



*Enforcement Administrator Celena Cage answers questions from members of a tour group from the Society of Environmental Journalists.*

In the case of a willful violation of permitted standards or of the state's basic environmental laws, enforcement can route the complaint to the agency's Criminal Investigative Division, Cage said, and criminal charges may follow.

Having fed their appetites, the journalists were ready to feed their curiosity and politely peppered the DEQ speakers with questions after each presentation. Johnston fielded questions about nonattainment, emissions inventories, coal dust and more. Cage was queried about penalty calculations, risk assessments and the amount DEQ collects in fines each year.

Johnston explained National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) in one of his answers, and elaborated on dispersion modeling and how it is used to show that a project doesn't compromise NAAQS. Cage was asked about the sincerity

of companies and if they often have repeat violations. She said the companies exhibit a genuine concern for complying with environmental regulations.

At the end of the Q and A session, the journalists seemed happy to get back to the cool confines of their tour bus. The DEQ speakers had given them some insight into how permits and enforcement work in Louisiana, and the journalists had, in their questions, revealed some of their concerns about those processes.

## Fort Polk moving toward zero waste to landfills by 2020

In April 2011, Katherine Hammack, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy and Environment launched a sustainability initiative across the Army known as "Net Zero." Beginning as a pilot program, six Army installations were selected in each media area to launch the Net Zero initiative which sets a benchmark for the installations to annually consume only as much energy as they produce, conserve water and eliminate their solid waste stream to landfills by 2020. In January 2014, the Net Zero Installations Policy went into effect, directing all Army installations to move toward Net Zero goals.

One of the chosen pilot locations to achieve Net Zero Waste was the Joint Readiness Training Command (JRTC) and Fort Polk located in Vernon Parish. A significant civilian and military employer in the area, the post and the surrounding region serves a population of more than 82,000.

Fort Polk was already a few steps toward the idea, having implemented the Qualified Recycling Program (QRP) in 2009. Established by the Department of Defense, the integrated waste management program allows installations to retain revenue from the sale of recycled materials while diverting waste from landfills. To support the QRP's role and lead the Net Zero Waste Program, the post followed up with the opening of the JRTC and Fort Polk Recycling Center in November 2012. The QRP is a self sustaining program. Unlike many other Army programs, the QRP

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does not receive any appropriated funding. Operational cost to run the center to include a contracted labor work force and any needed equipment is funded by returned revenues from the sale of recyclables. The QRP and Net Zero Waste Programs have been successfully working together to reduce waste on the post through various educational and outreach endeavors.

A significant part of the waste reduction effort is facilitated by the 300 soldiers and civilian employees on the post who serve as designated Environmental Compliance Officers (ECOs) for their respective units. As liaisons between their unit and the recycling/waste reduction programs, their job is to ensure that the programs are being implemented in accordance with regulations. Supporting the ECOs are seven Environmental Customer Service Technicians (ECSTs), who oversee environmental compliance and ensure ECOs have the proper guidance and tools in which to perform their duties effectively.



*Recyclable material can be separated easily through the use of co-collection recycling containers distributed throughout the post.*

At the forefront of this effort is the Fort Polk Recycling Center. Managed by the QRP, the Center handles curbside collection of white and mixed paper on the post, as well as non-paper recyclables. Since implementation, the recycling program has been a major success. Cardboard diversion alone has amounted to approximately 200 to 300 tons of material per year being kept out of landfills, and recycling bins are located at practically every turn.

“When we began the Qualified Recycling Program in 2009, we saw a \$30,000 sales return on our recycling for the year. Culminating over the last five years, our sales have grown to around \$750,000,” said Tim Fitzgerald, Environmental Protection Specialist and Installation Qualified Recycling Program Manager.

While educating newly arriving soldiers, families and visitors poses a continuous challenge, outreach efforts continue to spread the word. “Last year, we distributed 1,500 recycling bins to offices on Fort Polk for paper, plastic and aluminum collection. In addition, hazardous material collection containers are issued to each unit on post as part of our ongoing mission to be proactive in the process while educating everyone on how they can make a difference,” said Tammy Veillon, Installation Sustainability Coordinator. “Segregation of different types of paper is of particular importance as total paper amounts to one third of the post’s total waste stream.”

