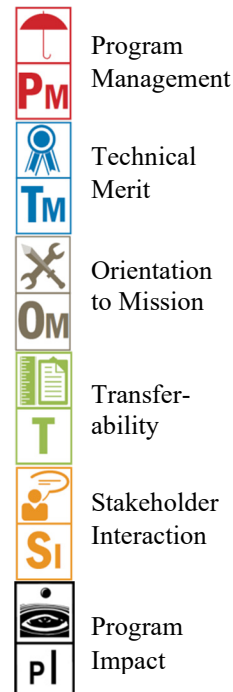


SECRETARY OF THE ARMY ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS 2026

SOUTH DAKOTA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY, NON-INDUSTRIAL INSTALLATION

The South Dakota Army National Guard (SDARNG) encompasses more than 3,100 soldiers across locations in 22 communities on a statewide installation that includes 26 armories, 7 maintenance facilities, and several leased training areas and permanent training sites. At the center of the organization is Camp Rapid, a key training resource and home to the Joint Forces Headquarters. The Environmental Quality (EQ) Program is charged with maintaining compliance and improving sustainable management throughout the state. While leadership for the EQ program comes from the Environmental Office, the ethic of compliance and environmental accountability is rooted throughout the organization. By building relationships with units, shops, managers, and trainers, the EQ program has achieved active participation and accountability for compliance throughout the SDARNG. Their success was reflected in this year's external EPAS, which was characterized by many positive findings throughout the statewide installation. Indeed, when inspectors asked SDARNG employees what they would do in the event of an environmental issue, personnel uniformly identified EQ program staff by name as their first call. The EQ program and all SDARNG soldiers and staff are committed to sustaining the capacity for SDARNG training for generations to come by reducing waste, fostering continuous improvement, and achieving full regulatory compliance across all aspects of training and operations.



Among the milestones accomplished over the past two years, the results of the external EPAS are a key marker of programmatic success. The audit identified only 60 total compliance findings, three of which were positive. Of the 36 required eMS topics, 29 of these were positive findings. There were no significant negative compliance findings at all. These stellar results are due in large part to the EQ program's above-and-beyond approach to site assistance visits (SAV). EQ staff visit 80% of SDARNG facilities each year, with 100% of shops visited, well in excess of the mandated 25% of sites. The hands-on approach allows the EQ program to identify any potential issues, complete immediate retraining as needed, and communicate any new environmental priorities. The positive impact is reflected in environmental issues that *don't* arise: for instance, the SDARNG has not had a major spill in more than two years. The EQ program has targeted waste reduction, an aspect of the eMS, recently voting with the EQCC to raise the SDARNG's waste diversion goal to 75% by 2030 in congruence with the Army goal. The EQ program has also directly supported the SDARNG's mission now and in the future, completing the NEPA compliance process in advance of five MILCON projects, all now cleared or anticipated to be cleared for construction.



The EQ program works collaboratively across SDARNG directorates, forging closer partnerships and more integration with Operations and Maintenance (O&M), the G4 logistics community, Health and Safety Office, and other key players within the Environmental program. This collaboration has helped to push a cultural shift of environmental awareness and stewardship throughout the state. EQ staff also manages the Qualified Recycling Program (QRP) and works with a cross-functional QRP Committee to increase recycling availability, a perennial issue in the state with few recycling vendors and a limited market for recyclables. This effort is directly supported by the Warehouse staff, Shop Chiefs, O&M staff at each facility, and M-Day



Environmental Soldiers who help conduct armory SAVs and training on waste diversion throughout the state. The Environmental staff's expertise incorporates pollution prevention; regulatory compliance; waste management and diversion; spill prevention; EPAS; water, air, and noise pollution; hazardous waste management; and underground storage tank maintenance. With this range of capabilities, and the support of the larger SDARNG operations, the EQ program is ideally positioned to enact a comprehensive compliance regime.

