

Burning Man Project's 2026 Sustainability Update



"Thomas Dambo turns trash into treasure with his giant troll sculptures, all made from recycled wood." Rose Wonders by Thomas Dambo, 2025 (Photo by Lara Crespo Davo)

In just over a week, tens of thousands of people will come together in one of the most unlikely environments imaginable to create Black Rock City. Like the dust itself, the city will vanish with little evidence it ever existed. That's the premise Leaving No Trace runs on, but that's not where the responsibility ends—it's where it starts. For decades, the Burning Man community has been utilizing Black Rock City as a testing ground to experiment and prototype solutions that create positive ripples throughout the world. That impact is further developed through programs such as [Fly Ranch](#), [Burners Without Borders](#), and the [Regional Network](#).

Our community respects the environment. We are committed to leaving no physical trace of our activities wherever we gather. We clean up after ourselves and endeavor, whenever possible, to leave such places in a better state than when we found them. — Leaving No Trace Principle

As you make your journey to the desert this year, consider ways YOU can join this effort and contribute to a more sustainable and regenerative Black Rock City.

- **Bringing a camp?** Build [sustainable infrastructure](#), assign a [sustainability lead](#), play the [Green Radius](#) game, and register for the [Black Rock Compost](#) program. In addition, track your camp's fuel consumption and fill out the [BRC Emissions Survey](#), which will be emailed to your camp organizer and sustainability lead *after* the event.
- **Bringing an e-bike or electric mutant vehicle?** Many camps, such as [SOLARPUNKS](#) and [Bao Chika Wow Wow](#), gift renewable-energy charging.
- **Want to learn how to green your burn?** Explore the [Green Corridors](#) where camps teach, learn, and experiment with new ideas around sustainable infrastructure and regenerative practices. Learn about solar from groups like the [Renewables For Artists Team](#) or [Alternative Energy Zone](#).
- **Inspired after the event?** Apply for the \$30,000 [Green Regionals Grant](#) and build a sustainability project at a Burning Man Regional Event in 2027. Participate in a campout or nature walk at [Fly Ranch](#) to learn about regenerative projects having an impact on Black Rock City and beyond. Around the world, [Burners Without Borders](#) groups and chapters are nurturing grassroots regeneration projects — get involved!

Summary

In 2025, the Burning Man community made considerable progress toward the goals of the [2030 Environmental Sustainability Roadmap](#), thanks to the ongoing innovation and Communal Effort of the community, support from generous donors, and the year-round work of the [Burning Man Project nonprofit](#).

Nearly half of Burning Man Project's operational [fossil fuel emissions were avoided or displaced](#) through solar, batteries, and renewable fuels in Black Rock City 2025. Energy generation is shifting fast as well: the majority of placed camps deployed solar panels (59%), many completely ditched generators (19%), most art installations utilized solar (63%), and a significant number of mutant vehicles were electric (27%).

Waste is being handled more responsibly, with over **50 cubic yards of food scraps composted** through the DPW Organics Collection Crew and the participant-led [Black Rock Compost](#) program.

Regeneration efforts are returning value to the land and people, with 80 cubic yards of compost — primarily generated from Black Rock City — sent back to [Fly Ranch](#) to **grow food for the local community and future camps in Black Rock City**. In addition, a new **\$30,000 [Green Regionals Grant](#) was launched**, funding sustainability projects at [Burning Man events](#) worldwide.

Background

In 2019, Burning Man Project embarked on the [2030 Environmental Sustainability Roadmap](#). The roadmap sets a course, but its purpose extends beyond the destination.

While most of Burning Man Project's sustainability work is rooted in [Black Rock City](#), the vision isn't simply to change how event participants and operations function; it's to develop impactful solutions that extend beyond the annual Black Rock City event to inform and inspire gatherings, communities, and organizations around the world. That impact is what the roadmap is meant to grow. Black Rock City is a node in a broader Global Network. Artists, builders, and innovators gather at [Burning Man events](#) to experiment and collaborate, guided by the same [10 Principles](#) that define Black Rock City, including Participation, Communal Effort, and Leaving No Trace.

