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Significant Climate Change Benefits Accomplished by Government Agencies in the Northeast

The State Electronics Challenge (SEC) is assisting state, regional, and local governments in the Northeast reduce the environmental impact of their computers. In its inaugural year—2008—24 government agencies, ranging from Maine’s State government to cities such as Keene, New Hampshire, joined the SEC as Partners, making a commitment to purchase “green” computers, lower the energy consumption of computers in use, and reuse and recycle equipment at the end-of-its life.

Their efforts are reaping benefits for the Northeast. Energy use, for example, was reduced by 21.8 million kilowatt hours, equivalent to the electricity to power 1,823 households for a year. This reduction in energy use also translates into lower greenhouse gas emissions, which are implicated in climate change. SEC Partners reduced greenhouse gases by 2,333 metric tons of carbon equivalents. This is equal to removing 1,566 cars from the road for a year.

Purchasing more environmentally friendly computer equipment avoided the use of 781 pounds of toxic materials such as lead and mercury in the manufacture of new computers, while recycling computers at the end-of-life avoided the generation of 65 metric tons of hazardous waste. Reusing and recycling computer equipment rather than discarding it also reduced municipal solid waste equivalent to the amount of trash generated by 78 households annually.

Five SEC Partner organizations received Environmental Merit Awards this week from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for demonstrating exceptional leadership in electronics stewardship. SEC Partners were eligible for one of three recognition levels – Bronze, Silver, or Gold – based on completion of SEC program requirements. U.S. EPA award recipients included:

- Maine’s State government and the City of Keene, New Hampshire achieved silver recognition for purchasing environmentally preferable computers, extending the life of computers through reuse programs, and recycling obsolete equipment at facilities that adhere to environmentally sound management practices.
- City of Providence, Rhode Island, Public Schools received silver recognition for purchasing green computers and reducing the energy consumption of computer units in operation by implementing strategies to better manage and control energy consumption.
- Connecticut’s Department of Environmental Protection and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation were recognized at the bronze level for

purchasing environmentally preferable computers. For these Partners and others, environmentally preferable computers are defined by the Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool, also known as EPEAT® (www.epeat.net).

The SEC is a voluntary program developed and administered by the Northeast Recycling Council, Inc. (NERC) with funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. It is modeled after the U.S. EPA's Federal Electronic Challenge. The SEC was developed as a way to reduce the environmental impact of the more than \$35 billion worth of technology equipment purchased annually by state and local governments in the U.S. Currently, 30 state, regional, and local government agencies, collectively employing over 43,000 people, have joined the SEC as Partners.

In October, the SEC will transition from a pilot project in the Northeast to a nation-wide program. The State Electronic Challenge provides a unique opportunity to provide leadership in the environmentally sound and cost-effective management of electronic assets. The Challenge provides a framework, implementation tools, resources, and recognition to assist government agencies in reducing the environmental impact of computer equipment.

For more information on the SEC, including a list of current Partner organizations, how to join, and SEC program requirements, visit www.stateelectronicschallenge.net.