



MEDIA RELEASE

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MILITARY AND SURROUNDING COUNTIES
JOIN FORCES TO FORM VISION FOR REGION

FORT BRAGG, N.C. - More than 20 leaders of Hoke, Harnett, Cumberland, Richmond, Moore and Scotland counties gathered at the Fayetteville Technical Community College Center for Business and Industry to form the executive steering committee that will guide the development of a multi-county plan for sustainable growth.

“The region and the military must join forces to ensure a high quality of life long into the future”, COL Gregory Bean, Director of Fort Bragg’s Public Works Business Center, told members of the Sustainable Sandhills Executive Steering Committee at their first meeting on Thursday.

“Just as we cannot succeed in Iraq without the combined arms team of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, we cannot succeed as a region without the combined arms team of the counties, municipalities, military and other interested stakeholders,” Bean said.

William G. Ross, Secretary, North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources, told attendees that the Sustainable Sandhills undertaking, jointly initiated by Fort Bragg and NCDENR, would involve uncovering the combination of natural systems on public and private lands that will ensure the viability of the region for future generations.

“The value of this process is that it moves the region forward by finding conservation driven approaches to meet the “quadruple bottom line” of economic growth, natural resource protection and enhancement, social equity, and protection of the military’s ability to perform its mission,” Ross said.

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Two years ago, Fort Bragg leadership took a proactive stand to ensure the long-term viability of the installation. Resource restraints, including restrictions on land use for realistic training due to encroachment and protection of endangered flora and fauna, raised questions as to Fort Bragg's ability to continue to meet the mission to maintain a well-trained and well-equipped strategic response force that can be deployed anywhere in the world within 18 hours.

Within that two-year time span, the installation has succeeded in identifying its "environmental footprint", developing 10 goals centered on air, water, energy, education and construction to reduce that footprint, forming goal teams to develop objectives, and identifying specific projects and funding requirements to achieve those goals by partnering with organizations like The Nature Conservancy.

"In working to change our own processes, we realized we could not succeed alone," said Christine Gettys Hull, Ph.D., Fort Bragg's Long-Term Sustainability Planner. "The issues that affect readiness and the military's quality of life are the same that face our region. Clean air, clean water and related issues do not stop or start at the installation fence line.

"You can't have a Sustainable Fort Bragg without a Sustainable Sandhills region – and vice versa."

Organizations from across the Sandhills region will send representatives to a goal development workshop in May to form a vision for the region that ensures a healthy, thriving region for future generations.

For more information on Sustainable Sandhills or Sustainable Fort Bragg, call 396-3341, ext. 366, or ext. 361.

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