

OMEGA INSTITUTE

Omega Center for Sustainable Living

Rhinebeck, New York

An integrated water strategy links a holistic wellness center's wastewater treatment to its mission and educational activities.



The Omega Institute is a nonprofit educational organization and wellness center dedicated to pioneering holistic studies. When the Institute needed to replace its aging wastewater infrastructure, they sought a solution that would align with their mission and provide opportunities for education and inspiration.

In collaboration with BNIM Architects and John Todd Ecological Design, Biohabitats designed a low-energy, low-maintenance wastewater treatment system that also functions as a teaching tool. Known as the Omega Center for Sustainable Living (OCSL), the system includes primary treatment, an anoxic tank, subsurface flow constructed wetlands, an indoor aerated lagoon, a recirculating sand filter and subsurface dispersal.

The effluent meets all of the State of New York water

quality standards for the land application/subsurface disposal of treated effluent. This allows the Institute to reuse the water to irrigate 2.5 acres of the campus using a pressure-dosed subsurface irrigation system in the future.

The OCSL treats up to 52,000 gallons of wastewater per day, and is a key part of the Institute's educational programming about ecological impact. In operation since July, 2009, the facility was awarded the AIA COTE 'Top 10 Green Projects' and received LEED Platinum certification in 2010. The building was also one of the world's first certified Living Buildings.

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