

## **Sustainability – What it is and Why It’s Important**

Sustainability is becoming a hot topic, but does everyone really know what it is? Sustainability or “to be sustainable” means to use methods, systems or materials that will not deplete present resources or harm natural cycles so those resources are still available in the future. Three Presidential executive orders require Federal agencies to maintain an Environmental Management System. Fort Stewart/Hunter Army Airfield (FS/HAAF) takes that one step further to incorporate sustainability. We call ours a Sustainability Management System, and it is a continual cycle of planning, implementing, reviewing, and improving the actions an organization takes to meet its environmental obligations. Per the Army, sustainability should be institutionalized in doctrines, policies, training, operations and acquisitions. By focusing on balancing the mission, well-being of the community, and the environment, the Installation’s sustainability program helps to align mission and environmental goals, ensure the viability of the training areas, reduce environmental liability, promote sustainable operations, and foster continual improvement.

Our sustainability objectives – conserving water and energy, reducing solid waste disposal (mostly through recycling), and proper management of threatened and endangered species – are all included in the Installation’s Strategic Plan to keep these important considerations in the forefront of management decisions. This system is in place to ensure that we properly manage those areas where improper management or deviation from the regulations would cause significant negative impacts to the environment. After all, maintaining compliance with all federal, state, and local laws is one of the four commitments of the FS/HAAF Sustainability Policy!

We’ve chosen “ROCK” to help everyone remember the Sustainability Policy. Each letter in the acronym tells part of the Installation’s commitment to sustainability. “R” is for Resources - prevent pollution and conserve natural resources. “O” is for Optimize - optimize the mission, well-being, and environment. “C” is for Complying with Federal, state, and local laws. And finally, “K” is for Keep Improving, as we should all be striving to continually improve environmental stewardship.

If you have been at FS/HAAF for very long, you may have been approached by staff of the Environmental Division inquiring if you know what sustainability is or what the “ROCK” acronym stands for. This was most likely in conjunction with one of the annual assessments of the program. Internal assessments are conducted every year to ensure sustainability is being properly implemented and to determine the level of awareness among the Installation community. Then every three to four years, the Army Environmental Command conducts an external assessment. Help FS/HAAF showcase its commitment to sustainability by knowing the ROCK acronym and what it means to be sustainable. Live sustainably by remembering the first promise of ROCK – to prevent pollution and conserve natural resources.

Every day, we are faced with decisions that have the potential to impact the environment, but recognizing those impacts can help us avoid them. The energy sources our power companies use present big risks to the environment, but we as individuals can reduce that risk by conserving energy. As populations of the local communities increase, so does our water usage. In fact, the increased groundwater withdrawals from the Floridan Aquifer have led to saltwater intrusion in nearby coastal communities. When water is being withdrawn from the ground faster than it is being put back, saltwater from the ocean essentially pollutes groundwater sources, making it necessary to treat the water before drinking it. Make it a personal goal to be conscious of your energy use and conserve water resources where possible.

Another area of daily life where environmental impacts lurk is with the chemicals we use. Everyone wants to keep a clean home, but many of the cleaning solutions sold on the supermarket shelves are not environmentally friendly. Pay attention to the labels and purchase non-toxic or less toxic alternatives to standard cleaning supplies.

Finally, be conscious of what you throw away! Material you put in the trash does not go to a mysterious place where garbage lives; it goes to the Installation landfill limiting its potential use in the future and eating away at one of our most valuable resources – land. Recycle! It takes much less energy to make products out of recycled materials compared to raw materials. By knowing what can be recycled and making sure those recyclable materials end up in the blue recycling container instead of the trash receptacle saves land, energy, and helps prevent pollution. When we combine these small changes as we go about daily activities, pollution prevention adds up quickly, and so do the environmental benefits! Follow these tips to jump-start sustainable living:

### Conserve Energy



- Turn off lights and appliances when not in use.
- Consider three-way lamps; they make it easier to keep lighting levels low when brighter light isn't necessary.
- When washing clothes or dishes, use no more water than appropriate for the size of the wash.
- Air-dry dishes instead of using your dishwasher's heat cycle.
- Change at least three of your household light bulbs to compact fluorescent light bulbs.
- Clean your refrigerator coils.
- Look for the Energy Star label on appliances and products.
- Periodically inspect your dryer vent to ensure it is not blocked. This will save energy and may prevent a fire.
- Close fireplace dampers when not in use. A chimney is designed for smoke to escape, so until you close it, warm air escapes!

### Conserve Water



- Turn off the water while you brush your teeth.
- Sweep the driveway instead of spraying it down with a garden hose.
- Use buckets or rain barrels to harvest and store rainfall for watering your plants.
- Try landscaping with plants that require less water such as succulents and cacti.
- Install low-flow fixtures, such as shower heads and low-flow toilets.

<b>R</b>	<b>RESOURCES</b>	Pollution <b>P2</b> Prevention	Natural Resources
<b>O</b>	<b>OPTIMIZE</b>	MISSION WELL-BEING — ENVIRONMENT	
<b>C</b>	<b>COMPLIANCE</b>	Scales of justice, gavel, and book	
<b>K</b>	<b>KEEP IMPROVING</b>	Person climbing stairs, bar chart with upward arrow	
<b>OF THE MARNE</b>	<i>Sustainable Fort Stewart/ Hunter Army Airfield</i>		