



## Going Green at White Sands



*If you are a frequent visitor to national parks, you have probably heard the phrase “leave no trace” quite often. Hikers, campers, and other visitors are advised to “leave only footprints.” At White Sands National Monument, in partnership with the Western National Parks Association bookstore (WNPA) and White Sands Trading gift shop (WST), we have taken this idea a little further to include park operations as well.*

As part of this initiative to “go green,” we recycle paper, cardboard, plastic, and aluminum throughout the monument and in our offices. Because single-use water bottles are a huge ecological concern, we recently installed a waterbottle filling station at the visitor center. Visitors are encouraged to take their water containers and fill them there. We also purchase 100% recycled office paper and packing supplies, as well as recycle our ink cartridges.

Our partners are also going green with us. WNPA operates the bookstore and carries a wide selection of green products including doggy waste bags, reusable BPA-free water bottles, tote bags, and even earrings made with recycled materials! All WNPA publications are produced using recycled paper and soy-based inks. They also actively seek-out vendors that follow earth-friendly initiatives and

pursue environmentally sound practices. Several tote bags sold by WNPA are made of 99% recycled materials, most of which are fashioned from recycled single-use plastic bottles. Made in the U.S.A. products make up 75% of the merchandise sold in WNPA stores.

Also located at the visitor center, WST operates the gift shop. They pride themselves on being an ISO 14001 certified company and a member of the EPA’s Wastewise program. Since it opened its doors in 2005, they have been focused on environmental stewardship. One of the ways they have achieved this is through the sled buy-back program. Visitors are encouraged to return sleds with receipt to the gift shop for a buy-back fee. They also compost used coffee grounds from coffee sold in the gift shop. In 2012, 94.5 pounds of coffee grounds were used to enrich the soil in local growers’ gardens.

There are many ways that you can reduce your impact not only at White Sands, but everywhere you are. If everyone took that little step to reduce waste and other human impacts, special places like White Sands can be preserved for our future generations to enjoy. Remember what Benjamin Franklin said, “Don’t put off until tomorrow what you can do today.”

—Kathy Denton, Education Specialist



Ranger at our water bottle filling station