Technology-based Decision-support Planning Tools

Background:

Increasingly, in order to promote compatible land use around installations and sustain the viability of ranges, Department of Defense (DoD) and the individual services are taking an interest in engaging communities and owners of conservation and working landscapes. Improved land-use compatibility requires such engagement with communities and stakeholders to promote supportive land stewardship. This engagement can be made easier if the different parties involved have greater access to and understanding of technology-based decision-support tools. Such tools range from scenario planning and visualizations to growth forecasting and impact analysis.

Objective:

This project was designed to produce a user-friendly computer-based guide on the range of technology-based decision-support conservation planning tools that are available. The guide was meant to help open to the door to installations on the range of tools available to assist them. With such tools, it can be possible to develop more informed compatible land use choices to promote conservation and forestall incompatible off-base development.
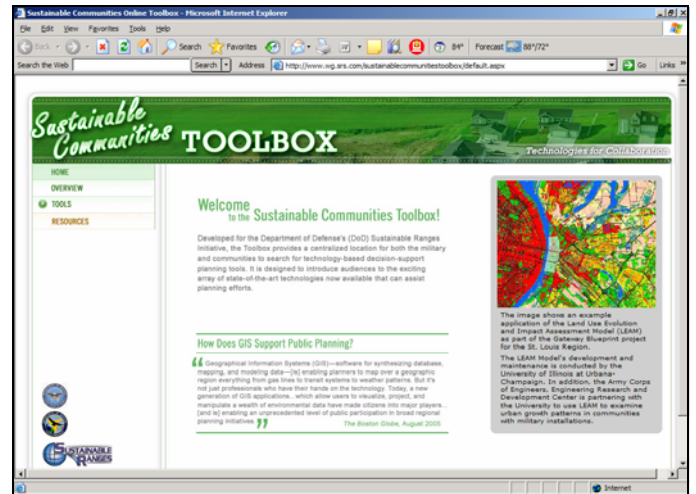
Summary of Approach:

The approach of the project was to survey the various technology-based tools available and help make these tools easier-to-understand for installations as they work more with communities and local and regional stakeholders on growth planning issues and land-use decisions. The project undertook dozens of interviews, experimentation with many of the tools, and thorough research of the evolving literature in this field. Moreover, a number of experts in the field reviewed a draft version of the guide before its completion. The completed guide is available at
http://www.wg.srs.com/SustainableCommunitiesToolbox/default.aspx

Benefit:

Helping to make technology-based decision support tools easier to understand will promote the compatible use of land around military installations and strengthen the relationship between DoD and surrounding communities, which will help reduce encroachment on military training. The project also supports DoD's growing regional conservation strategy efforts, such as the Southeast

Regional Planning and Partnership for Sustainability (SERPPAS) and has provided added ballast for DoD's involvement in support of cooperative conservation.

Snapshot of Sustainable Communities Website

Accomplishments:

The project produced an easy-to-use web guide, which can assist installations in working with surrounding communities (and communities in working with installations) on pursuing more informed compatible land use choices. By helping to make such tools easier to understand, the guide strives to contribute to both military sustainability and community sustainability, with the guide geared for both military and non-military audiences. It includes descriptions of tools developed by nonprofit and for-profit groups, foundations, universities, and the military. For those seeking more information, links to the developers of these tools are provided in the Toolbox, along with a list of additional resources. Already, as part of this follow up, the project has secured a place for the guide in the curriculum material being developed for DoD's community partnerships pilot at Fort Stewart.

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