We are conscious of the need to provide economic, social and environmental value for future generations and the communities in which we operate.

- We demonstrate a strong and unwavering commitment to safety, health and the environment at our operations.
- We work with appropriate government bodies to establish effective, responsible and balanced laws and other requirements based on sound science.
- We encourage life cycle re-use of products during manufacturing and post-consumer use.
- We maintain adequate aggregate resources in locations that minimize the life-cycle impacts of the resource's extraction, delivery and use.
- We encourage proper land use development and planning within communities to ensure long-term aggregate resource availability.
- We adhere to the highest ethical business practices and transparency in all aspects of our operations.
- We recognize that profitability is essential to a sustainable industry and its continued ability to contribute to communities.

During the mining life cycle of an aggregate operation, our members are encouraged to:

Planning Phase

- Develop a site-specific plan for post-mining land use and/or reclamation that engages stakeholders in planning for future needs and interests.
- Plan for the prevention and/or minimization of environmental impacts.
- Adopt and implement an Environmental Management System program to properly manage potential environmental risks and requirements and improve overall environmental performance.

Operational and Closure Phases

- Pursue new technologies and practices to improve the operational, safety, health and environmental efficiency of our operations.
- Invest in the personal and professional development of employees to ensure a strong work force in the future.
- Ensure that employees are treated in a respectful and positive manner and provide them with competitive com-

ensation programs consistent with performance and industry practice.

- Identify, control and/or eliminate risks associated with occupational injuries and illnesses.
- Encourage employees and contractors to interact responsibly within the community in which we operate and serve.
- Work in partnerships to promote beneficial post-mining land use, including industrial, commercial, residential and community development, agricultural production, wildlife conservation and habitat creation and restoration.

The Business Case for Sustainability

1. Sustainability is a developing issue in the markets where NSSGA members operate. Public resource agencies are implementing frameworks based on sustainable development. NSSGA member companies will increase their ability to compete effectively by implementing sustainability guidelines.
2. The long-term viability of the industry is dependent on obtaining and maintaining a social license to operate. These licenses are based on discretionary decisions by local government bodies that are heavily influenced by political/public opinion. NSSGA member companies will enhance their ability to obtain these licenses when applying sustainability guidelines.
3. Sustainability emphasizes the efficient use of resources, which reduces costs (by reducing waste) and contributes to profitability.
4. The implementation of sustainability principles can reduce the risk of adverse legal and regulatory actions.
5. Sustainability is an integrated concept. Implementing sustainability guidelines will help coordinate and improve the effectiveness of multi-disciplinary groups such as community relations, EH&S, operations and legal in NSSGA member companies. ■

NSSGA's "Guiding Principles for Sustainable Aggregates Operations" were unanimously approved by the Board of Directors at the 2007 Summer Board Meeting.