



Engagement with Academia and Research Centers Project

05-282

Background:

The Department of Defense (DoD) Sustainable Ranges Initiative -- in particular its effort to promote compatible land use and conservation buffering around military ranges and installations -- is a cross-cutting area that can take advantage of research being carried out in several academic disciplines. These disciplines include local and regional planning, regional conservation, habitat and species protection, ecology, smart growth, real estate transactions, consensus-building, and law.

Some scholars and academic centers have begun study into and research associated with topics related to the sustainment of DoD military operations. In addition, academic efforts are underway to study smart growth and broad scale conservation in general.

Objective:

This project was designed to develop and implement engagement with key academics and research centers to help support DoD's Sustainable Ranges Initiative. DoD outreach to the academic and think-tank community offers a great opportunity for the Department to better assess the research landscape surrounding these issues, to encourage stronger academic focus on range sustainability, and to gain academic input as the Initiative moves forward.

This project involved engaging key academics and research centers to identify and cross-link existing and potential studies on range sustainability and related habitat conservation topics.

Summary of Approach:

The Sustainable Ranges Initiative's engagement with academia built on and furthered the Initiative's strong initial outreach successes. The project entailed:

- Developing a general inventory of key academics, centers, and consortiums with an interest (or potential interest) in range sustainability efforts, particularly in the Southeast
- Preparing material for academic outreach for discussion with the partners of the Southeast Regional Planning Initiative

- Organizing and hosting a meeting in Atlanta of a small, cross-section of scholars, focusing on policy development, integrating research, and elevating the potential for academic engagement
- Preparing a summary memorandum of the meeting

Though the project was national in scope, particular attention was paid to academics with an interest in the Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability, of which DoD is a lead participant.

Benefit:

The project broadened the understanding of appropriate ways to sustain military readiness and improved coordination with academia on conservation issues, which is bolstering DoD's growing emphasis on compatible land use, cooperative conservation and regional conservation planning efforts. The project allowed DoD to help inform academic research, while drawing lessons for future policy and strategy from this research and leading academic thinkers.

Accomplishments:

First, the project produced an inventory of key academics and academic institutions across the country. This inventory not only aided in the selection of participants for the academic meeting in Atlanta, it has been very useful to other offices at DoD in their outreach efforts. The Atlanta meeting itself was a great success, from which a host of ideas and collaboration opportunities have sprung. Academics have expressed a strong interest in working on DoD issues. Additionally, a partnership has developed between Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program and the Sustainable Ranges Initiative to build on the Atlanta meeting with a much larger workshop in the Southeast in the Spring of 2007.

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