

Sequestration, the Continuing Resolution & You

Fiscal Challenges Demand Innovation & Careful Planning

WELCOME TO THE spring 2013 issue of *Currents*. I'll use this space to offer a few words about the fiscal challenges we're all facing right now and how they could impact the Navy's energy and environmental programs; mention related progress in areas that have been a priority for Navy leadership and my office; and wrap up with a "plug" for Earth Day.

Sequestration and defense appropriations are issues we've been tracking closely and are very concerned about. While the effects of sequestration will still be felt throughout the Navy, the good news is that we have a budget for the remainder of the fiscal year that will provide flexibility and continuity beyond what would be possible with a continuing resolution. Many fiscal challenges remain ahead, and our leadership (and all of us) will need to make tough choices to cut or scale back programs as we deal with lower than anticipated budget numbers. Our primary focus will be to support our forces that are overseas and forward deployed.

During this time of declining budgets, investments in the efficiency of our ships, airplanes, and systems becomes more important than ever. We need to hold true to our principles of looking at energy not from a "green" standpoint, but in terms of how to reduce consumption, increase capability, and in the case of alternative fuels, create flexibility and resilience to large market price fluctuations. Tactically, reducing consumption will enable us to fly farther on a gallon of fuel and operate for longer time periods between refueling at sea. Ashore, any megawatt hour or MBTU we save is one we don't have to buy.

One approach for decreasing consumption is to invest in systems and platforms to make them more efficient, which *Currents* readers know we've done extensively since 2009. Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) and Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) are doing great work to find mature technologies we can transition to the Fleet in a reasonable amount of time with good payback. Likewise, the Office of Naval Research (ONR) has an eye to the future, looking for efficient and effective technologies to support the growing demands for power to support future

weapons systems/platforms.

Another approach is to change our culture to affect how we think and act regarding energy. These efforts have also been ongoing for several years and discussed in this column. The Air-ENCON (Energy Conservation)

program, which the Chief of Naval Air Forces (CNAF) and NAVAIR are presently beta testing with a Carrier Air Wing, is a culture change initiative "in progress." Working closely with the Fleet, Air-ENCON is looking at ways to modify how we train, handle, and fly aircraft to reduce fuel consumption without degrading our ability to operate. Hot refueling, where we refuel aircraft with engines running, is just one of the many things they are evaluating. While hot refueling can be necessary under operational scenarios, it is not very fuel-efficient. Changes to this process, if feasible during certain training scenarios, could achieve major fuel savings.

The Navy has smart people at all levels with good ideas for changing our energy culture, but the challenge has been getting those ideas to the right decision makers. As a small step to that end, I released a video on our Energy & Environment YouTube channel this past January encouraging Sailors and civilians to reach out via online form. We've received dozens of energy suggestions, and have been actively reviewing and routing them to the appropriate technical and policy folks. It's my hope that the best ideas can become new Fleet or shore installation practices and/or new standards for how we do business. To those who responded, thank you for sharing your thoughts and trying to make a difference. Keep the good ideas coming.

Underlying these energy technology and culture change initiatives are the Secretary of the Navy's energy goals. One of these goals is to sail the Great Green Fleet (GGF) in 2016. A milestone for the GGF occurred January 17, when Secretary Mabus signed out a charter establishing working groups to define and plan the GGF deployment.





Another concern the sequester and fiscal challenges create is based on the fact that, to maintain readiness, the Navy often has to meet mandated environmental requirements on a “just-in-time” basis. Permits for our Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing (AFTT) and Hawaii-Southern California Training and Testing (HSTT) areas are key examples. Our current permits expire in less than 12 months, and we don’t have much wiggle room in the AFTT and HSTT schedules. Therefore I’m concerned about the impacts sequestration may have on Navy environmental planning teams and the regulatory agencies we interface with to move these projects forward. On the environmental front, I can think of nothing more important from a “support to the Fleet” perspective.

To date, we continue to make significant progress toward obtaining those permits. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published the proposed rules for AFTT and HSTT in the Federal Register on January 31, and accepted public comments through March 10. Some people and organizations used that period as an opportunity to claim “gloom and doom” for marine mammals due to our planned activities. It should come as no surprise that some of these statements were exaggerated, misleading, and

firm is cutting the ship into sections and removing pieces via a large floating crane. The Navy understands the importance of the Tubbatha Reef to the Philippines and the natural environment and we truly regret any damage this incident has caused to the reef. We will be assessing the extent of the damage once the ship is removed.

Spring is upon us, and many of us have been planning and participating in Earth Day events. Earth Day is April 22, but commands celebrate with activities throughout the month of April. This year’s theme is “Global Reach—Local Action,” reminding us that our worldwide presence creates both the ability and the responsibility to make a difference in our communities. Actions such as neighborhood or shoreline clean ups, recycling drives, or educational talks for students on environmental topics can be accomplished at little or no expense, so I am hopeful that Sailors, civilians, contractors, and families got involved for Earth Day this year. You’ll find an Earth Day poster in the center spread of this magazine, and can access free Earth Day planning materials at <http://greenfleet.dodlive.mil/earth-day>.

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often completely false. The bottom line is that the best available science—and our 60 plus-year track record of similar training and testing with minimal impacts—indicates that our proposed activities will have negligible effects on marine species populations. If you want the facts about AFTT and HSTT, technical experts at the Fleets and on my staff are your best resource.

As you may have heard, the mine countermeasures ship USS Guardian (MCM 5) ran aground January 17 on the Tubbatha Reef, a World Heritage Site about 80 miles east-southeast of Palawan Island in the Philippines. No one was injured, but attempts to free the ship intact were unsuccessful. To avoid further reef damage and protect the surrounding area, Seventh Fleet (C7F) removed all fuel and other materials that could have potentially harmed the reef if released from the ship. As of this writing, a salvage

Finally, I’d like to mention the recent departure of my deputy director, John Quinn. After five years with N45 and a long history of stellar leadership with the Navy on an incredibly wide range of issues, John has accepted a new position as the Maritime Administration’s Associate Administrator for Environment and Compliance. From environmental compliance ashore and afloat, to marine mammals and sound, to policy for ocean discharges, to energy efficiency and compatibility, John’s contributions to N45 and the Navy-at-large would fill many pages, but suffice it to say that he will be sorely missed and his successes never forgotten. We wish him fair winds and following seas as he embarks on this new phase of his career. ⚓

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