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According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, sustainability is “the ability to achieve continuing economic prosperity while protecting the natural systems of the planet and providing a high quality of life for its people.” Sustainable practices can be applied to farming, industry, and your back yard. They can also be applied to the buildings in which we live and work.

According to the U.S. Green Building Council, buildings in the U.S. account for:

- Over 65% of total U.S. electricity use
- 35-40% of municipal solid waste generated
- 25-30% (40% globally) of wood and raw materials used
- 12% of potable water used
- 30% of greenhouse emissions
- 136 million tons of construction/demolition wastes

The USGBC has developed a certification system to rate buildings developed using sustainable measures and that promote sustainability in the way the buildings operate. Known as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), the program seeks to recognize buildings that use sustainable sites, promote water efficiency, promote energy efficiency, show innovation in design, and promote indoor air quality. A points-based system rates a building at four levels, from certified to platinum. Categories are

available for new construction, existing building operations, homes, and neighborhood developments.

The Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve began construction in July of their new headquarters. Located near Moss Point, Mississippi, the 20,000 square foot facility, housing an interpretive center, classrooms, dormitory and laboratory space, and administrative offices, will adhere to Gold-Level LEED certification. According to GBNERR, the facility will include:

- a rainwater collection and filtering system to eliminate potable water use for toilet flushing, resulting in a 40% reduction in water use,
- extensive day-lighting with sun-shading overhangs to control unwanted solar gains,
- an innovative chilled water storage system to minimize cooling costs,
- displacement ventilation to provide a healthy indoor environment
- use of daylight harvesting will optimize the building's thermal performance and is expected to result in energy performance that is a 40 percent improvement over Code

This project will be unique to our area. You can learn more about the facility by visiting the Reserve on the world wide web at [www.grandbaynerr.org](http://www.grandbaynerr.org)