

Engaging Regional Organizations

Many national and regional non-governmental organizations are respected and highly influential among policymakers, the media and the public. They communicate regularly with national and state leaders, and they participate in the formation of public policy. Several have also signaled their willingness to establish and continue a dialogue with the Army/DoD on issues of mutual concern.

In recent years, the Army has increased its efforts to offer information on its environmental programs to state-level executive, judicial and legislative organizations. The information exchange began as a means to inform state policymakers about Army environmental priorities. The exchange has evolved into a partnership of Army representatives and state and local officials that is built on mutual trust.

The Army Regional Environmental Offices (REOs) administer these partnerships with non-governmental organizations whose primary focus is on state and county policy issues. By attending and/or arranging presentations to national meetings of state groups, REOs can exchange information on range sustainability with a large and diverse group of state officials. State legislators may be able to sponsor land-use legislation. State regulatory agencies may be able to prevent adoption of rules that hinder military training. State attorneys general may foster interstate cooperation with the military on sustainability issues.

The Defense Department established regional environmental coordinators in each of the 10 federal regions in 1994 to improve environmental coordination at the regional, state and local levels. The Army is executive agent for four of those regions. Each Army REO is staffed by a DoD regional environmental coordinator as office chief and Army regional environmental coordinators who facilitate regional environmental matters. REOs operate under DoD Instruction 14715.2 "to articulate Army/DoD positions on proposed regional, state and local legislation and regulations to regional, state, and local authorities."

The Army REOs are working closely with several national and regional organizations of state and local officials--both elected and appointed. The primary goals of the REO groups outreach program are to:

1. Establish working relationships with key officials in key state groups and agencies;
2. Increase state officials' awareness of the Army/DoD's efforts to balance environmental stewardship with its mission to train and test troops for combat;
3. Build a coalition of support for Army/DoD;
4. Leverage innovation and other resources; and
5. Arrive at mutually agreed-upon and mutually beneficial positions.

The REOs coordinate their DoD efforts with the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) range sustainment initiative outreach coordinator, and receive guidance on outreach initiatives and priorities from the Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Environment, Safety & Occupational Health).

The REOs are the Army's primary points of contact with representatives from these groups:

- Environmental Council of the States (ECOS)
- Natural Resources Leadership Council of the States (NRLCS)
- Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials (ASTSWMO)
- National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) Council of State Governments (CSG)
- National Association of Counties (NACo)
- Southeast Natural Resources Leaders Group (SENRLG)
- Southwest Strategy

OSD is the DoD primary point of contact with representatives from these groups:

- National Governors' Association (NGA)
- National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG)
- International City/County Management Association (ICMA)

The REOs believe that building relationships with these groups is important for long-term sustainability of the Army/DoD mission and its training ranges. They have used the relationships as a platform for increasing policymakers' awareness about encroachment, range sustainability, the Readiness and Range Preservation Initiative, Performance Based Contracting, and other issues.

For more information, contact the Army Regional Environmental Office by region:

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