

Proctor Finding New Ways To Reduce Carbon Footprint

By Chelsea Conaboy
Concord Monitor staff

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At Proctor Academy, students study by headlamp, dry their clothes on laundry racks, and volunteer Saturdays to sort recycling. The students are committed to cutting carbon emissions in the race to slow climate change.

Looking to save money and reflect the values of conservation that the school is teaching students, the administration is moving forward on two construction projects to curb emissions.

The school is building a dorm that will have a geothermal heating system, which will draw on the temperatures deep underground to heat and cool the building. It is also building a wood boiler to run the school's steam heat plant.

Environmental Coordinator Alan McIntyre said the construction projects demonstrate "the institutional will that we're trying to match with the students' passion and drive."

The school, which has 347 students, is responsible for a lot of carbon emissions, largely because of transportation abroad, he said. Proctor runs regular programs in France, Spain, and Costa Rica.

But McIntyre said he hopes the new biomass boiler, coupled with good management of the school's 2,500 acre woodlot, will make the school nearly carbon neutral, meaning it puts out only as much as the trees on the school's land suck up. He's working with students writing a mission statement to present to the school board pledging to work toward carbon neutrality.

Meanwhile, Proctor students are competing this month with their peers in other private schools to see who

can reduce their carbon emissions the most.

Lisa Fishman, a senior from Boston, lives in the efficient Eco Dorm, one of 18 dorms on campus. Students compost, keep their thermostats low, and encourage other dorms to conserve. Eco Dorm is one of five dorms heated with wood furnaces using some of the 100 cords harvested from the school's woodlot each year.

Fishman is also part of a core group of students who volunteer to sort the school's recycling and deliver it to the Andover transfer station. She said seeing up close how much waste the school produces has an effect. It makes her want to conserve more.

Samuel Aiken, a junior from Florida, said the wood boiler will have a similar result. People will see it running and learn about why it's important.

"When you go for a walk in the woods. . . you see all the trees growing, just forest everywhere," he said. "It gives you the sense that it's kind of your responsibility to make sure all of this is kept safe."

Proctor's Working Forest

Walk past the modern brick and white clapboard buildings that make up most of the campus and you'll come to the squat cabin where David Pilla works at the edge of the woods. Coffee cups and flannel shirts hang on pegs around the woodstove. The attached shed holds harvesting equipment and a slew of snowshoes.

For nearly 30 years Pilla has managed the woodlot, which encompasses much of the south face of Ragged Mountain and was recently named Community Tree Farm of the Year for the state. He also teaches forestry and wildlife classes and directs the woods team, a group

of students who help manage the forest, building bridges over streams and identifying trees for harvest.

Pilla said students have become more familiar with climate change vocabulary such as "carbon sequestration," which can mean using trees to capture carbon emissions.

"In some ways, our students are now more verbally in tune with environmentalism and yet are more divorced from the land," he said.

He sees part of his job as reconnecting them. "Every day we're on the land," he said.

Peabody House

A few hundred feet away, the school is walking the walk. Construction crews are building the 12,000-square-foot, \$2.85 million Peabody House, a dorm that will house 16 students, with two apartments for Proctor staff and their families.

The building will be so airtight that windows on an upper story will be mechanically controlled to let in fresh air when it's needed.

"The insulation is astronomical," said Paul Tremblay, project superintendent with Trumbull-Nelson Construction.

Head of School Michael Henriques said the school is investing between \$150,000 and \$160,000 in a geothermal heating system. Six wells will be drilled about 500 feet into the ground, where

the temperature stays between 40 and 50 degrees all year.

During the winter, water pumped down into the wells will be warmed by the earth and brought up to the surface, where a heat pump will use a refrigerant to capture the heat, condense it to as warm as 80 degrees, and heat the dorm. It's a complicated process that more than one person at Proctor described as "magic."

In the summer, the reverse will happen. The earth cools the water, and the pump captures those lower temperatures to cool the building.

With fuel oil costs rising, the board also voted earlier this month to bond \$2 million to build a wood boiler to generate heat for most of the school. Spokesman Chuck Will said the board expects the boiler to pay for itself in about a decade.

Wood chips will be brought into the school – not taken from the woodlot. The oil burners will still be used during moderate weather, when they are more efficient.

Henriques said the boiler and geothermal system are "a systemic community response to a challenge we know is much greater than this school. It's a national challenge. It's a world challenge."

Both the boiler and the new dorm are expected to be ready for the start of next school year.

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