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Developing Headquarters Guidance for Army Installation Sustainability Plans in 2007

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Prepared for the United States Army
Approved for public release; distribution unlimited



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The research described in this report was sponsored by the United States Army under Contract No. W74V8H-06-C-0001.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Developing headquarters guidance for Army installation sustainability plans in 2007 /
Beth E. Lachman ... [et al].

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-8330-4707-6 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. United States. Army—Facilities—Management. 2. United States. Army—
Facilities—Maintenance and repair. I. Lachman, Beth E., date.

UC403.D48 2010

355.7068⁴—dc22

2009045741

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Published 2009 by the RAND Corporation

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Summary

Background and Purpose

As is the case with businesses and governments at all levels, the Army has recognized the need to manage its installations in a way that sustains them for the future. Based on lessons from industry and communities, many Army installations started to develop installation sustainability plans (ISPs). Beginning at the turn of the century, a few installations, like Fort Bragg, started developing and implementing installation sustainability plans because of the operational, financial, and environmental benefits they saw industry and communities experiencing by implementing sustainability approaches. Such plans address long-range mission, community, and environmental issues and priorities and are developed through a strategic planning process. To develop an installation sustainability plan, installation staff members and key stakeholders define the vision and goals for the installation over a 20- to 25-year horizon and identify tasks needed to achieve them. Such plans are often developed in addition or in combination with installation strategic plans.

The installations that have developed sustainability plans have provided insight to the rest of the Army about how to develop such plans. The plans have also been useful to installation management and staff. However in 2007, we found that these plans were inconsistent in their focus and scope, and most did not fully address some key sustainability issues, such as quality of life (QOL) and master planning issues. Nor was there a formal Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA) policy requiring installation sustainability planning, and no HQDA guidance describing specific issues that should be addressed by the plans or guidance on how to develop or implement an ISP.

This study aimed to develop guidance for ISPs to ensure that they strategically and comprehensively deal with installation sustainability issues affecting mission, community, and environment. Additionally, the guidance should foster the effective development and implementation of ISPs throughout the Army. As part of this study, we examined the ISP development process and implementation progress, challenges, and needs to ensure that the guidance enabled effective ISP development and implementation. The methodology for the study included examining ISP documentation; reviewing sustainability and management literature; interviewing installation staff, Army regional, and HQ staff, and other relevant experts; attending ISP development

workshops and visiting several installations that have implemented ISPs; and assessing all this information. This study was conducted from fall 2006 through fall 2007. It is important to note that there have been many changes to the program since this research was conducted that address many of the issues raised in this study. Some examples have been provided in this document. For more current information, contact the Assistant for Sustainability, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army Environment, Safety and Occupational Health (DASA-ESOH) or the Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management's Environmental Division (DAIM-ISE).

Findings and Recommendations

Our study found that some installations, such as Forts Bragg, Carson, Hood, and Lewis, have made considerable progress in developing and implementing ISPs with limited resources and guidance. For example, Fort Bragg built an urban village training site in 90 days from 50 recycled shipping containers at an estimated savings of \$220,000 compared to standard construction and has built brigade complexes to be more aesthetic and friendly to pedestrians and the environment. Fort Hood saved more than \$2.5 million in 2006 through its qualified recycling program, compost recycle program, inert material management, deconstruction management, special waste management, and electronics waste recycling program. Fort Hood also used recycled tires to create a platform for a tank firing range to reduce dust and air-quality impacts. Fort Lewis has pioneered the Sustainable Interiors Showroom approach that has resulted in the purchase of more than \$180,000 in recyclable and/or recycled content furnishings on post, and purchased 10 percent green power in FY07. Energy initiatives saved Fort Carson approximately \$1 million in FY06, and this post is participating in a strategic ecoregion management collaboration, called the Central Shortgrass Prairie Ecoregion Partnership, to help prevent species-protection requirements from causing training restrictions.

However, we also found that issues remain. For example, most of the accomplishments have been in environmental technology and pollution-prevention areas and range management, maintenance, and use. Yet key sustainability areas—such as family support, health, and other QOL issues; regional transportation and growth management; ecosystem management; and other mission functions—receive less attention. As a result, there are fewer accomplishments in ISP processes for these areas.¹ In addition, installation sustainability project accomplishments are not being analyzed or documented well, making it difficult to transfer lessons to other installations, to measure and track true progress and benefits, and to ensure that programs are addressing the

¹ It is important to note that installations that have implemented ISPs may have accomplishments in these other areas through other programs, but they have not yet been integrated into the ISP process, as is discussed in greater detail in this report. Also, much more has been done since 2007 to address such areas in the ISP process.

most pressing sustainability needs. Limited numbers of staff with sustainability expertise and funding constraints make it difficult to develop and implement ISPs. Often the funding for ISP implementation comes through environmental programs, which is one reason why it is difficult to focus on QOL and other nonenvironmental sustainability issues. A lack of mechanisms to benefit from sustainability activities return on investments also limits ISP implementation. Army policy and standards, such as U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) building design standards, can also impede sustainability implementation and progress.

To address these and other issues identified, we had two sets of recommendations. One pertains to the development of ISPs and the other to their implementation.

Development of ISPs

By early FY07, ISPs were being developed through a series of workshops held at each installation. This process had both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages included increasing the education and enhancing the motivation of installation staff with respect to improving sustainability and the potential for developing a high-level advocate for sustainability issues.

