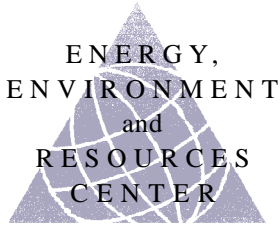


# HIGHLIGHTS and INITIATIVES



Jack Barkenbus  
Executive Director

Center for Clean Products and  
Clean Technologies  
Gary A. Davis, Director

Office of Communications  
David Brill, Director

Center for Geography and  
Environmental Education  
Rosalyn McKeown, Director

FORUM for Applied Research  
and Public Policy  
Dennis McCarthy,  
Editor in Chief

Oak Ridge Technology Research  
and Development Program  
Sheila Webster, Director

Systems Development Institute  
Donald Alvic, Director

Pro-Dialogue  
Mary English and  
David L. Feldman, Directors

Water Resources Research Center  
Tim Gangaware, Assoc. Director

For more information, contact  
Gail Farris at 865-974-4251  
University of Tennessee  
EERC  
311 Conference Center Bldg.  
Knoxville, TN 37996-4134.  
Visit our website at:  
<http://eerc.ra.utk.edu/>.


**COLLABORATIONS** Research Leader **Mary English** serves as lead investigator on a UT contract with the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations to work on growth policy issues in Tennessee. TACIR is charged with studying state and local government operations and making recommendations for improving their efficiency and effectiveness. TACIR recently released a staff information report authored by **English** and Graduate Research Assistant **James Hoffman**. This report, "Planning for Rural Areas in Tennessee under Public Chapter 1101," suggests guidelines and resources for assessing rural-area growth plans.

**James Hoffman** is a second-year graduate student in UT's **Department of Urban and Regional Planning**. This is **Hoffman's** fourth semester as a TACIR-supported graduate research assistant working with **Mary English** on land use and growth policy issues. **Daniel Guinle**, a second-year graduate student in UT's **College of Business Administration**, is working under the direction of EERC Executive Director **Jack Barkenbus**. **Guinle** is assisting the Marketing Services division of the Knoxville Utilities Board in marketing "green power" (electricity supplied from renewable energy sources). His position is one of several internships funded through EERC affiliate the **Waste Management Research and Education Institute**. **Sara Drake**, a recent graduate in UT's **Environmental Studies Program**, has been working on a project involving producer responsibility under the direction of Senior Research Associate **Catherine Wilt**. **Drake** will enter graduate school at the University of Georgia in the fall.

**PROJECTS** Research Specialist **Warren Wilson** of EERC's Systems Development Institute and SDI Assistant Director **Anurag Agarwal** recently developed software that allows the Loudon County Enhanced-911 system to search rapidly for records, potentially matching names or phone numbers with outstanding warrants. The application, called LcPhone, has enabled Loudon County officials to capture at least three fugitives since Christmas. SDI can modify this software to support other E-911 centers and has already created other applications for law enforcement and court personnel. SDI recently created a tool, called PARTner, for the Gallatin police department, which allows officers to use computers to complete reports that were previously hand written.

**ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM** EERC will cosponsor a forum on Wednesday, **April 11**, to learn how other large universities are "greening" their campuses. Forum presentations may ultimately guide UT's efforts to improve its environmental stewardship. The forum is being organized by the UT Committee on the Campus Environment, which is chaired by EERC Executive Director **Jack Barkenbus**. David Newport of the University of Florida's "Greening UF" program will discuss campus sustainability; Al Matyasovsky of Penn State University will address waste reduction, recycling, and composting; and Mike McDonald, from Rebuild America, will speak on energy conservation on U.S. campuses. "With a population of 30,000, the Knoxville campus is larger than many cities," says **Barkenbus**. "A well-conceived approach to environmental stewardship will help establish UT as an environmental leader." The forum, which is cosponsored by the UT Environment and Natural Resources program, is open to the public and will run from 1-4 p.m. in the Shiloh Room of the University Center.

## *Rolling Out the GREEN Carpet*

 Each *Highlights and Initiatives* page presents an in-depth look at one of EERC's projects or activities. This edition focuses on *The Midwestern Workgroup on Carpet Recycling*, a partnership between industry and academia that explores new ways to reuse and recycle old carpet.

continued on back \*

The EERC conducts unbiased, analytical, and multidisciplinary research designed to promote real-world solutions to problems in the fields of energy, environment, technology, and economic development.

