The Pierce County Environmental Services Division is housed in a building designed by the Miller/Hull Partnership, incorporating sustainable design principles such as light wells, natural air circulation and roofwater collection. The site, an old gravel mine overlooking Puget Sound, is being reclaimed through a 50-year master plan which will incorporate the wastewater treatment plant, and replace the mine with recreational facilities and an environmental education centre.

AldrichPears provided interpretation of Environmental Services’ vision and action, the green building, the site’s history and geology, as well as greywater reclamation, landscaping and erosion control. Visitors are given an inside look at this often unseen world, and take away a sense of personal relevance and responsibility for the environment.

The building and first phase of reclamation opened in March 2003.
Green Building
Colourful graphic panels introduce the visitor to the guiding building principles of the Environmental Services Building: design for the human factor, integrated systems, and earth-smart materials. As they look around, visitors notice live plants, skylight “chimneys” and recycled flooring. They turn to interpretive panels to discover more about these and other living systems that form an integral part of the building.

Environmental Services
Interpretive graphics introduce visitors to the key services that Environmental Services provides: water programs, sewer utility, solid waste, and education. Images of Puget Sound salmon and surging floodwater inform visitors that there is much more going on here than simply keeping water clean. Wastewater facts and figures appear in the washrooms, surprising visitors and stimulating their curiosity. Recycling bins and their contents show what can be recycled from home, yard or office. A 3D model showing the 50-year plan for the site helps visitors envision the future and feel positive about change.

The Site
Emerging from the building, visitors encounter a timeline illustrating the history of the land that lies before them, from the Steilacoom Tribe village to the Lone Star mines, right up to the present day and beyond. Mining artifacts are dramatically displayed, hinting at the industrial history of the site. Graphic panels scattered along the pathways highlight the sustainable systems of the building and surroundings. Visitors see sustainable choices in action, as they witness roofwater collection, native emergent plantings, and natural filtration. Visitors reflect on the far-reaching benefits of choosing sustainable materials, as they discover that even the paving beneath their feet plays a part in the synergy of sustainable building, site and systems.