

Mission, Community, Environment – The Triple Bottom Line of Sustainability

The Installation's Sustainability Management System is all about a continual cycle of planning, implementing, reviewing, and improving the actions an organization takes to meet its environmental obligations. As a Federal agency, the Army must abide by all federal, state, and local laws, many of which pertain to the land or environment in which we live. Military activities affect land use every day. From construction activities to waste disposal, handling of hazardous materials, maneuver and live fire training, stream crossings, and even communications, our land supports many activities that have the potential to cause it harm. As we keep in mind the second commitment of Fort Stewart/Hunter Army Airfield's (FS/HAAF's) Sustainability Policy – to optimize the mission, well-being of the community, and the environment – we recognize that caring for these three aspects can work together to create a happy and healthy environment for all.

Fort Stewart is blessed with the benefit of a very large training platform, but training ranges and maneuver areas are not the only treasures in the woods of the reservation. Our woods are home to delicate ecosystems and several threatened and endangered species (TES) that all require vigilance in how we interact with them. One success story of FS/HAAF's TES management practices is the red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW). The FS/HAAF Fish and Wildlife Branch monitors and manages these birds and the Forestry Branch assists with habitat management through prescribed burning. This collaboration has resulted in tremendous success in growing the Installation's RCW population. As a result of the combined, proactive management efforts of both the Fish and Wildlife and Forestry Branches as well as the efforts made by Soldiers to minimize damage to RCW habitat, the Installation has met its recovery goal for the RCW. Consequently, all training restrictions associated with the RCW have been removed, allowing for better maneuver of tanks and other tactical vehicles, which ultimately creates a more realistic training experience.

Let us take a step back for a moment and consider why RCWs love the land in which we train. Fort Stewart has over 150,000 acres of upland forests consisting of longleaf pine with a thick ground cover underneath, to include wiregrass, forbs and short shrubs. This unique ecosystem is among the most diverse in the world, rivaling the species richness of tropical rain forests, and containing rare plants and animals not found elsewhere. The understory, or groundcover, may contain 150 to 300 plant species per acre and is home to more breeding birds than any other southeastern forest type. With the rich species diversity found in this ecosystem, it is clear why so many RCWs call our forests home and why it is imperative for us to take care of the land in which they live and we train. All of us at Fort Stewart should take pride in the fact that we have such a rare and unique ecosystem. We can continue to be at the forefront of conservation and training by doing our part to maintain and protect this ecosystem, and by educating others of its importance.

One way we protect this ecosystem and the species it supports is through controlled burning. The longleaf pine and its associated species are fire-dependent. Many of the plants, like wiregrass, require fire to stimulate flowering and seed production. As fire burns, it consumes the leaves, needles, twigs, branches, and stems that fall and cover the forest floor, making a seed bed for this sensitive ecosystem while protecting the community from threat of wildfires. Overall, controlled burns help to ensure a healthy forest, a healthy population of fire-dependent species, as well as an environment safe from wildfires for our Installation community to live.

Another way we protect our forests and surrounding environment is by planting trees which provide valuable environmental services. Trees clean the atmosphere, reduce ambient temperature, provide us with wood for building and warming our homes, as well as food for both people and animals. However, most importantly, they give us the very air we breathe. Fort Stewart is designated as a Tree City USA community, which means the Installation has established a Tree Board, a Tree Care Ordinance, a Community Forestry Program, and observes Arbor Day each year. In fact, there

are three Arbor Days recognized at FS/HAAF each year; National Arbor Day (celebrated on the last Friday in April), Georgia Arbor Day (celebrated on the third Friday in February), and FS/HAAF Arbor Day (celebrated in early December). In support of urban trees, the Forestry Branch coordinates a tree planting each year to celebrate the Installation's Arbor Day. Each tree planting serves as an opportunity to educate our youth on the importance of trees and protecting the environment. These tree plantings also serve as a beautification and conservation effort and support the Installation's initiatives as a member of Tree City USA.

By knowing and respecting the restrictions that exist in our training areas, appreciating the benefits of our controlled burning program, and planting new trees to grow in our community, everyone can contribute to the triple bottom line of sustainability!



R	RESOURCES	Pollution Prevention P2 Natural Resources
O	OPTIMIZE	MISSION WELL-BEING ENVIRONMENT
C	COMPLIANCE	Scales of Justice, Gavel, Book
K	KEEP IMPROVING	Person at computer, Bar chart
OF THE MARNE	<i>Sustainable Fort Stewart/ Hunter Army Airfield</i>	