In the Recycling Center’s intake bay, cardboard, paper, bottles, used ink and toner cartridges are delivered, segregated, weighed and packaged on a daily basis. For paper collection, units can get credit through an incentive known as the “Riche\$ from Recycling” program. Based on total weight of paper and cardboard that is turned in, a portion of the money allotted for the program by the QRP Committee will be given to the Mission Support Command through the unit fund program. The largest portion of the money then goes to the recycler with the largest weight of recycled paper. The program has been effective for fostering a friendly atmosphere of competition – all for the benefit of the environment. “We maintain tight control on the intake of recyclable materials and track everything on spreadsheets daily,” Fitzgerald said.

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*Tim Fitzgerald, Installation Recycling Program Manager, examines pallets of recycled paper awaiting pickup by a vendor.*

Used motor oil and cooking oil are also collected, and anyone working or living on post can drop off used oil at the center.

With an abundance of ammunition a common sight at any Army installation, spent brass is another area that can add up to huge savings. To facilitate that effort, the center demilitarizes and sells all .50-caliber and smaller spent brass casings. The brass is sold to a scrap metal vendor, and revenues are returned to the program. Spent brass processing provides an annual revenue of approximately \$250,000. The recycling center also processes many other types of metals including ferrous iron, aluminum and various forms of cast iron. In 2013, \$110,000 in revenue was brought in from miscellaneous metal alone.

The recycling program also reaches out to the construction and demolition projects. This year, approximately 3,200

linear feet of waste piping from the demolition of two waste water treatment plants was recycled and diverted from landfill deposit. Approximately \$50,000 in revenue was returned to the recycling program from this project alone.

Fort Polk has also looked toward additional methods in which to reduce. For example, gray water captured from troop showers in the field is processed in accordance with environmental regulations in a wastewater treatment lift station. Lead acid automotive batteries (non-Lithium) are also collected and stored in the warehouse for purchase and pickup by the highest bidding vendor for recycling. This helps to keep battery acid out of the waste stream while simultaneously putting money back into the program. The Net Zero Waste Team has established an Office Supply Re-Store where office binders, unused copy/printer paper and the thicker, more costly file folders are also stored and are free issue and available for use on official Army business and support programs provided by the Directorate of Family, Morale, Welfare and Recreation. In the past, many of those office items would simply be discarded and added to the waste stream.

QRP's endeavors have been very profitable as the program continues to operate on a self-sustaining model. Money brought in through the recycling and waste reduction effort is put directly into pollution prevention programs as well as morale, welfare and recreation programs for the military service members, their families and retirees in the surrounding community. For example, a recent Brantley Gilbert concert and FreedomFest Fourth of July fireworks show on the post were funded in part through the accumulated funds brought in from recycling. "Our program put approximately \$85,000 into the morale, welfare and recreation programs for soldiers and their families last year. Without these recycling funds as a contributing factor, those special events would not have been able to take place," said Fitzgerald. The program also benefits the community off-post as many of these events are open to the general public. Through the revenue generated from recycling, the program has been able to purchase a \$62,000 paper baler and a \$120,000 grapple truck that can be used to pick up and process multiple commodities.

With the variety of recycling taking place across the post, glass still poses a challenge. While it is a viable recyclable that can be used for road or highway applications, an analysis conducted by QRP and Net Zero Waste on post

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have shown that glass recycling has been cost-prohibitive function as collection, transportation and vendor interest continue to outweigh its benefits. Glass recycling, however, is still a target of focus as part of the total sustainability concept, where everything can be recycled and put back into use. "Promoting the benefits of glass recycling and fostering its demand are goals we are continually working to accomplish," said Veillon.

## HAZMART

In addition to the Recycling Center, a significant player in supporting these efforts is the Fort Polk HazMart, which their brochure touts as "a one-stop 'no hassle' facility for all your hazardous material and waste needs." Opened in 1997, HazMart consists of a central supply warehouse with several storage units that are used for the cataloging, storage and issuance of free materials to units on the post. The HazMart serves as the post's hazardous material oversight activity with a mission of reducing hazardous waste and improving workplace safety through environmental compliance.



*Gray water collected in the field during training exercises is transported and processed at a wastewater treatment site at the Recycling Center.*

According to Steve Martinez, Manager of the HazMart, the shop offers convenience in the hazardous waste reduction process. "Last year, we accumulated 11 tons of hazardous waste, compared to 184 tons 20 years ago," said Martinez. "We offer products free to units and we can order, pickup, deliver, repurpose, repackage and track items such as antifreeze, lithium batteries, computer and phone batteries, paint, fluorescent light bulbs and solvents. For example, a unit may request some paint or antifreeze from us. We'll sign out that material and track it. Any remaining material is returned to the HazMart for bar-coding, safe storage and subsequent redistribution to other units as needs arise. This cuts down on waste and implements a level of efficiency and organization in the total process."

