

Marking Watershed Effort

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Can a stream of effort flow into a river of results? Of course.

Proof positive is Toyota's Portland Vehicle Distribution Center (VDC). Toyota redesigned the site at Terminal 4 of the city's port on the Willamette River in 2004 with a focus on H₂O.

The facility collects rain water, stores it in a large underground tank and uses it to flush toilets in the main building...saving water. Toilets have dual function flush...saving water. Personnel are trained to clean vehicles in a wash bay (not outside) and to only wash vehicles that have accessories added...saving water.

The VDC – which processes Toyota, Scion and Lexus vehicles for distribution to dealers in 23 states – earned LEED® Gold certification. Water conservation, not surprisingly, played a big role.

But environmental efforts extended beyond the building, says Doug Warneke, production supervisor at the VDC. Take, for example, the site's four-acre bioswale.

The bioswale is a series of shallow ditches that holds water during runoff. Grass and other biomass in the ditches slow the water down, allowing time for particulates to settle out. The ditches also cool water running off the asphalt. As a result, the bioswale helps improve the quality of the water flowing into the Willamette River, helping many species living in and near it. "The bioswale serves as a protected wildlife habitat," says Warneke. "We've seen eagles, geese, ducks, rabbits, coyotes and other critters."

Other steps Toyota has taken to protect the watershed:

- Installing filters to absorb oil in the parking lot and loading area
- Using vegetable-based hydraulic oil instead of petroleum-based oil
- Using native, drought-resistant plants for landscaping
- Not using pesticides on landscaped areas
- Partnering with Willamette Riverkeeper for annual river cleanup

Team members even test storm water for contaminants quarterly as part of the site's storm water pollution prevention program. Levels have been consistently low, so the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality allows the company to opt out of monitoring.

"We choose to stay in the program," says Brent LaFollette, safety and environmental administrator at the facility. "It's a good way for us to remain vigilant about water quality."

To read more about Toyota's water stewardship efforts, go with the flow at <http://www.toyota.com/usa/environmentreport2015/index.html>.