

Cape Cod Canal gets a little greener with purchase of electronic vehicles

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The Cape Cod Canal team recently became more environmentally friendly when they purchased six Polaris GEM eM1400LSV electric utility vehicles to replace the aging fleet of gas-powered John Deere Utility Gators. "These vehicles are exclusively powered by electricity and only need to be plugged in at night to be ready for the day's work the following day," said Park Ranger Ann Le Blanc. "These vehicles are safe, quiet, good for the environment and very cute!"

Their appealing appearance was not the reason for their purchase, however. According to Park Ranger Joe Mazzola, switching to electric vehicles would save Park Rangers time by not having to continually fill up the Gator tanks. It also eliminates the potential hazard of carrying fuel containers that could spill. "Moving to these smoother riding and quietly running vehicles will increase operator situational awareness and reduce fatigue," he said.

Mazzola also said moving to electric will also work towards the District's sustainability goals to lower CO₂ (Carbon Dioxide) emissions.

These vehicles will not only be healthier for the environment, but will save money, according to Park Ranger Michele Breen. "In 2016, we spent roughly \$3,500 in gasoline for the six Gators," she said. "We tend to keep our utility vehicles until the end of their life span, which in the case of the Gators is approximately 10 years. If gas prices remained the same for the next 10 years, our gasoline savings would amount to \$35,000."

Breen said gas estimates based on energy outlook predictions by the U.S. Energy Information and Administration indicated that the saving would be more like \$54,000. She said the older vehicles have found homes elsewhere in Operations Division.

The new vehicles are the latest in a series of initiatives the Canal has undertaken in the last decade to make their project more environmentally friendly. Other efforts have included new, energy efficient heating system, new LED lights and other work in the Canals' Maintenance Building; a new heating system in the maintenance shed and the Ranger Annex garage; and replacing and upgrading lighting at the Administrative Area, recreation areas, 14 miles of the Canal as well as new Energy Star windows at the Herring Run comfort station.

The Canal Team is constantly looking at ways to save money and improve the project's carbon footprint. According to Scott Barr, Environmental Resource Specialist, upcoming projects include installing new fiber optic lines, replacing the Bourne Bridge lighting with LED lights, installing a new HVAC System in the administration building and a possible midway solar array.

The Canal's efforts are in keeping with the Corps of Engineers' Sustainability Plan.