

Knowing Our Luxuries: A Reflection on Holden Village Utilities

Ian Goller

At Holden Village, we have the unique opportunity to engage directly with all our utilities. We can see the generators that provide us with electricity, change the filters that clean our drinking water, pump the septic tanks that stores our waste, and stoke the boilers that keep us warm. Being so close to these processes, it is easy for us to reflect on the impact that the luxuries we take for granted have on the environment and community.

In the down lake world, we are often far removed from these realities. Our drinking water, electricity, sewer, and heating systems are often maintained by municipal utility stations that can be miles away from our homes and hidden from plain sight. As a result, it is easy to forget that all our luxuries come at a cost. In the United States, 64% of our electricity comes from burning coal or natural gas, contributing to the ongoing climate crisis, whereas only 22% comes from renewable sources. Most of the other goods and services we rely on day to day contribute to this crisis as well. At some point in their life cycles, from production to disposal, virtually all goods and services will burn fossil fuels and contribute to the warming of the planet.

If you can take any lesson away from the utilities at Holden Village, it is that it is important to be aware of where your luxuries come from. Learn where the power station that generates your electricity comes from and learn what mix of energy sources they use to feed their generators. Learn where your sewage goes and how it is treated. Learn where your drinking water comes from and how it is impacting the hydrology of the surrounding landscape. Everything we use comes from somewhere and learning those stories is the first step in building a more sustainable future for all of us.