# Rolling Out the Green Carpet

An EERC researcher is working with an industry-led coalition determined to get old carpet out from underfoot in ways that keep it out of local landfills. • BY LISA BYERLEY GARY

The Midwestern Workgroup on Carpet Recycling, which includes both carpet industry and nonindustry representatives, has endorsed a plan in which an independent, industry-funded organization will look for ways to recycle and reuse old carpet.

**Catherine Wilt**, senior research associate with the University of Tennessee's Energy, Environment and Resources Center, says the national plan benefits consumers by keeping carpet, traditionally made of petroleum-based fibers, out of landfills and incinerators, both of which contribute to environmental pollution. Some 2.3 million tons of carpet and rugs were disposed of in 1996 alone, according to figures from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

But consumers and the environment aren't the only ones who will benefit, says Werner Braun, president of the Carpet and Rug Institute. By taking a proactive approach, the carpet industry gains the flexibility to plan its own strategies for meeting government standards—a move that will help companies maintain their competitive edge. "This is the next logical step for our carpet manufacturing, which has been viewed as a model industry in terms of environmental stewardship," Braun says.

The idea of a third-party group sponsored by manufacturers isn't new. The Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation, for instance, was organized in 1994 by the rechargeable power industry to keep batteries out of landfills. Today the group has the support of more than 300 battery manufacturers and retailers.

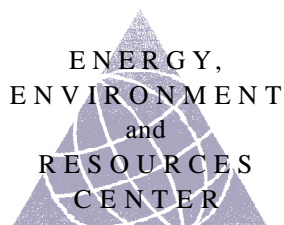
Though spearheaded in the Midwest, the Midwestern Workgroup on Carpet Recycling has become national in scope, encompassing some 40 representatives including state and local government groups, non-government environmental groups, carpet and fiber manufacturers, and carpet installers. Primary supporters are the governments of Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, and the EPA. The initiative has the support of more than 15 state governments, and participants met six times between February and November of 2000 to iron out proposals.

"This is a unique opportunity for states to move away from heavy-handed regulation," says Sherry Enzler, director of the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assessment. "Instead they can focus on working in a mutually beneficial partnership with industry and environmental groups."

But for those members of industry who aren't interested in reducing waste, incentive might come in the form of government procurement contracts. Those might stipulate that bids are awarded only to those manufacturers who support the independent recycling group.

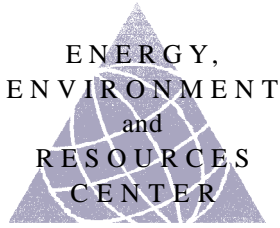
"When an industry becomes part of the solution, that is good product stewardship," says UT's **Wilt**, a project workgroup facilitator and former president of the National Recycling Coalition. "By going through this decision-making process with stakeholders, we are providing incentives for products to be manufactured and managed in an environmentally conscious way, creating a win-win situation for consumers, government, and the industry!"

**"Some 2.3 million tons of carpet and rugs were disposed of in 1996 alone, according to figures from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency."**



For more information contact Catherine Wilt, EERC, the University of Tennessee, 311 Conference Center Building, Knoxville, TN 37996-4134, or call 865-974-1915.

# HIGHLIGHTS and INITIATIVES



Jack Barkenbus  
Executive Director

Center for Clean Products and  
Clean Technologies  
Gary A. Davis, Director

Office of Communications  
David Brill, Director

Center for Geography and  
Environmental Education  
Rosalynd McKeown, Director

FORUM for Applied Research  
and Public Policy  
Dennis McCarthy,  
Editor in Chief

Oak Ridge Technology Research  
and Development Program  
Sheila Webster, Director

Systems Development Institute  
Donald Alvic, Director

Pro-Dialogue  
Mary English and  
David L. Feldman, Directors

Water Resources Research Center  
Tim Gangaware, Assoc. Director

For more information, contact  
Gail Farris at 865-974-4251  
University of Tennessee  
EERC  
311 Conference Center Bldg.  
Knoxville, TN 37996-4134.  
Visit our website at:  
<http://eerc.ra.utk.edu/>.


