

The Air Force's Sustainability Vision

Dan Kowalczyk
SAF/IEE

The mission of the United States Air Force is “to fly, fight, and win ... in air, space, and cyberspace.” This mission is energy intensive, and requires considerable access to, and dependence upon, built infrastructure and natural resources. In executing its mission, the Air Force strives to protect, sustain and improve the built and natural infrastructure. It is committed to complying with applicable laws, regulations, executive orders, instructions and policies as well as reducing risk to our Airmen, mission and the environment. The Air Force’s sustainability vision is to create a culture where energy, environment and workforce protection considerations serve as central elements for sustainable operations, and are incorporated into everything we do. The Air Force embraces sustainability as a means for achieving its mission and improving its performance.

Through the issuance of Executive Order 13514, “Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Per-

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-- DoD definition of Sustainability

formance,” the president formally established an integrated strategy that links past legislative, regulatory and executive office efforts to move the federal government towards more sustainable operations. The Department of Defense defines sustainability as “the ability to operate in the future without decline, either in the mission or the natural and manmade systems that support it.” Building on this definition, the Air Force concept of sustainability involves recognizing the direct and indirect impacts of Air Force operations on resources and understanding of the full measure of resources needed in the present and future to ensure successful operations. It also involves taking action by planning, designing and executing mission requirements in a manner that provides for the long-term sustainability of operations in the face of constrained resources.

In response to unprecedented demands on the critical assets, systems and infrastructure that enable the Air Force mission, sustainability is increasingly of strategic importance. Sustainability is not a stand-alone program, and is not simply an environmental initiative. Rather, it is a management approach that recognizes the wise use of economic, energy, environmental and human resources

applied across the enterprise can increase efficiencies and improve mission performance. The Air Force relies on a wide range of resources including skilled, trained and healthy Airmen, as well as energy, water supply and quality, land availability, adequate airspace and material availability (e.g., precious/specialty metals/minerals). Each of these resource assets provides a host of opportunities to sustain and enhance the Air Force mission.

The 2014 Department of Defense Strategic Sustainability Performance Plan, implemented by the Air Force, identifies four key priority areas: 1) ensuring the continued availability of critical resources (energy and water); 2) maintaining readiness in the face of climate change (by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing resiliency); 3) minimizing waste and pollution (by managing non-hazardous solid waste and minimizing the use of toxic chemicals); and 4) ensuring sustainability practices become the norm (by integrating into management systems, procurement, and building design processes).

The Air Force’s 2014 efforts will be balanced with mission requirements, and geared towards meeting current commitments and future challenges. Efforts will include energy conservation and use of renewable energy sources; effective water conservation and resource management; pollution prevention; reduction in hazardous chemical use; procurement of energy-efficient, water efficient, bio-based and environmentally preferable products; and use of innovative sustainable design processes for Air Force facilities.

Air Force heritage exemplifies a willingness to embrace innovation, relentlessly strive for improvement and mission success, serve the warfighter and defend the nation. The resources entrusted to the Air Force are essential to Air Force strategic priorities, and are the foundation for agile response and effective mobilization when facing threats. Moving forward, the Air Force must continue to value and practice stewardship of the precious resources entrusted to it for long-term sustainability.

Mr. Kowalczyk provides contract support to the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Environment, Safety and Occupational Health, Washington, DC.