The EQ program plays an integral part in the eMS program and Environmental Quality Control Committee (EQCC), helping to identify improvement targets and implement the strategies to achieve those goals. Waste diversion is the significant aspect for the SDARNG's eMS, which has helped to communicate the importance of best practices at the unit and facility levels. The eMS had been effective in helping to change the culture, and the ECCC recently voted to maintain the eMS framework even though it is not required any longer. Across the installation, the eMS has combined waste diversion with spill prevention: fewer spills mean less waste. The Environmental staff rewrote several of the SDARNG spill prevention control and countermeasures (SPCC) plans in-house with contracted employee support over the past two years, saving budget funds and building internal capabilities. They have implemented the full range of planning documents, to include SPCC Plans, a Hazardous Materials Plan with a Sharepoint-driven inventory system, and an Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan that incorporates the Hazardous Material & Waste Management Plan along with recycling programs to create a comprehensive guide for the SDARNG. Last year, the Environmental Office rewrote the SDARNG's overarching Environmental Policy, which explicitly expresses the SDARNG's commitment to stewardship and the role this stewardship plays in serving the culture, mission, and community.

Adherence to these plans helps the SDARNG to maintain its outstanding compliance record. The Environmental Office coordinates regularly with oversight agencies including the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (SDDANR). They have also encouraged the wider community to expand recycling and environmental awareness, with participation on the Rapid City Sustainability Committee, a consortium of public and private organizations and businesses committed to sustainable management practices.

The EQ program's focus on waste reduction and diversion achieves eMS goals while also saving the SDARNG money. Last year's 49% diversion rate for solid waste translated into \$35,000 in avoided disposal fees for municipal solid waste alone. Recycling added \$18,000 to the QRP account last year as well. Diversion of waste streams saved the SDARNG \$134,000 in 2024 and \$60,000 in 2025 for solid waste and construction debris disposal. This year, the EQ program has pushed new initiatives to rehome potential waste streams, finding uses within and outside of the SDARNG to further slash disposal costs and increase diversion rates. The EQ program has also begun utilizing free collaborative state agency disposal programs, like bulk pesticide disposal offered by the SDDANR, for a savings of approximately \$2,100 in disposal costs this year.

The EQ program is more than just the Environmental Office working behind the scenes to continually improve the quality of the environment; it involves significant effort by the operations and maintenance staff to manage requirements put down in policy at the facility level. One major action from the O&M team is a robot mower test program. While the robot mower was purchased as a time savings experiment, it produced other Environmental Office expected results. The mower maintains a more unified grass height as the areas mowed can be continually managed with minimal man hours. Another benefit is that the mower does not stop when



extreme temperatures reach dangerous levels for humans to operate under, and it does not call out sick.

The cost savings for EQ processes are unique as well. There is a negligible increase in the electrical use from the docking station, which means that all the fuel used in a traditional mower is not burned away. The mower requires minimal maintenance and no oil changes. Just one season saved approximately \$3000 in operating, maintenance and disposal costs. This could be utilized in 12-15 other areas on the Camp Rapid Campus alone, where highly manicured lawns are the intended management style.

The area mowed this season was equivalent to a football or parade field. There are plans to place mowers at facilities across the state to manage the manicured sections around armories.

EPAS: The EQ program has prioritized building relationships with SDARNG soldiers, staff, and tenants. Through the SAV program, the EQ staff conduct full internal EPAS audits for SDARNG facilities, with on-the-spot corrections and retraining. Because these visits are collaborative, Army and O&M facility managers request visits from EQ staff; annual environmental training, material handling, and spill compliance is also integrated into the SAV program.