This update marks a halfway point: Black Rock City has been built five times since the roadmap was published, with five more to go through 2030. This report will revisit the goals, highlight progress, discuss challenges, and share how the nonprofit and broader community are moving forward.

Goal #1: No Matter Out of Place. Handle Waste Ecologically.

The first goal is to eliminate non-sustainable waste from Burning Man events and operations. Achieving this goal requires innovation across the entire lifecycle of materials, from manufacturers and suppliers, to recycling and recovery systems. While many challenges exist beyond Burning Man Project's direct control, our efforts have focused on areas where meaningful progress can be made.



The crew at Organic Fruit & Veggie Camp prepare to dry their food scraps before hauling them to the Black Rock Compost program (Photo by Susan Becker)



Black Rock Compost volunteers inspect food scraps for contaminants (Photo by Kathleen Nadel)

Progress on “No Matter Out of Place” in Black Rock City 2025:

- **Composted 36 cubic yards of food scraps** and compostable materials from Black Rock City’s staff through the operations of the DPW Organics Collection crew, plus **18 cubic yards of food scraps** from participant camps through the community-led [Black Rock Compost](#) program.
- **Recycled 10,880 lbs. of sorted aluminum cans** through [Recycle Camp](#) and staff operations, donating \$3,264 in rebates to the Gerlach K-12 School.
- **Enhanced waste streams processes** for staff operations to include specialized recycling for lithium-ion batteries and disposable vapes.
- **Replaced the procurement of new firewood** with scrap wood to supplement the Man Burn.
- **Inspected and MOOPed 157 million square feet of playa** through [Playa Restoration](#).



The Playa Restoration team conducts MOOP sweeps, ensuring that Black Rock City leaves no Matter Out of Place. (Photo by Nick Cahill)



Playa Restoration staff support the Bureau of Land Management's Post-Event Inspection (Photo by Moon Mandel)

Challenges. While the Burning Man community continues to demonstrate what is possible through collective action and a commitment to Leaving No Trace, we recognize there is still significant work ahead. As a temporary city built and removed in a matter of weeks, Black Rock City faces unique challenges around waste management. Limited time for sorting and recovery, a lack of local recycling infrastructure, and limited access to sustainable or locally sourced procurement options often push participants toward single-use or low-cost goods, which are more likely to be discarded and contribute to overall waste generation.

Moving forward. Burning Man Project will continue investing in community-led solutions, such as the [Black Rock Compost Program](#), [Recycle Camp](#), and [Earth Guardians](#). The nonprofit will also continue sharing [existing solutions](#) and reinforcing Leaving No Trace [education](#), including the [Leave Nevada Beautiful campaign](#), which connects participants with responsible waste disposal and recycling options along the travel corridor. Burning Man Project is actively exploring innovative waste processing technologies and seeking partnerships around these efforts, including composting toilets and waste-to-energy. Lastly, local entrepreneurs and businesses are encouraged to develop upstream and downstream solutions, while boosting the regional economy, such as providing rental equipment or access to locally produced goods.

Goal #2: Be Regenerative. Create a net positive ecological and environmental impact.

The second goal aspires to prototype solutions that enable humanity to become a regenerative force for the planet. Land projects have been the primary focus. It's worth noting that regeneration isn't only about ecology; this practice also involves establishing stronger relationships, sharing knowledge, and developing systems that are life-enhancing, beyond Burning Man's ephemeral gatherings.

Black Rock City exists for eight days each year, so most of this work is done year-round, primarily through three programs: [Fly Ranch](#), a living laboratory where regenerative practices are tested; [Burners Without Borders](#), a community of doers that supports people and projects; and the [Regional Network](#), a distribution and learning channel that circulates solutions, supports experimentation, and feeds lessons back into the broader community.



