



Denver



Quarterly Sustainability Update

February 2026



The Peace of Wild Things

By Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

The purpose of this newsletter is to engage and foster our CU Denver sustainability community by keeping folks informed about the progression of sustainability efforts at CU Denver, sharing ways to get involved, and facilitating connection and collaboration. Know a colleague or fellow student that would be interested in receiving this newsletter? Forward this along and have them fill out [this form](#) to be added to the distribution list. Would you no longer like to receive this newsletter? Shoot me an [email](#) to let me know and I will remove you (no hard feelings, I promise).



Check out CU Denver's [sustainability webpage](#)! Learn more about our sustainability efforts, focus areas, and [ways to get involved](#).

CU Denver Updates

Blair Gifford Mile High Sustainability Impact Challenge:

CU Denver Business School invites students and community partners to compete in the new Blair Gifford Mile High Sustainability Impact Challenge...with a \$10,000 prize! This action-driven competition is designed to catalyze local solutions to address growing pressures from climate change and help make downtown Denver one of the nation's most sustainable places to live, work, and play. Student teams and community partners will design a project—or a set of interventions—that improve the environmental, social, and economic sustainability of downtown Denver over the next 5 years. Learn more [here](#), and join the Idea Generation Workshop from 5-7 PM Thursday, Feb. 5 from in Business School Room 1600.



Blair Gifford Mile High Sustainability Impact Challenge

Strategic Energy Management (SEM): As a part of CU Denver's ongoing participation in Xcel's [SEM program](#), we are beginning some small recommissioning projects on air handlers in the Student Commons building. By reprogramming the sequence of operations for some of our HVAC equipment, we expect to conserve around 120,000 kWh per year – roughly equivalent to the annual electricity consumption of 14 American homes. We anticipate several more recommissioning projects to follow! The LED lighting retrofit is still in contracting phase, with auditing and design to follow in the coming months. Updates are forthcoming.



Micromobility Parking Survey: Facilities Management and Planning is collecting feedback on parking experience and infrastructure related to micromobility vehicles (bikes, e-bikes, scooters, skateboards, etc.) in the three CU Denver parking garages (Business, Lawrence Street and CU Building). The information collected will be shared with our new parking vendor and used to inform potential improvements. If you have feedback on micromobility parking in these garages, please consider taking **brief, 3-question, open-ended** [survey](#) and sharing with any peers that may be interested!

Heating and Cooling Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):

In an effort to conserve energy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase occupant comfort, CU Denver Sustainability & Facilities Management and Planning has implemented a [Heating and Cooling Standard Operating Procedure \(SOP\)](#). The SOP establishes heating and cooling threshold setpoints between 68-76 degrees and adapts schedules for heating and cooling equipment to better reflect building occupancy (and inoccupancy during holidays and academic recess). This operating procedure applies to CU Denver owned, general fund buildings (Lawrence Street Center, CU Denver Building, Business School, Student Commons, and Learning Commons). AHEC recently implemented a similar policy which was approved by the Auraria Board of Directors (ABOD) and the Student Advisory Committee to the Auraria Board (SACAB) for AHEC-owned buildings. That policy can be found [here](#).





Green Labs: Did you know that the Auraria Campus has a [Green Labs](#) pilot program? Our very own Chemistry department at CU Denver is participating in the My Green Lab 2.0 certification pilot, along with peers at MSU Denver and CCD.

Ultra Low Temp Freezer Subsidy: Last fall, all four University of Colorado institutions partnered to implement an efficient purchasing policy for ultralow temperature (UTL) freezers. Only UTL freezers that use less than 0.31 kWh/day/cubic foot or less will be available for purchase in the CU Marketplace. These high efficiency UTL freezers use 70% less energy than conventional UTL freezers and will reduce energy and greenhouse gas emissions. To help defray cost difference between a conventional and high efficiency UTL, the ASCP is offering an up-to-\$5,000 rebate per freezer for Auraria labs through a new subsidy program approved by SACAB last October. More information about this program and how to access the funds is forthcoming.

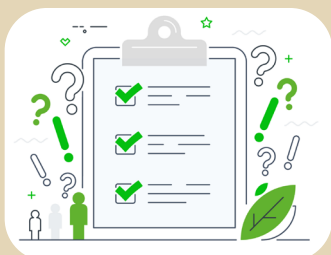
Engagement Opportunities and Auraria Updates

Make sure to sign up for the ASCP's Newsletter to learn even more about student-fee-funded sustainability initiatives occurring on campus and ways to get involved. Their [January newsletter](#) is a wealth of information, and includes info on their Free Store, food recovery app, job opportunities, their sustainability workshop series and much more!



Sustainability Workshop Series: The ASCP's semesterly workshop series offers a unique opportunity to learn core environmental sustainability concepts and discover how to turn knowledge into action. This free five-course program covers essential sustainability topics, including water and energy consumption, waste management, and environmental justice. You will explore these issues through various lenses—global, national, local, and individual—and gain the tools to promote sustainable change in any career path. Learn more and sign up [here](#).

CU Denver Students will earn the [Sustainability Through Service Leadership Certificate](#).



ASCP Biannual Survey: Did you know that the Auraria Sustainable Campus Program is funded with student fees? The ASCP is looking for CU Denver students to provide direction on future initiatives and focus areas by taking their biannual survey. Visit sustainableauraria.org/survey to take the survey, and please distribute to any enrolled students paying fees!

The Water Workforce Summit and Career Fair: This event (**free for students!**) is an opportunity to convene students, water industry professionals and employers, water-related educators and trainers, workforce development specialists, and other stakeholders to discuss and address water workforce needs across the state. The next Water Workforce event series will be the [2026 Water Workforce Summit & Career Fair](#) on February 12-13, 2026 at CSU Spur in Denver with the Water Workforce Summit being held on Thursday, February 12 and the Career Fair on Friday, February 13.



WE WILL BE JAGUARS

A Memoir of My People



NEMONTE NENQUIMO
AND MITCH ANDERSON

Environmental Justice Book Club: Join your peers across the Auraria campus for the 12th session of the Environmental Justice Zoom Book Club. We will be reading *We Will Be Jaguars*, the memoir of Nemonte Nenquimo. Learn more about the book and its authors (who will be visiting campus in April!) [here](#). The book club will strive to create a dialogic space of deep listening and foster conversations about what each of us might do next, individually and collectively, to be responsive to environmental racism and creative toward environmental justice. Meetings will be held biweekly on Tuesdays from 6:30-7:45 PM between 2/17 and 3/31. Register before February 9th [here](#).

2026 Lab Freezer Challenge: Does your lab have refrigerators, freezers, or cold rooms for sample storage? If so, [click here](#) to sign up for Auraria's tri-institutional team for the 2026 Freezer Challenge! The International Laboratory Freezer Challenge empowers labs around the world to adopt sustainable cold storage practices, reduce energy use, and contribute to a greener future. The program has saved a over 76.8 million kWh since its beginning. Sign up to help make our campus more energy efficient and for your chance to win a prize! If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact the sustainability team at greenlabs@ahec.edu.



freezer
challenge