**COLLABORATIONS** Research Leader **Mary English** serves as lead investigator on a UT contract with the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations to work on growth policy issues in Tennessee. TACIR is charged with studying state and local government operations and making recommendations for improving their efficiency and effectiveness. TACIR recently released a staff information report authored by **English** and Graduate Research Assistant **James Hoffman**. This report, "Planning for Rural Areas in Tennessee under Public Chapter 1101," suggests guidelines and resources for assessing rural-area growth plans.

**James Hoffman** is a second-year graduate student in UT's **Department of Urban and Regional Planning**. This is **Hoffman's** fourth semester as a TACIR-supported graduate research assistant working with **Mary English** on land use and growth policy issues. **Daniel Guinle**, a second-year graduate student in UT's **College of Business Administration**, is working under the direction of EERC Executive Director **Jack Barkenbus**. **Guinle** is assisting the Marketing Services division of the Knoxville Utilities Board in marketing "green power" (electricity supplied from renewable energy sources). His position is one of several internships funded through EERC affiliate the **Waste Management Research and Education Institute**. **Sara Drake**, a recent graduate in UT's **Environmental Studies Program**, has been working on a project involving producer responsibility under the direction of Senior Research Associate **Catherine Wilt**. **Drake** will enter graduate school at the University of Georgia in the fall.

**PROJECTS** Research Specialist **Warren Wilson** of EERC's Systems Development Institute and SDI Assistant Director **Anurag Agarwal** recently developed software that allows the Loudon County Enhanced-911 system to search rapidly for records, potentially matching names or phone numbers with outstanding warrants. The application, called LcPhone, has enabled Loudon County officials to capture at least three fugitives since Christmas. SDI can modify this software to support other E-911 centers and has already created other applications for law enforcement and court personnel. SDI recently created a tool, called PARTner, for the Gallatin police department, which allows officers to use computers to complete reports that were previously hand written.

**ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM** EERC will cosponsor a forum on Wednesday, **April 11**, to learn how other large universities are "greening" their campuses. Forum presentations may ultimately guide UT's efforts to improve its environmental stewardship. The forum is being organized by the UT Committee on the Campus Environment, which is chaired by EERC Executive Director **Jack Barkenbus**. David Newport of the University of Florida's "Greening UF" program will discuss campus sustainability; Al Matyasovsky of Penn State University will address waste reduction, recycling, and composting; and Mike McDonald, from Rebuild America, will speak on energy conservation on U.S. campuses. "With a population of 30,000, the Knoxville campus is larger than many cities," says **Barkenbus**. "A well-conceived approach to environmental stewardship will help establish UT as an environmental leader." The forum, which is cosponsored by the UT Environment and Natural Resources program, is open to the public and will run from 1-4 p.m. in the Shiloh Room of the University Center.

## *Rolling Out the GREEN Carpet*

 Each *Highlights and Initiatives* page presents an in-depth look at one of EERC's projects or activities. This edition focuses on *The Midwestern Workgroup on Carpet Recycling*, a partnership between industry and academia that explores new ways to reuse and recycle old carpet.

continued on back \*

The EERC conducts unbiased, analytical, and multidisciplinary research designed to promote real-world solutions to problems in the fields of energy, environment, technology, and economic development.

# Rolling Out the Green Carpet

An EERC researcher is working with an industry-led coalition determined to get old carpet out from underfoot in ways that keep it out of local landfills. • BY LISA BYERLEY GARY

The Midwestern Workgroup on Carpet Recycling, which includes both carpet industry and nonindustry representatives, has endorsed a plan in which an independent, industry-funded organization will look for ways to recycle and reuse old carpet.

**Catherine Wilt**, senior research associate with the University of Tennessee's Energy, Environment and Resources Center, says the national plan benefits consumers by keeping carpet, traditionally made of petroleum-based fibers, out of landfills and incinerators, both of which contribute to environmental pollution. Some 2.3 million tons of carpet and rugs were disposed of in 1996 alone, according to figures from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

But consumers and the environment aren't the only ones who will benefit, says Werner Braun, president of the Carpet and Rug Institute. By taking a proactive approach, the carpet industry gains the flexibility to plan its own strategies for meeting government standards—a move that will help companies maintain their competitive edge. "This is the next logical step for our carpet manufacturing, which has been viewed as a model industry in terms of environmental stewardship," Braun says.

