

Carbon Footprint Boundary

National Outdoor Leadership School

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In 2006 NOLS made a commitment to measuring and reducing its carbon footprint. As part of this commitment, NOLS contracted Pure Strategies to complete an external audit of the school, which was completed in February of 2008. One of the primary audit recommendations was that NOLS calculate its carbon footprint at a regular interval so that we are better armed to reduce that footprint.

The Kyoto Protocol and the internationally accepted greenhouse accounting standard developed by the World Resources Institute and World Business Council for Sustainable Development categorize greenhouse gas reporting into three scopes. Scope 1 is defined as direct emissions from sources controlled by the organization—on site fuel combustion, emissions from NOLS owned and leased vehicles, etc. Scope 2 is defined as indirect emissions from sources controlled by the organization—in our case, electricity use. Scope 3 is defined as all other sources of emissions—student, instructor and staff travel, as well as any “upstream” emissions caused by rented facilities (buildings not owned by NOLS), or by the production and shipment of any purchased products.

The Kyoto Protocol calls on organizations to report Scope 1 and 2 emissions. Many organizations go beyond this standard and also report Scope 3 emissions, or some portion of them. The extent of Scope 3 emissions that are calculated is highly variable, depending on the organization to make the final decision.

NOLS has drawn the following boundary, balancing the need to paint a comprehensive picture of the school’s environmental impact while keeping the task focused on what we can control and what is manageable with the school’s existing resources. Measurability is also a consideration, as we cannot manage what we cannot measure. Our boundary changes occasionally as we learn more about what we can count, control, and change.

Included in Scope 3 Boundary:

Student Travel During NOLS courses—measure and reduce

- Non-NOLS vehicle travel during course (air, ferries, etc)

Staff Travel—measure and reduce as feasible

Faculty Travel—measure and reduce as feasible

- Measuring this will continue to be challenging and will develop over time as our data systems improve.
- With both reimbursed and non-reimbursed travel, working with staffing and using incentives to encourage reduced instructor travel (working at one branch for an entire season, for example), or increasing the efficiency of travel has potential to significantly reduce our emissions.

Outsourced Relations--measure, reduce where feasible

- Includes non-NOLS horsepackers (gas to roadhead), airplanes, etc.
- NOLS has control over these sub contracted relations; although there are pieces of this that aren’t possible to reduce, this is an important piece of our carbon consciousness.

Not Included in Scope 3 Boundary:**Commuting—educate**

- Includes instructor travel to first catalog contract in each fiscal year.
- We can influence this area by educating staff about options to reduce travel impact.

Student Travel to NOLS courses—educate, integrate measurement tools into the application process, revisit

- We are not currently measuring this travel; it is personal travel, and NOLS has little influence on how it happens. Additionally, there are no alternatives to air travel to several of our course locations, making change here more of a challenge. Nevertheless it is likely our largest source of indirect emissions. We are interested in quantifying these emissions so that we have the baseline data needed to address this in the future.

Offsite facilities (primarily used by WMI and NOLS Pro)

- These are farther from our control and more resource intensive to calculate.
- Revisit

Emissions from production and shipment of purchased materials

Calculating our carbon footprint with these parameters will stretch our resources without overtaxing them. These areas of Scope 3 emissions will give NOLS a strong foundation from which to address the accessible areas for Green House Gas reduction, as well as the information needed to tackle more challenging measurements and reductions in the future.