The disadvantages were that the workshops were time-consuming and expensive. It often took over a year to hold the required sessions, and they cost in total about \$140,000 per installation. They also tended to limit the number of installations that can develop ISPs, because the Army only had staffing and resources for about four to eight sets of workshops a year. Nor did they necessarily address all the key issues: the workshops tended to focus mostly on sustainability examples and objectives with obvious economic benefits. While financial returns are important, so too are regional sustainability and ecosystem concerns, which could have important long-term implications. Finally, there was no requirement that installations complete or implement an ISP after the workshop process ended, so a couple of installations have gone through the workshop process but have not developed a written document or implemented a plan.

We recommended three main improvements for the workshop process. First, it should be streamlined so that more installations can develop ISPs in a more timely fashion. One workshop should be sufficient to initiate the process and to garner the benefits of the workshop process. In addition, this workshop's sustainability presentations need to be customized to focus more on the unique mission, quality of life, community, and environmental concerns of each installation given its local circumstances. Note that since this research was done in 2007, ACSIM has streamlined the workshop process as suggested here.

Second, installations need more technical support to develop an ISP document once the workshop process is completed.

Third, there should be sufficient guidance and support to ensure that key functional staff and stakeholders are involved in ISP development, and that such func-

tional areas as health, education, and morale, welfare, and recreation are considered in the sustainability planning process. This guidance should include standard reporting requirements for the contents of ISPs and periodic progress reports.

Implementation of ISPs

With respect to implementation, we had two recommendations. First, the Army should provide HQDA-level implementation guidance. Second, it should broaden the involvement of Army organizations outside the installation management and environmental organizations currently participating in the ISP implementation process. We discuss each recommendation in turn.

HQDA-Level Guidance. First, the Army should direct garrison commanders and other senior installation staff to support sustainability, including investing staff time, funding, and other resources. This includes designating a staff member as the sustainability coordinator and providing that person the time—at least 50 percent of their work hours—to carry out these duties, at least until a sustainability program is well established. In addition, sustainability should be included in garrison commander and other senior installation staff performance evaluations, education, and training.

The Army also should address problems with funding sustainability initiatives, because they may require an upfront investment to achieve the expected life-cycle cost reductions or operational benefits. To help integrate sustainability practices into installation operations, HQDA should direct the inclusion of sustainability issues in key installation strategic planning, implementation, and operational documents, such as installation strategic and master plans and range management plans. It is important to note that this issue was partly addressed in a December 2007 update of Army Regulation (AR) 200-1 that directs installation commanders to “Ensure that the installation strategic planning office (or equivalent) incorporates sustainability principles into strategic and other installation management plans.”² In addition, combining the ISP and installation strategic plan can be an effective way to start to integrate sustainability into key installation business processes. Since late in 2007, the ACSIM-funded ISPs have incorporated sustainability planning into the installation strategic plan.

Additionally, the Army should ensure that installations focus more attention on gaps in implementation, including QOL issues, regional collaboration, ecosystem management and other strategic natural resource management activities, and mission areas other than ranges. Regional collaboration and approaches are especially needed in such strategic areas as growth management, encroachment issues, and natural resource constraints that are likely to arise in the future. Since late 2007, such issues are being addressed more routinely in ISPs.

² U.S. Army Regulation 200-1, “Environmental Protection and Enhancement,” December 13, 2007, addresses environmental responsibilities for all Army organizations and agencies.

The Army also needs to provide a channel that enables installations to identify and communicate policy and funding issues that hinder sustainability implementation. Installations that identify a policy roadblock, such as an Army regulation, should be able to flag it to the appropriate HQDA organization, which should then ensure that the relevant policy is changed or a new process is put into place.

Next, HQDA should help installations measure the true costs and benefits of sustainability projects. It is difficult for installations by themselves to do such assessments given the cost and skills required. Further, many projects would be beneficial across a wide range of Army installations. Therefore, Army headquarters and regional organizations should provide resources to conduct some initial assessments of existing or new sustainability projects and document them so the value can be measured and lessons can be transferred. The Army should also ensure that information about successful sustainability projects is shared across installations by providing support for documenting and transferring lessons learned.

Finally, the Army should endeavor to change its culture through sustainability guidance so that sustainability is viewed as a long-term strategic Army-wide program, not just an environmental one. The 2004 "Army Strategy for the Environment," which provided the Army's definition of sustainability, along with ongoing activities to integrate sustainability into all parts of the Army are good first steps, but sustainability needs to be implemented across the Army. Sustainability should be viewed as being as important as safety, for example. The way the Army integrated safety concerns throughout its installations is a good model.

Involving a Wider Range of Army Organizations. Many organizations that are not currently or directly involved in installation sustainability could help with ISP implementation. The Office of the Army Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3/5/7, and U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) should include sustainability training in unit and garrison pre-command courses and garrison staff education. The Army should integrate sustainability into Army-wide guidance and standards that affect installation operations, including USACE standards of excellence for building and range design guides (such as *Training Circular 25-8: Guidance for Ranges*), Integrated Training Area Management guidance, and budgeting, programming, and procurement guidelines. Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) transformation and implementation guidance also should mention the importance and need to follow installation sustainability practices. HQDA guidance on compatible buffers and natural resource management plans should also include sustainability.

Army headquarters organizations and commands, such as G-3/5/7, USACE, and nonenvironmental functional organizations within the Installation Management Command (IMCOM) and the office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management (ACSIM), should provide more support for sustainability. Such support should ensure that their guidance, policies, practices, and training include sustainabil-

ity elements. It can also include providing needed funding, such as sufficient military construction funds to enable building projects to meet sustainability standards.

Installations have accomplished much in developing and implementing ISPs with limited resources and guidance. Given such accomplishments and the experience from sustainable community and industry activities, we conclude that successful ISP implementation can significantly benefit Army missions, quality of life, and the environment. Additional support along the lines of the recommendations of this report will make installation sustainability actions even more effective and are needed if the Army expects installations Army-wide to develop and implement ISPs.