The external EPAS encompassed 25 facilities this year, to include all shops, the USPFO warehouse, and several readiness centers. Of the 60 EPAS findings, three were positive; the remaining findings were for minor and easily correctable issues like record-keeping, trash in a recycling receptacle, or an inaccessible Conex. Of the 36 findings in the eMS program audit, 28 were positive.

eMS: Though the NGB is winding down eMS funding, the SDARNG has found the system to be effective and impactful; the EQCC voted this year to continue the eMS program. The eMS is focused now on waste diversion along with spill prevention and response training, emergency preparedness and action plans, and HAZCOM training. The eMS program reflects the SDARNG goal for continuous improvement, encouraging proactive initiatives to develop process improvements and reduce non-compliance penalties.

Waste Reduction and Diversion: Reducing waste streams while increasing diversion has been a primary mandate for the EQ program. The EQ staff work with the EQCC to promote recycling education for soldiers and staff to avoid cross-contamination of materials and mis-sorting that would result in loads of recyclable materials being rejected by processors. They continue to increase receptacles for recycling to make compliance easier. Last year, the EQ program negotiated with a local vendor to resume cardboard recyclables, which involved retraining staff and soldiers on which materials can be accepted and which must be kept out of recycling dumpsters. They are now working on bringing back paper recycling, potentially at a State level. The EQCC created high-level messaging to communicate the importance of recycling



The robotic mower improves the efficiency of grounds maintenance and saves precious man-hours that can be put to use on other environmental priorities.



compliance and the negative impact of carelessness with waste streams. These messages were reinforced by SAV visits through the EPAS program.



The EQ program manages the logistics of diversion across communities where few or no recycling vendors operate. In some cases, materials are transported to Camp Rapid to be warehoused for turn-in. In other cases, facility managers are empowered to develop their own independent arrangements with local options. The recycling program directly reduces municipal solid waste (MSW); over the past year, the SDARNG diverted 350,000 plastic drink containers alone. Paper, cardboard, and comingled glass, plastic, and metals are now recycled in most locations, helping the SDARNG to achieve a MSW diversion rate of 51% this year. With construction debris diversion factored in, the SDARNG is on track to reach its 2030 75% diversion goal. FY24 also showed an 11% decrease over the prior year in material sent to landfills.

The EQ program is implementing new ways to reduce hazardous waste as well. They are now working with DLA to transfer unused hazardous materials to other non-SDARNG sites that can utilize them. With increased communication between DLA partner agencies, the EQ program can also see what potential waste they have and request those materials to be rehomed to the SDARNG when products are available. For example, an aviation maintenance-related expired product can be rehomed to a vehicle maintenance shop not subject to the more stringent product expiration rules. This prevents these materials from becoming hazardous waste, saving money while benefiting the environment.

Energy Use Reduction and Cost Avoidance: Reducing energy use and costs associated with energy use is a major objective of the SDARNG Energy and Water Management Plan. The initiative from the O&M team to reduce the man hours on mowing by implementing a more energy efficient and man hour efficient mower, saved at least \$3000 for a space the size of a parade field. This cost savings does not include the man hour savings. This is a fuel and oil change with disposal cost estimate only. This cost savings initiative is planned to be utilized at the other 32 facilities across the state with manicured lawn requirements, and in some cases, multiples of the robot mowers will be used.



Beyond the DLA exchange program, the EQ program implements the SDARNG's Hazardous Materials Plan, which is supported by a material inventory system managed by the Compliance Manager, the Hazardous Waste Manager and coordinated through all the Shop chiefs. The pharmacy aspect of the system empowers units to share materials rather than dispose of them or purchase new materials.



With an emphasis on face-to-face communication, the EQ program has established themselves as a resource for SDARNG soldiers, there to help them succeed. Continual improvement is the goal, and the EQ staff is there for SAV visits to provide the hands-on instruction facilities staff need, continuously traveling around the state to meet with new facility managers and supervisors. This level of regular interfacing has helped to maintain the state's excellent compliance record and protect the soldiers and staff working in these facilities.