The idea of a third-party group sponsored by manufacturers isn't new. The Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation, for instance, was organized in 1994 by the rechargeable power industry to keep batteries out of landfills. Today the group has the support of more than 300 battery manufacturers and retailers.

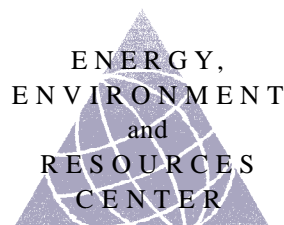
Though spearheaded in the Midwest, the Midwestern Workgroup on Carpet Recycling has become national in scope, encompassing some 40 representatives including state and local government groups, non-government environmental groups, carpet and fiber manufacturers, and carpet installers. Primary supporters are the governments of Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, and the EPA. The initiative has the support of more than 15 state governments, and participants met six times between February and November of 2000 to iron out proposals.

"This is a unique opportunity for states to move away from heavy-handed regulation," says Sherry Enzler, director of the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assessment. "Instead they can focus on working in a mutually beneficial partnership with industry and environmental groups."

But for those members of industry who aren't interested in reducing waste, incentive might come in the form of government procurement contracts. Those might stipulate that bids are awarded only to those manufacturers who support the independent recycling group.

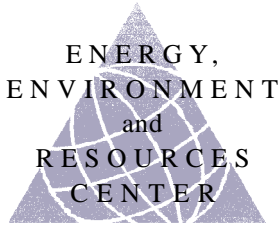
"When an industry becomes part of the solution, that is good product stewardship," says UT's **Wilt**, a project workgroup facilitator and former president of the National Recycling Coalition. "By going through this decision-making process with stakeholders, we are providing incentives for products to be manufactured and managed in an environmentally conscious way, creating a win-win situation for consumers, government, and the industry!"

**"Some 2.3 million tons of carpet and rugs were disposed of in 1996 alone, according to figures from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency."**



For more information contact Catherine Wilt, EERC, the University of Tennessee, 311 Conference Center Building, Knoxville, TN 37996-4134, or call 865-974-1915.

# HIGHLIGHTS and INITIATIVES



Jack Barkenbus  
Executive Director

Center for Clean Products and  
Clean Technologies  
Gary A. Davis, Director

Office of Communications  
David Brill, Director

Center for Geography and  
Environmental Education  
Rosalynd McKeown, Director

FORUM for Applied Research  
and Public Policy  
Dennis McCarthy,  
Editor in Chief

Oak Ridge Technology Research  
and Development Program  
Sheila Webster, Director

Systems Development Institute  
Donald Alvic, Director

Pro-Dialogue  
Mary English and  
David L. Feldman, Directors

Water Resources Research Center  
Tim Gangaware, Assoc. Director

For more information, contact  
Gail Farris at 865-974-4251  
University of Tennessee  
EERC  
311 Conference Center Bldg.  
Knoxville, TN 37996-4134.  
Visit our website at:  
<http://eerc.ra.utk.edu/>.


**COLLABORATIONS** Research Leader **Mary English** serves as lead investigator on a UT contract with the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations to work on growth policy issues in Tennessee. TACIR is charged with studying state and local government operations and making recommendations for improving their efficiency and effectiveness. TACIR recently released a staff information report authored by **English** and Graduate Research Assistant **James Hoffman**. This report, "Planning for Rural Areas in Tennessee under Public Chapter 1101," suggests guidelines and resources for assessing rural-area growth plans.

**James Hoffman** is a second-year graduate student in UT's **Department of Urban and Regional Planning**. This is **Hoffman's** fourth semester as a TACIR-supported graduate research assistant working with **Mary English** on land use and growth policy issues. **Daniel Guinle**, a second-year graduate student in UT's **College of Business Administration**, is working under the direction of EERC Executive Director **Jack Barkenbus**. **Guinle** is assisting the Marketing Services division of the Knoxville Utilities Board in marketing "green power" (electricity supplied from renewable energy sources). His position is one of several internships funded through EERC affiliate the **Waste Management Research and Education Institute**. **Sara Drake**, a recent graduate in UT's **Environmental Studies Program**, has been working on a project involving producer responsibility under the direction of Senior Research Associate **Catherine Wilt**. **Drake** will enter graduate school at the University of Georgia in the fall.