Soil samples are collected to analyze the benefits of compost applications at Black Rock Station (Photo by Moon Mandel)



Black Rock City's food scraps after seven months of composting (Photo by Cody Witt)



Staff and volunteers harvest produce at the Fly Ranch Garden

Progress towards “Be Regenerative” at Fly Ranch since Black Rock City 2025:

- Invested in infrastructure, such as a **greenhouse, water well, and drip system**, to **scale regenerative agricultural efforts and food systems**.
- Returned **80 cubic yards of compost** primarily generated from Black Rock City 2025, now **growing hundreds of pounds of produce** to supplement meals in the local region and for camps in Black Rock City 2026.
- Produced more than **500 pounds of honey** from **eight beehives**, providing co-benefits for the land and community.
- **Powered all infrastructure with solar** for various programs, such as the [Fly Guardians](#), garden and artist residencies, and general operations.

- Hosted two 300-person campouts with no generators, the Fly Afterburn and Burners Without Border's (BWB) [Solstice Summit](#), where programming integrated regenerative projects and workshops.



Burning Man Project is scaling regenerative events, such as the Burners Without Borders Summit, on the Hualapai Flat, home of Burning Man 1997 (Photo by Zac Cirivello)

Progress towards “Be Regenerative” for Regional Events since Black Rock City 2025:

- Funded the StarShade and Lux Capacitor projects through the [BAM Regional Event Civic Ignition Grant](#) facilitated by Burners Without Borders. Both projects are now [field-tested and open-sourced](#) for other communities to replicate.
- Produced the [Green Regionals](#) initiative, a platform for knowledge-sharing around sustainability efforts at community-led Regional Events across the Regional Network. Highlights from Regional Events include:
 - [AfrikaBurn](#), in South Africa, powered [99% of their infrastructure with solar](#), utilized humanure toilets, and began [seed planting initiatives](#).
 - [The Borderland](#), in Sweden, purchased land on which they are developing regenerative land projects and to host gatherings in a more sustainable manner.
 - [Kiwiburn](#), in New Zealand, formed a Sustainability Committee and created [goals](#) to reduce environmental impact.

- [Firefly](#), in Vermont, USA, started [composting](#) food waste on-site.
- Launched the [Green Regionals Grant](#), providing **\$30,000 to projects** that support Regional Events to become more sustainable, regenerative, and resilient.



Composting toilets producing humanure at Tanka Town for Afrikaburn, South Africa



The “Secret Garden” at Alversjö, Sweden where The Borderlands takes place

Challenges. Regeneration is slow to prove. Healthy soils, restored ecosystems, and stronger communities often take years to show results. We don't yet have a reliable way to say whether the ledger balances in any given year. We only know that the trajectory is moving toward balance, not away from it. Developing meaningful ways to measure these outcomes remains an important challenge for Burning Man Project.

This work runs on people, and right now we need more of them. Growing that network isn't just a capacity question. It's central to whether regeneration becomes a value that more communities choose to embrace.

Moving forward. We plan to scale regenerative efforts at Fly Ranch to provide access to locally grown food for locals, staff, and camps in Black Rock City, while continuing to expand capacity for year-round programming and events. As more Regional Events [pursue owning land of their own](#), there's a real opportunity to cultivate this model of place-based, long-term regenerative work across the network, evolving it from something we simply build into something we actively tend.

Through Burning Man's network, the nonprofit will continue to pilot grant programs, expand knowledge-sharing platforms, and develop more effective communications channels to advance sustainable and regenerative efforts. The more hands that join this work, the more regenerative it actually becomes.

Goal #3: Become Carbon Negative. Remove more carbon from the environment than we put into it.

The third goal is to become carbon negative by 2030. Achieving this requires collective action from the entire Black Rock City community, supported by partnerships with innovative technology providers. The main objective has been to take Black Rock City off of fossil fuels, primarily through solar, batteries, and renewable fuels.

Black Rock City is an ideal platform for testing and developing solutions that mitigate environmental harm for gatherings in desert climates. Since the publication of the roadmap, Burning Man Project's Regeneration team, Burners Without Borders, and Event Operations teams have partnered with camps and organizations that develop or provide rapidly deployable solar and battery solutions, electric vehicles, off-grid chargers, and renewable fuels. The nonprofit has also launched a solar program, building a variety of mobile solar and battery assets and gifting used solar panels to participants in Black Rock City.

