

DoD Natural Resources Program

Program Overview

The Department of Defense's (DoD) Natural Resources Program (NR Program) supports the military's combat readiness mission by ensuring continued access to realistic habitat conditions. The NR Program invested approximately \$300 million in FY2015 to ensure continued access to the 25 million acres of military land, air, and water resources needed to accomplish vital testing, training, and operational activities, and to ensure the long-term sustainability of our nation's priceless natural heritage. The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) provides policy, guidance, and oversight for DoD's NR Program.

The three principles that guide DoD's NR Program activities are mission enhancement, long-term sustainability of lands/resources, and cost avoidance and minimization. **Mission enhancement** is the primary goal of every NR Program action or activity. The Program strives to maintain the **long-term sustainability of DoD's lands and resources** to enable realistic, mission essential testing, training, and operations. By addressing imperiled species, critical habitats, invasive species, fire, and other key NR issues on base, the NR Program can **avoid or minimize costs** that could otherwise result in natural resources related restrictions or delays.

DoD manages and protects approximately 400 federally-listed species and over 550 species at-risk.

OSD's primary responsibilities are to:

- oversee Military Service natural resources programs, including expenditures and compliance with legislative obligations, Executive Orders, and DoD policies;
- assess, develop, and implement natural resources-related legislation, policy, guidance, procedures, and metrics;
- provide tools for DoD natural resources managers, such as training courses and outreach materials;
- develop and maintain partnerships with external stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, state governments, and other federal agencies;
- promote awareness of the NR Program to the DoD community, Congress, and other interested parties; and
- advocate and ensure adequate resources for the NR Program and for installation natural resources managers.

Sikes Act

First passed in September 1960, the Sikes Act as amended authorizes DoD to manage the natural resources under its stewardship. It requires that DoD develop comprehensive Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans (INRMPs) that are fully coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the appropriate state agency. To assist the Military Services, the NR Program provides policy and guidance on preparing and implementing INRMPs.



Policy and Guidance

Through policy statements, procedures, and supplemental materials, the NR Program provides broad guidance to help the Military Services comply with all federal environmental laws, including the Sikes Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, and all relevant Executive Orders. DoD Instruction 4715.03 is the NR Program's primary policy document.

DoD Instruction 4715.03 formalized new conservation metrics that evaluate seven key performance areas for each installation's INRMP. These are:

1. INRMP Implementation
2. Listed Species and Critical Habitat
3. Sikes Act Cooperation
4. Fish and Wildlife Management and Public Use
5. Team Adequacy
6. Natural Resources Management
7. INRMP Impact on the Installation Mission

DoD Manual 4715.03, issued in November 2013, provides procedures to prepare, review, update, and implement INRMPs in compliance with the Sikes Act.



Enabling the Mission, Defending the Resources
Department of Defense Natural Resources Program

Wildlife and Habitat Management

DoD is responsible for the lands and waters under its control. This includes managing and protecting approximately 400 federally-listed species and over 550 species at-risk. In addition to providing policy and guidance, the NR Program accomplishes this by:

- participating in partnership-based conservation efforts, such as Partners in Flight, Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, and the Pollinator Partnership;
- creating outreach materials, such as the *Biodiversity Outreach Toolkit* and *Commander's Guide on Invasive Species*;
- developing educational events, such as a national pollinator workshop and regional threatened and endangered species workshops; and
- supporting safety programs, such as Bird/Wildlife Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) and wildland fire.

Funding Award Programs

Through OSD, the NR Program manages the DoD Legacy Resource Management Program and the Forestry Reserve Account, both of which provide funding to installations for competitively awarded projects.

The Legacy Program awards funding to high priority natural and cultural resources projects that support the military mission. Since its inception in 1991, Legacy has funded approximately 3,000 projects, totaling over \$300 million.



Black-Capped Vireo
Photo: USFWS

To be eligible, projects must:

- have regional or DoD-wide significance and involve more than one Military Service;
- be necessary to support military operations or meet legal or statutory requirements that go beyond installation-specific needs;
- be more effectively managed at the DoD level;
- not be an assigned responsibility of a Military Service; and
- emphasize crosscutting conservation that supports or leverages ongoing or new DoD initiatives, demonstrates cost efficiencies and time savings, or exhibits new and innovative ways of managing resources on DoD lands.

Forestry Reserve Account funds are awarded to the Military Services each year primarily for projects that



Mojave Desert, Fort Irwin, CA

benefit DoD forestry resources. Funds result from the sale of forest products from military installations, with approximately \$1-2 million awarded per year.

Emerging Issues

DoD advances strategies to deal with emerging natural resources issues. Currently identified areas of focus include species at-risk and declining species and habitats; ecosystem services; adapting to and mitigating impacts from global climate change; fire; and water resources.

Outreach and Education

OSD's NR Program also has sponsored educational courses and workshops, such as the Sikes Act Introductory and Advanced Sikes Act training courses, Endangered Species Act Implementation training course, regional State Wildlife Action Plan/INRMP Integration workshops, and a variety of other workshops focusing on topics DoD or the Military Services identify as high priority. Due to restrictions on travel and conferences, these courses are being modified for online delivery.

The DoD NR Program also has a quarterly newsletter, *Natural Selections*, which highlights NR activities across the country. Contact NaturalSelections@bah.com to be added to the distribution. Outreach materials and online training resources also are available at www.DoDNaturalResources.net, and be sure to follow us on Twitter [@DoDNatRes!](https://twitter.com/DoDNatRes)

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