**PROJECTS** Research Specialist **Warren Wilson** of EERC's Systems Development Institute and SDI Assistant Director **Anurag Agarwal** recently developed software that allows the Loudon County Enhanced-911 system to search rapidly for records, potentially matching names or phone numbers with outstanding warrants. The application, called LcPhone, has enabled Loudon County officials to capture at least three fugitives since Christmas. SDI can modify this software to support other E-911 centers and has already created other applications for law enforcement and court personnel. SDI recently created a tool, called PARTner, for the Gallatin police department, which allows officers to use computers to complete reports that were previously hand written.

**ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM** EERC will cosponsor a forum on Wednesday, **April 11**, to learn how other large universities are "greening" their campuses. Forum presentations may ultimately guide UT's efforts to improve its environmental stewardship. The forum is being organized by the UT Committee on the Campus Environment, which is chaired by EERC Executive Director **Jack Barkenbus**. David Newport of the University of Florida's "Greening UF" program will discuss campus sustainability; Al Matyasovsky of Penn State University will address waste reduction, recycling, and composting; and Mike McDonald, from Rebuild America, will speak on energy conservation on U.S. campuses. "With a population of 30,000, the Knoxville campus is larger than many cities," says **Barkenbus**. "A well-conceived approach to environmental stewardship will help establish UT as an environmental leader." The forum, which is cosponsored by the UT Environment and Natural Resources program, is open to the public and will run from 1-4 p.m. in the Shiloh Room of the University Center.

## *Rolling Out the GREEN Carpet*

 Each *Highlights and Initiatives* page presents an in-depth look at one of EERC's projects or activities. This edition focuses on *The Midwestern Workgroup on Carpet Recycling*, a partnership between industry and academia that explores new ways to reuse and recycle old carpet.

continued on back \*

The EERC conducts unbiased, analytical, and multidisciplinary research designed to promote real-world solutions to problems in the fields of energy, environment, technology, and economic development.

# Rolling Out the Green Carpet

An EERC researcher is working with an industry-led coalition determined to get old carpet out from underfoot in ways that keep it out of local landfills. • BY LISA BYERLEY GARY

The Midwestern Workgroup on Carpet Recycling, which includes both carpet industry and nonindustry representatives, has endorsed a plan in which an independent, industry-funded organization will look for ways to recycle and reuse old carpet.

**Catherine Wilt**, senior research associate with the University of Tennessee's Energy, Environment and Resources Center, says the national plan benefits consumers by keeping carpet, traditionally made of petroleum-based fibers, out of landfills and incinerators, both of which contribute to environmental pollution. Some 2.3 million tons of carpet and rugs were disposed of in 1996 alone, according to figures from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

But consumers and the environment aren't the only ones who will benefit, says Werner Braun, president of the Carpet and Rug Institute. By taking a proactive approach, the carpet industry gains the flexibility to plan its own strategies for meeting government standards—a move that will help companies maintain their competitive edge. "This is the next logical step for our carpet manufacturing, which has been viewed as a model industry in terms of environmental stewardship," Braun says.

The idea of a third-party group sponsored by manufacturers isn't new. The Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation, for instance, was organized in 1994 by the rechargeable power industry to keep batteries out of landfills. Today the group has the support of more than 300 battery manufacturers and retailers.

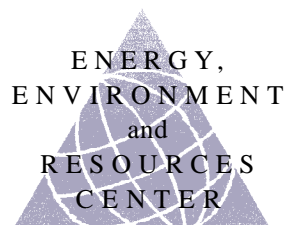
Though spearheaded in the Midwest, the Midwestern Workgroup on Carpet Recycling has become national in scope, encompassing some 40 representatives including state and local government groups, non-government environmental groups, carpet and fiber manufacturers, and carpet installers. Primary supporters are the governments of Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, and the EPA. The initiative has the support of more than 15 state governments, and participants met six times between February and November of 2000 to iron out proposals.