We're also seeing significant progress with the community. In 2025, the **majority of placed camps deployed solar panels (59%)** and **many completely ditched generators (19%)**. **Most of the art installations utilized solar (63%)** and **a significant number of mutant vehicles were electric vehicles (27%)**.



SOLAR STATION: 24/7 free charging for electric mutant vehicles and e-bikes (Photo by SOLARPUNKS)



Dragonwings, a rapidly deployable solar array engineered by members of Black Rock Labs (Photo by Liza Welsh)



"Solarians" building the Solar Library, a battery check-out system for art installations (Photo by Espressobuzz)

Progress towards "Becoming Carbon Negative" in Black Rock City 2025:

- [Avoided or displaced 48% of fossil fuel emissions](#) against a business-as-usual baseline for BRC Operations, through solar, batteries, and renewable fuels.
- Powered **nearly 40%** of BRC infrastructure power grids **on solar**.
- Deployed more than **16 megawatt-hours** of battery capacity by Burning Man Project and its partners.
 - Interconnected more than 9 megawatt-hours of battery capacity with Burning Man Project's generators, **reducing average generator run-time by 59%** and saving more than 24,000 gallons of diesel fuel.
- Provided participant access to renewable fuels through the [BRC Fuel Program](#).
- Replaced **100% of propane** usage by BRC Operations and the BRC Fuel Program with renewable propane.
- Replaced **~40% of diesel** usage by BRC Operations with renewable diesel.

- Transported **7,000+ passengers** into Black Rock City and **6,000+** back into the default world through the [Burner Express Bus travel program](#).
- Published an updated [BRC Emissions Inventory](#) to track measurable progress.

Challenges. Solar, batteries, and renewable fuels have reduced Black Rock City's fossil fuel use dramatically. Still, the city burns hundreds of thousands of gallons of fuel, and participant travel remains the largest emissions source associated with the event. Renewable gasoline is not yet commercially available. Electric vehicles remain costly, along with permanent carbon dioxide removal credits.

Moving forward. Burning Man Project will expand the use of renewable fuels, increase renewable energy and battery capacity, and sharpen annual emissions reporting. The nonprofit will continue collaborating with participant-led initiatives and camps, such as [SOLARPUNKS](#), [Renewables for Artists Team](#), [Black Rock Labs](#), the [Green Theme Camp Community](#), [Alternative Energy Zone](#), and [Bao Chika Wow Wow](#). We are actively seeking new Regeneration [Civic Support Camps](#) that help the community reduce its environmental impact. Lastly, the Regeneration department plans to expand a pilot process for developing partnerships with organizations that build and deploy innovative technologies with applications both for participants and around the world, including electric vehicle charging, portable wind, solar and battery-integrated prototypes, zero-emissions generators, grey water recycling and evaporation systems, and energy-efficient shelters.

Where we go from here

The work here isn't simply to change how Black Rock City is built or operated. By design, Black Rock City is a relatively [low impact city](#): it fully operates for only eight days, and most participants live in tents, ride bikes, and share resources. The question that drives this work is deeper. What can we do here, and what applications does it have out in the world?

Over the next five Black Rock City events, Burning Man Project will continue working toward each goal, sharing what we learn so that others can apply this knowledge to initiatives such as sustainable event production, disaster relief infrastructure, or simply one participant returning home to serve their community. But none of this is possible without the participants who lead, an organization that clears the path, and the creatives willing to test their boldest ideas on the playa. Fostering that collaboration is the most important part of this work, and that's what the roadmap is meant to grow.

In a time when collective action can feel impossible, the Burning Man community continues to prove otherwise. Let's show the world what's possible and build Black Rock City better, together.



Burners come together to ideate a regenerative future at Fly Ranch, during the Burners Without Borders Solstice Summit (Photo by Mia Terracotta)

You can stay connected by [signing up for our email updates](#) or contacting us at sustainability@burningman.org.

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