Used antifreeze and solvents are reprocessed for reuse, sent through a thorough distillation and filtration process, where any impurities can be extracted. In addition, the HazMart employs a specialized battery tester that has saved the Army approximately \$450,000 a year through the retention of functional batteries that would normally be discarded as seemingly dead.

The facility serves as a convenient and safe way to keep hazardous waste down by using only what you need and delivering the unused material back for eventual redistribution. Overall, these functions have worked together to make a huge difference in the waste reduction mission. "In the last two years, the post has gone from 7,500 tons of combined waste to 5,000 tons, making this an overall reduction in waste by one-third," said Veillon. HazMart's common sense approach to waste reduction has played a large part in the shop's success at Fort Polk, with more than \$6.4 million saved through their effort over the last 17 years. Fort Polk's forward-thinking hasn't gone unnoticed either. In 2012, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued a letter to the Environmental Customer Service team commending Fort Polk for their success in hazardous waste reduction.

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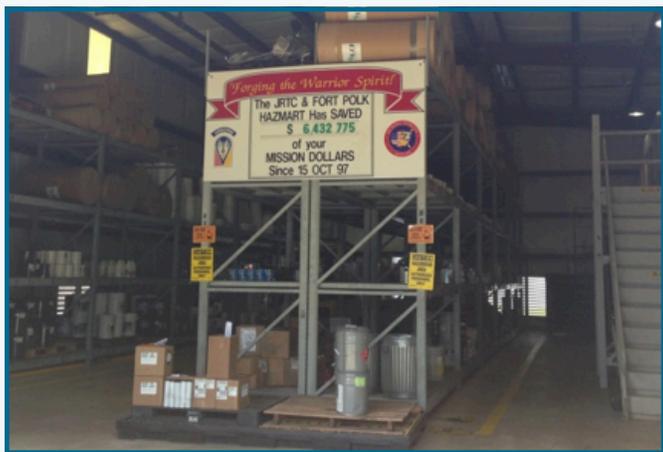


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*A sign in the HazMart warehouse tallies the progress of HazMart's waste reduction effort at Fort Polk.*

As the programs continue to forge ahead to meet the Net Zero Waste goal by 2020, the overall effort has been a positive one as newly arriving soldiers and their families are informed of the process and begin to chip in and do their part. Veillon stressed that it all comes down to personal responsibility, as people begin to realize the benefits of waste reduction and start to participate. She noted, "If you make the process easy for people to do the right thing, most will do the right thing."

And word has continued to spread. As of August 2014, at least 11 Army installations have implemented the Net Zero Waste Program.

With all of the ecologically conscious initiatives being put into place on the post, it's no surprise that Fort Polk has set the example for doing the right thing – through hands-on

application on the importance of recycling, energy conservation and overall waste reduction. As Veillon points out, "the idea is to close the loop and promote environmental stewardship. Whatever we can do to reduce waste not only saves money, it protects the ecosystem and adds to the quality of life for all."

## Volunteers conduct trash sweep of Ward Creek in Baton Rouge

Litter in our creeks, rivers, lakes and coastline is an overwhelming and ongoing problem for Louisiana. There are groups of dedicated volunteers and concerned citizens who try to keep up with the litter and clean it up. It is an endless job.

Recently, volunteers from LSU, PaddleBR and the Bayou Manchac Group conducted a trash sweep along the banks of Ward Creek near Siegen Lane in Baton Rouge. In four hours, 38 volunteers removed 1.8 tons of trash and litter from one-eighth of a mile along Ward Creek in the Annual Lake Pontchartrain Beach Sweep. Ward Creek is a feeder stream that flows into Bayou Manchac south of the City of Baton Rouge, so litter dumped into the waterway ends up there, eventually finding its way into Lake Maurepas.



*Group picture of the 38 volunteers that helped clean up Ward Creek for the Trash Sweep.*

"No worries if you missed it," said Jonathon Scott of the Bayou Manchac Group. "There are tons more where we left off, and the supply is replenished every time it rains."

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