"This is a unique opportunity for states to move away from heavy-handed regulation," says Sherry Enzler, director of the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assessment. "Instead they can focus on working in a mutually beneficial partnership with industry and environmental groups."

But for those members of industry who aren't interested in reducing waste, incentive might come in the form of government procurement contracts. Those might stipulate that bids are awarded only to those manufacturers who support the independent recycling group.

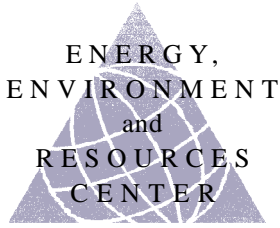
"When an industry becomes part of the solution, that is good product stewardship," says UT's **Wilt**, a project workgroup facilitator and former president of the National Recycling Coalition. "By going through this decision-making process with stakeholders, we are providing incentives for products to be manufactured and managed in an environmentally conscious way, creating a win-win situation for consumers, government, and the industry!"

**"Some 2.3 million tons of carpet and rugs were disposed of in 1996 alone, according to figures from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency."**



For more information contact Catherine Wilt, EERC, the University of Tennessee, 311 Conference Center Building, Knoxville, TN 37996-4134, or call 865-974-1915.

# HIGHLIGHTS and INITIATIVES



Jack Barkenbus  
Executive Director

Center for Clean Products and  
Clean Technologies  
Gary A. Davis, Director

Office of Communications  
David Brill, Director

Center for Geography and  
Environmental Education  
Rosalyn McKeown, Director

FORUM for Applied Research  
and Public Policy  
Dennis McCarthy,  
Editor in Chief

Oak Ridge Technology Research  
and Development Program  
Sheila Webster, Director

Systems Development Institute  
Donald Alvic, Director

Pro-Dialogue  
Mary English and  
David L. Feldman, Directors

Water Resources Research Center  
Tim Gangaware, Assoc. Director

For more information, contact  
Gail Farris at 865-974-4251  
University of Tennessee  
EERC  
311 Conference Center Bldg.  
Knoxville, TN 37996-4134.  
Visit our website at:  
<http://eerc.ra.utk.edu/>.


**COLLABORATIONS** Research Leader **Mary English** serves as lead investigator on a UT contract with the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations to work on growth policy issues in Tennessee. TACIR is charged with studying state and local government operations and making recommendations for improving their efficiency and effectiveness. TACIR recently released a staff information report authored by **English** and Graduate Research Assistant **James Hoffman**. This report, "Planning for Rural Areas in Tennessee under Public Chapter 1101," suggests guidelines and resources for assessing rural-area growth plans.

**James Hoffman** is a second-year graduate student in UT's **Department of Urban and Regional Planning**. This is **Hoffman's** fourth semester as a TACIR-supported graduate research assistant working with **Mary English** on land use and growth policy issues. **Daniel Guinle**, a second-year graduate student in UT's **College of Business Administration**, is working under the direction of EERC Executive Director **Jack Barkenbus**. **Guinle** is assisting the Marketing Services division of the Knoxville Utilities Board in marketing "green power" (electricity supplied from renewable energy sources). His position is one of several internships funded through EERC affiliate the **Waste Management Research and Education Institute**. **Sara Drake**, a recent graduate in UT's **Environmental Studies Program**, has been working on a project involving producer responsibility under the direction of Senior Research Associate **Catherine Wilt**. **Drake** will enter graduate school at the University of Georgia in the fall.

**PROJECTS** Research Specialist **Warren Wilson** of EERC's Systems Development Institute and SDI Assistant Director **Anurag Agarwal** recently developed software that allows the Loudon County Enhanced-911 system to search rapidly for records, potentially matching names or phone numbers with outstanding warrants. The application, called LcPhone, has enabled Loudon County officials to capture at least three fugitives since Christmas. SDI can modify this software to support other E-911 centers and has already created other applications for law enforcement and court personnel. SDI recently created a tool, called PARTner, for the Gallatin police department, which allows officers to use computers to complete reports that were previously hand written.

**ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM** EERC will cosponsor a forum on Wednesday, **April 11**, to learn how other large universities are "greening" their campuses. Forum presentations may ultimately guide UT's efforts to improve its environmental stewardship. The forum is being organized by the UT Committee on the Campus Environment, which is chaired by EERC Executive Director **Jack Barkenbus**. David Newport of the University of Florida's "Greening UF" program will discuss campus sustainability; Al Matyasovsky of Penn State University will address waste reduction, recycling, and composting; and Mike McDonald, from Rebuild America, will speak on energy conservation on U.S. campuses. "With a population of 30,000, the Knoxville campus is larger than many cities," says **Barkenbus**. "A well-conceived approach to environmental stewardship will help establish UT as an environmental leader." The forum, which is cosponsored by the UT Environment and Natural Resources program, is open to the public and will run from 1-4 p.m. in the Shiloh Room of the University Center.

## *Rolling Out the GREEN Carpet*

 Each *Highlights and Initiatives* page presents an in-depth look at one of EERC's projects or activities. This edition focuses on *The Midwestern Workgroup on Carpet Recycling*, a partnership between industry and academia that explores new ways to reuse and recycle old carpet.

continued on back \*

The EERC conducts unbiased, analytical, and multidisciplinary research designed to promote real-world solutions to problems in the fields of energy, environment, technology, and economic development.

# Rolling Out the Green Carpet

An EERC researcher is working with an industry-led coalition determined to get old carpet out from underfoot in ways that keep it out of local landfills. • BY LISA BYERLEY GARY

The Midwestern Workgroup on Carpet Recycling, which includes both carpet industry and nonindustry representatives, has endorsed a plan in which an independent, industry-funded organization will look for ways to recycle and reuse old carpet.

**Catherine Wilt**, senior research associate with the University of Tennessee's Energy, Environment and Resources Center, says the national plan benefits consumers by keeping carpet, traditionally made of petroleum-based fibers, out of landfills and incinerators, both of which contribute to environmental pollution. Some 2.3 million tons of carpet and rugs were disposed of in 1996 alone, according to figures from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

But consumers and the environment aren't the only ones who will benefit, says Werner Braun, president of the Carpet and Rug Institute. By taking a proactive approach, the carpet industry gains the flexibility to plan its own strategies for meeting government standards—a move that will help companies maintain their competitive edge. "This is the next logical step for our carpet manufacturing, which has been viewed as a model industry in terms of environmental stewardship," Braun says.

The idea of a third-party group sponsored by manufacturers isn't new. The Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation, for instance, was organized in 1994 by the rechargeable power industry to keep batteries out of landfills. Today the group has the support of more than 300 battery manufacturers and retailers.

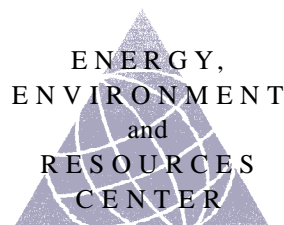
Though spearheaded in the Midwest, the Midwestern Workgroup on Carpet Recycling has become national in scope, encompassing some 40 representatives including state and local government groups, non-government environmental groups, carpet and fiber manufacturers, and carpet installers. Primary supporters are the governments of Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, and the EPA. The initiative has the support of more than 15 state governments, and participants met six times between February and November of 2000 to iron out proposals.

"This is a unique opportunity for states to move away from heavy-handed regulation," says Sherry Enzler, director of the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assessment. "Instead they can focus on working in a mutually beneficial partnership with industry and environmental groups."

But for those members of industry who aren't interested in reducing waste, incentive might come in the form of government procurement contracts. Those might stipulate that bids are awarded only to those manufacturers who support the independent recycling group.

"When an industry becomes part of the solution, that is good product stewardship," says UT's **Wilt**, a project workgroup facilitator and former president of the National Recycling Coalition. "By going through this decision-making process with stakeholders, we are providing incentives for products to be manufactured and managed in an environmentally conscious way, creating a win-win situation for consumers, government, and the industry!"

**"Some 2.3 million tons of carpet and rugs were disposed of in 1996 alone, according to figures from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency."**



For more information contact Catherine Wilt, EERC, the University of Tennessee, 311 Conference Center Building, Knoxville, TN 37996-4134, or call 865-974-1915.