



Secretary of Defense Environmental Awards for Natural Resources Conservation

The Awards

Each Earth Day (April 22) the Secretary of Defense honors Department of Defense (DoD) installations, teams, and individuals for outstanding work in DoD environmental programs. A total of 17 awards within six categories are bestowed. In the **Natural Resources Conservation** category, awards are given for exceptional efforts for **Large Installations**, **Small Installations** (10,000 acres or less), and for **Teams or an Individual**.

Purpose

The purpose of the awards is to recognize outstanding efforts that promote successful natural resource conservation in the areas of endangered species management, invasive species control, ecosystem management, land use, forestry, education, and community outreach, while maintaining the DoD mission.

Some Award Winning Examples

The following are just a few examples of past award winners and some highlighted program elements that resulted in successful conservation programs.

Fort Drum, NY: 2004 Winner~*Large Installation:* Fort Drum demonstrated innovation in managing their natural resource data by establishing a unique spatial data framework for all of its land called **Natural Resources Management Units (NRMUs)**. This system would be beneficial to any large landholder (30,000+ acres) with the desire to proactively conserve and/or enhance the environment and increase sustainability. Using aerial photos, the base delineated its entire acreage, gathered habitat management information on 15,000 individual NRMUs and linked the information in a Microsoft Access database. This database acts as a driving force in determining initial management actions; a means to continually monitor the quantity and quality of the various land cover types that exist on post; and a feedback tool to evaluate the effect of recently implemented actions and to determine future management actions. Fort Drum has responded to many inquiries from other military installations about NRMU database

development and even briefed the Department of Defense (DoD) Conservation Conference in 2004. Fort Drum also



Base constructed wetland

established a Wetland Mitigation Bank by constructing, enhancing and preserving wetlands

and associated uplands. This provides wetland “credits” for non-military Construction Army (MCA) projects that require wetland mitigation. It is only the second of its kind within the Army and several Army installations have requested documentation to use the bank as a model.

Arnold AFB (AAFB), TN: 2006 Winner~

Large Installation: AAFB supports 20 animal and 61 plant species that are federal or state listed as endangered, threatened or of concern, and was honored in part for exceptional management of its sensitive species. For example, through research, management, and habitat restoration, AAFB achieved the recovery and subsequent delisting of the Eggert’s Sunflower, a



Eggert’s Sunflower (*Helianthus eggertii*)



Tagged Grey Bat

federally-listed threatened species, a first for the Air Force. The base also employs the latest bat-locating technology for surveys of endangered gray and Indiana bats, developed a gray bat Management Plan that protects the sustainability of a high priority maternity colony, and organized the Tennessee Bat Working Group (TNBWG). AAFB also established a management and banding program for the Henslow’s sparrow (a USFWS Species of Concern) and helped discover a new breeding population located just off base, resulting in increased mission flexibility.

Columbus AFB (CAFB), MS: 2003 Winner~

Small Installation: One area of accomplishment for CAFB was the optimization of conservation goals and mission requirements by emphasizing collaboration, partnerships and cooperative conservation. A partnership with the USDA

wildlife biologist resulted in a wildlife inventory around the airfield to reduce immediate wildlife hazards, prevent Bird Aircraft Strike Hazards and provide long-term recommendations to a Wildlife Hazard Management Plan. A cooperative service agreement with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to remedy soil erosion problems at the Shuqualak Auxiliary Airfield saved the base more than \$250,000 in construction cost by having NRCS develop an erosion control plan while the base performed the work in-house. Revisions to CAFB's Wildlife Conservation Program led to the first-ever, self-sustaining wildlife program, with revenues from all hunting and fishing permits used to manage wildlife resources and improve conditions for indigenous wildlife on the base.

Patrick AFB (PAFB), FL: 2001 Winner~ Team:



Revegetation as part of beach restoration project

The natural resources conservation team was honored in part for their exceptional management programs. As illustrated by the team's beach cleanup efforts and beach re-nourishment

projects, the natural resources team launched a massive, 8.3 million dollar program beginning in 1999 to re-nourish the greatly eroded beach at PAFB. In 2001 alone, PAFB staff completely restored 75% of the beach at a cost of 6 million dollars. The restoration of this 3-mile stretch marked the first time the base joined with local county authorities to complete a joint beach restoration project and resulted in renewed habitat for endangered nesting sea turtles.

Naval Weapons Station Charleston (WPNSTA CHASN), SC: 2000 Winner~ Large Installation:

The base was honored in part for its use of innovative and cost-saving methods to manage and protect its natural resources. The installation employs *multiple-use management* which structures natural resource management projects to provide benefits in several program areas whenever possible. Examples include firebreaks re-worked for alternative use as horseback riding, hiking, and biking trails, wildlife food plots planted in utility line right-of-

ways and prescribed fire regimes manipulated to enhance wildlife habitat while reducing fire hazard around explosive ordnance areas. Use of alternative funding and materials sources for the natural resources program includes the Resource Management Institute, a nonprofit agency, which supplied 60 tons of seed for wildlife food plots for shipping costs only. Alternative sources of labor and equipment included National Civilian Community Corps, Navy Seabees, Station Self-help Unit, Department of Natural Resources biologists, and volunteers.

Marine Corps Base (MCBH), HI: 2005 Winner~Small Installation:

MCBH is recognized by the state of Hawaii as a leader in invasive species management and was honored in part for programs that tackle invasive species while benefiting threatened native species. By FY03, MCBH completed a 20 year, \$2.5M, phased effort, to remove 25 acres of non-native mangrove from the Mokapu's wetlands, resulting in improvements to valuable wildlife habitat, water flow and quality, and a



Volunteers pulling Mangrove seedlings



Hawaiian Stilt

surge in the endangered Hawaiian Stilt population from 60 to 160 birds. In the Ulupa'u Crater vital combat weapons training and more than 2,500 federally-protected Red-footed Boobies were both at risk from brushfires in invasive grasses within the impact area. To remedy this, gravel-anchored geotextile matting was placed around the perimeter of bird habitat tree clusters, to repress weed growth, hold down the soil, and create a secondary fire break.

To Learn More

To see the full write-ups for these and other award recipients and for more information and Guidelines on the *Secretary of Defense Environmental Awards Program* visit the DENIX website at: www.denix.osd.mil