

ARTS & EVENTS



**The Editors**

9:11 am

While citizens of France worldwide celebrated Bastille Day on July 14th, the French Embassy in D.C. celebrated a month of environmental improvements that followed the inauguration of its green roof project.

On June 17, 2013, the French Embassy celebrated the inauguration of its green roof project. Filling its contemporarily designed halls with guests from other embassies and various media outlets, the French ambassador, François Delattre, introduced the crowd to the embassy's latest environmental initiative.

Green roofs have been growing in popularity worldwide. The tops of buildings have been covered in grass and other greenery to help mitigate rainwater runoff and the urban heat island effect, which is the result of building materials trapping heat in a way that natural landscapes do not. The roofs also provide potential habitats for local wildlife and reduce cooling and heating costs for the buildings.

The green roof is not the French embassy's first excursion into energy reduction. The embassy itself is 100% wind-powered. Workers are provided electric bikes to travel to meetings in D.C.; in less than two years of use, the bikes have already paid for themselves. The bikes have also saved an estimated 360 kg of equivalent carbon dioxide emissions.

Ambassador Delattre said the green roof is another symbol of the French government's continuing commitment to the environment—a top priority for the country. Keith Anderson, the director of the District Department of the Environment, also spoke at the inauguration, identifying the project as evidence of the ongoing collaboration between the goals of the city and those of the embassies.

The embassy installed the first plants in December, and, at the inauguration in June, some hints of grass and plants were apparent. An embassy official reported that in the month since the inauguration, nature has continued to take its course on the roof. An additional two roofs on the embassy are planned to make the green transition in the future.

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