

## MEMORANDUM

Mahwish Cheema  
Writing Sample

Date: August 24, 2013  
To: Tracye Funn, head of *Charitable Giving Program*, Washington Gas  
From: Mahwish Cheema, Intern, Washington Gas  
Subject: Memorandum CSR Tree Planting Environmental Program

Washington Gas Company is very concerned with environmental issues, such as promoting clean air and water. However, our company has not implemented specific programs addressing greenhouse gases and reducing their carbon footprint. Many studies have found that planting trees can significantly reduce carbon dioxide in the long run. Washington DC is a city that has a high level of greenhouse gases due to the natural gas emissions in the area. Planting trees is a low-cost program because small trees are not expensive to buy. Washington Gas has a large fund for CSR programs, so we will be able to afford buying small trees to benefit the environment. By the Washington Gas employees volunteering to participate in a low-cost tree planting program, Washington Gas will be able to promote their own socially responsible image and improve the environment at the same time.

### **Benefiting the Community with the Filtering Power of Trees**

Trees have many benefits that help the environment immensely. According to the highly renowned Tree People Organization, "Trees absorb odors and pollutant gases and filter particulates out of the air by trapping them on their leaves and bark" (2012). Trees are able to filter and clean the air we breathe with great efficiency. In today's environment, trees are necessary to plant in order to keep everyone healthy. The Washington D.C. area is growing at a fast rate. More and more trees are being cut down so businesses can expand. Business expansion is beneficial for economic purposes. However, we must not forget that if the environment does not remain healthy, then we ourselves will not remain healthy enough to conduct business. Planting trees is an effective way to reduce pollutants from the air. According to the Urban Forestry Network, "On average, one acre of new forest can sequester about 2.5 tons of carbon annually. Young trees absorb CO<sub>2</sub> at a rate of 13 pounds per tree each year" (2012). Planting even a small amount of trees will make a big difference in the D.C. area. And in the long run, these trees will reduce the pollutants and greenhouse gases that become trapped in our atmosphere.

### **Why Worry About the Effects of Greenhouse Gases**

According to the Energy Information Administration, "Energy-related carbon dioxide emissions, resulting from petroleum and natural gas, represent 82 percent of total U.S. human-made greenhouse gas emissions" (2013). Since Washington Gas is in the business of providing natural gas to the Washington D.C. area, they need to remain aware of the harmful effects of increasing natural gas emissions. According to the OSS Foundation, the main concern is that humans are increasing the levels of greenhouse gases by the use of fossil fuels and deforestation (2013). Greenhouse gases are responsible for maintaining a stable temperature for suitable living

Date: March 28, 2013

Subject: Memorandum CSR Tree Planting Program

conditions on Earth. If greenhouse gases did not exist, the Earth would be barren and extremely cold. However, with a high level of greenhouse gases in the air, temperatures will continue to rise till a point in which life will not be able to survive in those conditions. It is important to act now to normalize the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

### **The Tree Planting Initiative**

After obtaining permission from the District of Columbia and the individual property owners, we will be planting trees in various locations such as private and public D.C. schools, community parks, neighborhoods, gardens, streets, and highways. Our goal is to plant trees in many diverse locations so all Washington, D.C. can experience environmental benefits.

The trees will be bought online from the Arbor Day Foundation, a reputable organization that is known for selling trees. The Arbor Day Foundation has an excellent website that is able to tell the buyer which types of trees will grow best in certain environments. According to the Arbor Day Foundation, Washington D.C. is classified as a Zone 7 region (2013). The perfect tree to choose is the Overcup Oak (*Quercus lyrata*). This tree will grow even in the roughest environmental conditions. Additionally, the Arbor Day foundation supports that this tree grows in a symmetrical, oval shape (2013). These trees will not look messy and unkempt due to their natural neatness in shape. According to Tree People Organization, trees that are large and grow quickly become the best absorbents of pollutants and Overcup Oak is a tree that can grow up to 70 inches (2013). On the website of the Arbor Day Foundation they cite that “The Overcup Oak has been grown successfully in arid regions and in a wide range of soil conditions, making it an excellent urban street tree,” (2013). This tree will be able to be planted easily all throughout Washington D.C. because of its organized structure and tolerance to urban environments, such as the streets and schools of D.C..

