



District embraces Sustainability

First in a 5-part series

USACE Goals

- (1) Reduce energy intensity in USACE buildings;
- (2) Increase the Corps' use of renewable energy and implement renewable energy generation projects on agency property;
- (3) Reduce the Corps' use of fossil fuels by:
 - a. using low greenhouse gas emitting vehicles, including alternative fuel vehicles;
 - b. optimizing the number of vehicles in the agency fleet; and
 - c. reducing the USACE fleet's total consumption of petroleum products by a minimum of 2 percent annually through the end of fiscal year 2020, relative to a baseline of fiscal year 2005.

story by Joe Saxon

We've heard a lot about sustainability, but what is it and what does that mean for you?

Executive Order (EO) 13514, "Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance," states that sustainability "means to create and maintain conditions, under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony, that permit fulfilling the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations."

The EO emphasizes that sustainability should not only be a natural part of all the Corps' decision processes, but should also be part of our organizational culture. The Corps is a steward for some of the Nation's most valuable natural resources, and we must ensure our customers receive products and services that provide for sustainable solutions that address short and long-term environmental, social and economic considerations.

Ruthann Haider leads the District's newly developed Sustainability committee. In defining sustainability, she quoted a former NWD Division commander who succinctly put it this way, "At its core, sustainability is about reducing waste and increasing efficiency. By reducing wasted water, energy, landfill space, and other resources, we increase our efficiency and assure our ability to meet current and future military and civil works missions and deliver quality projects."

Whether working on an environmental remediation project, maintaining equipment at a Corps operating project, designing a new construction project, or printing an e-mail we just received, we all play a role in sustainability.

"You too can strive to make sustainability an outcome of your activities," Haider added. "You can conserve energy and reduce pollution by making small changes to things you do in the office, at home and while traveling.

"For example, at home you can turn your refrigerator down or set your washer to use only warm or cold water. At the office you can purchase recycled office products, and ensure lights not in use are turned off. On the road you can carpool with office colleagues, avoid hard accelerations, reduce time spent idling, unload unnecessary items in your trunk to reduce your vehicle's weight, or drive smart by going easy on the brakes and gas pedal," she said.

Damian Walter, District POC for Environmental Compliance in Sustainability, illustrated the power of compounding saying "When I worked for the Park Service they had an issue where visitors could not take a pine cone off the Jewel Cave National Monument near Custer South Dakota. Why not? Because we got 1.3 million visitors every year. If everyone took a pine cone there wouldn't be any trees. Point is, even a penny saved eventually can add up to millions of dollars."

USACE Environmental Operating Principles

- Foster sustainability as a way of life throughout the organization.
- Proactively consider environmental consequences of all Corps activities and act accordingly.
- Create mutually supporting economic and environmental solutions.
- Continue to meet our corporate responsibility and accountability under the law for activities undertaken by the Corps, which may impact human and natural environments.
- Consider the environment in employing a risk management and systems approach throughout the life cycles of projects and programs.
- Leverage scientific, economic, and social knowledge to understand the environmental context and effects of Corps actions in a collaborative manner.
- Employ an open, transparent process that respects views of individuals and groups interested in Corps activities.