The EQ program also supports the SDARNG as it transforms to meet future mission requirements. The EQ staff coordinates with all program managers and planners to remain ahead of the curve on NEPA and Environmental Condition of Property (ECOP) processes. Five major construction projects are compliance-cleared to proceed as funding becomes available, including

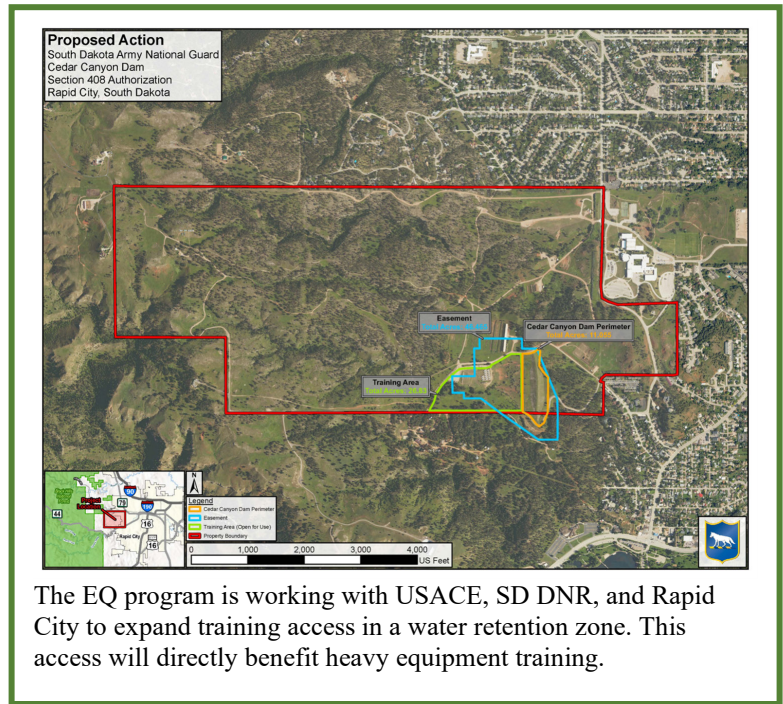
two new readiness centers; an Environmental Assessment (EA) is also in process for an upcoming real estate acquisition. In consultation with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the EQ program is pursuing a new permit to expand training capacity at West Camp Rapid. On that training site, there is a flood control dam that is managed by USACE and owned by Rapid City, but the dam itself has only held water once since it was built in the 1940s, and that was only a few inches of water. Because it is a retention space, it cannot be developed, but the EQ program is seeking permission to reuse that space for heavy equipment training. This proposal is also being coordinated with the South Dakota Department of Natural Resources for digging permits and the city leadership. With this permitted use, the SDARNG would be able to conduct much needed heavy equipment engineer digging training at the primary unit location.

Managing wildlands with training and Environmental Quality in mind helps to maintain these lands into the future. In a time of reduced budget and shrinking availability of land, this concept is more important than ever.

Process improvement applies to the EQ program as well, as they strive to capture best practices and ensure their uptake. This year, a contractor made an error with construction debris, disposing of concrete rubble at a waste facility without confirming it would be recycled. The construction debris diversion rate took a hit for FY25 as a result. In response, the EQ program worked with the Design Management team to develop contractor training materials and a disposal location list for recyclable materials to ensure that similar mistakes won't happen again.

SDARNG is also setting an example for other military agencies as one of three pilot states for the new Hazardous Materials Inventory and Disposal (HMIDS) program. In June of 2025, the EQ program oversaw one of the first DLA waste pickups at Camp Rapid and the AASF. Using this program is also helping the EQ program to build its network of relationships with other state agencies and military entities, which facilitates greater exchange of ideas and expertise.