### **Tree Costs and Shipping Method**

The Overcup Oaks will be shipped from Arbor Day Foundation as small trees. The Arbor Day Foundation states that “Our trees are delivered with natural bare roots which have been dipped in hydrating gel prior to shipment to keep the roots moist and healthy” (2013) Since the trees come with bare roots, it is easier to transfer and plant them into soil. Each Overcup Oak tree costs \$5.98. To start up with this tree planting program, 100 trees should be purchased. For only \$598 Washington Gas will be able to plant 100 trees throughout the Washington D.C. area. In the long term, these 100 trees will grow to be extremely absorbent to the natural gas emissions in the area. If Washington Gas plants 100 trees every year, then in 10 years there will be 1000 trees in Washington D.C., significantly reducing the carbon footprint. This will be an extremely respectable accomplishment. Washington Gas will raise their image of being socially responsible in their customers’ eyes.

### **Advertising and Other Implementation Costs**

Advertisements about this program will be done on the company’s website and blog. In addition, there will be marketing done on Washington Gas’s Facebook and Twitter account in order to show the public that we are involved in such an effective environmental program. There will be a

Date: March 28, 2013

Subject: Memorandum CSR Tree Planting Program

sign up area on the company's website, where the employees will be able to pick days volunteering with the planting of trees. Additionally, on our website and social media sites we will be asking for shovel donations from employees and the public in order to plant our trees. Because, the majority of our shovels will be donated, and/or employees will bring shovels with them, there will be a minimal cost for shovels. The advertising is solely based online, so the marketing will be effective and efficient, yet it will yield no cost.

Since this program is a volunteering program made for the employees of Washington Gas, there will be no labor costs as well. There will be a meeting held where a volunteer, like myself, will give all of the employee volunteers a briefing, and demonstration on how to plant a tree. Tree planting is a very simple process, especially when you working with small trees. This meeting will entail the training of this program. There will be no additional costs to this program besides the initial small cost of the trees Washington Gas will buy.

### **Implementation Benefits**

Washington Gas is currently not involved in any programs that deal with reducing their carbon footprint and reducing global warming. Because Washington Gas is in the business of providing natural gas, our company is responsible for a fair share of natural gas emissions which increase our carbon footprint. In order to create a socially responsible image in the media and public, we need to implement this program. If our company is contributing to global warming on the local scale, then we also should be locally helping our community in reducing the carbon dioxide levels in the Washington, D.C. area. There are some CSR programs that the employees love volunteering for because they like being a part of and contributing to the local community. Now, once again employees will be able to feel socially responsible and will enjoy helping out the community, by not only making it aesthetically appealing, but also helping the community be more environmental conscious.

### **Long-term Results**

The planting trees program will prove to be extremely beneficial for Washington Gas. Trees will be able to significantly improve the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. By planting trees locally in Washington D.C., Washington Gas will be able to promote a positive image because we will be actively involved in trying to better our natural gas emission levels. This is a socially responsible program; not only are we benefiting our environment greatly, we are giving our employees the ability to feel motivated and excited about our company's values and new CSR volunteer program.

Once this program is approved, the next step will be to contact me within the next three weeks, if possible. We will then come together and proceed to purchase the trees online. At the same time, we will also start our advertising campaign on our website so our employees are aware, and also on Facebook and Twitter so our clients are aware of our dedication to the environment.

I look forward to hearing from you and working with you soon. You can contact me at mcheema@gmu.edu. Thank you for your time.

Date: March 28, 2013

Subject: Memorandum CSR Tree Planting Program  
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