The SDARNG's new environmental policy emphasizes the connection between stewardship and the SDARNG's culture, mission, and community, as well as an organizational accountability for and prioritization of sustainability. To meet and exceed environmental goals, the EQ program has established comprehensive and continuous training regimes, particularly when it comes to waste diversion. Developing rapport with the facilities in turn leads to trust and coordination when issues arise. As a result of this cooperative stance, the SDARNG is now better able to track diversion rates, costs, and revenues and thus identify trends or points for improvement. Better data capture helps to validate the effectiveness of these efforts. Beginning in 2024, EQ staff members began serving on the explosives compliance committee with the safety, training, and warehouse directorates to determine the best management practices for



The EQ program is working with USACE, SD DNR, and Rapid City to expand training access in a water retention zone. This access will directly benefit heavy equipment training.



explosives handling and storage. They were also added to the Cultural Committee, managed by the ATAG in FY24, contributing to revision of the State Historic Preservation Office consultation process and mitigation actions to establish an online interpretive center. The EQ staff continues to embed environmental oversight across all operation areas, which enhances their own program's continuity and promotes a unified set of objectives for the SDARNG. With initiatives like robot mowers passively helping to reduce the impacts to and improve the quality of the environment, in which the SDARNG operates, the O&M staff take active roles in finding ways to maintain these spaces.

The soldiers and staff of the SDARNG are the foremost stakeholders for the EQ program. The EQ program has a strong training focus; they prioritize educating as many unit environmental compliance officers as possible to ensure there is at least one, full-time trained person in every unit and shop as well as an alternate M-Day compliance officer. They emphasize practicality in their training, communicating not only what is required by regulation, but also how meeting those standards benefits the unit, makes operations safer, and sustains the greater operations and training capacities of the SDARNG. Training materials are presented in person, but they are also available at any time on the SDARNG Sharepoint and a public webpage accessible with a QR code on a smartphone.



Through the DLA exchange program and outreach with other state agencies and non-profits, the EQ program has helped to expand its stewardship network while removing hazardous and non-hazardous materials from the waste stream. EQ staff placed chemicals from a decommissioned Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Unit (ROWPU) on the FEMA donation list for ROWPUs used in recent flooding disasters, donated cleaning supplies to the local animal shelter, contributed materials on state and federal online surplus sites, and donated waste fuel to a volunteer fire department and expired pepper spray to a local police department for training purposes. These efforts have saved thousands of dollars in disposal costs while also ultimately benefiting the community. Another outreach opportunity emerged out of a lifecycle upgrade to the SDARNG billeting quarters. Around 260 twin mattresses were replaced, but rather than simply disposing of old mattresses, the EQ program reached out to a local non-profit. In total, 246 mattresses were able to be reused to help local people in need—while also diverting 9000 pounds of material from the landfill. They have also helped to find local uses for materials that would be disposed of from



Youth campers learn about recycling, composting, water conservation, and other environmental topics at the annual event.

SDARNG facilities; paints or cleaning supplies, for instance, can be sent to Habitat for Humanity, while materials left behind after training events, like sheets, towels, or toiletries, can be donated to another public body or approved non-profits.

The EQ program has sought out opportunities for public engagement as well. Last year, EQ staff presented at the military youth camp on environmental topics. Over 100 campers enjoyed a recycling relay race to learn about diversion, a spill cleanup demonstration, wildflower planting with recycled food cans, and building birdhouses with lumber cut on post. Their championing of waste diversion has the potential to shift perspectives in communities across the state. In areas where recycling vendors are rare or very small, the demand generated by the SDARNG could make the difference in supporting or enabling local businesses to meet those needs. The SDARNG installation is essentially creating a market for those recycling vendors. At Camp Rapid, the SDARNG's environmental initiatives are particularly visible for the community, and EQ program staff have been invited to speak at community events and local commerce meetings about how their programs could be enacted in the private sector. As a partner with the Rapid City Sustainability Committee, the EQ program has provided information in areas ranging from green roof installation to lighting retrofits. The SDARNG has long been core to the towns and cities where it operates, and these community connections are an important aspect of creating an organization-wide culture of environmental stewardship.