

Army Gains Ground with Integrated Natural Resources Management Planning

MISSION ESSENTIAL

The Army mission – *To be ready to deploy, fight, and win our Nations wars* – remains constant. The Army defends those things most prized by all nations – our land, our resources, and our people.

The Army's warfighting readiness mission is inseparable from the environmental resources that are critical to accomplishing that mission. Readiness training for multi-domain operations; high intensity conflict; and development, testing, and fielding for combat system modernization; all require access to realistic natural landscapes and environmental conditions that Soldiers and materiel experience during combat.

Primary objective: to enable access to the air, land, and water resources needed to train and ready the force for current and future missions.

Army lands, water, airspace, and coastal resource are essential in meeting mission training and testing requirements. Integrated Natural Resources Management Planning supports the military mission through ensuring that natural resources conservation measures and military operations on the installation are integrated and consistent with stewardship and legal compliance. The Army's overarching plan, "The Army Strategy for the Environment", to meet mission essential training and fulfill federal agency compliance and stewardship requirements includes: developing and implementing Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans (INRMPs); developing and complying with National

The need to train as we fight is fundamental to our armed forces. Ranges are some of our most valued assets because they closely resemble the operational environments of assigned military missions. Installations are also critical for maintaining military readiness and mission effectiveness. As such, ranges and installations must be available when and where needed and have the capabilities necessary to support current and future military mission requirements. Creating and sustaining a long-term network of ranges requires a management framework that effectively addresses mission requirements, environment and natural resource management, and the interests and aspirations of the local community.

2011 | Report to Congress on
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Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents; fulfilling E.O. 12114 “Environmental Effects Abroad”; seeking critical habitat exclusions based on the INRMP’s provisions for benefit to endangered species; and, meeting regulatory requirements and stewardship responsibilities.

One major document in meeting the plan is the INRMP. It serves as a long term planning document to guide the Installation Senior Commander and Garrison Commander in the

management of natural resources to support the installation’s mission while protecting natural resources for multiple and sustainable uses. As such, it is important that the INRMP is integrated with the installation master plan, range plans, training plans, integrated cultural resources management plans (ICRMP), integrated pest management plans (IPMPs), cleanup installation action plans (IAPs) and other plans to ensure common goals and consistency.

SIKES ACT (16 USC 670) requires:

All military departments to carry out a program to provide for conservation and rehabilitation of natural resources on military installations.

Secretary of Military Departments must prepare and implement an INRMP for each military installation with significant natural resources.

Secretary of Military Department must prepare each INRMP in cooperation with Sec. of Interior (acting through Dir. USFWS) and the head of each State fish and wildlife (F&W) agency. Resulting plan must reflect mutual agreement for F&W management.

Approximately 147 Army installations within the U.S. require an INRMP. Although all installations requiring an INRMP (based on criteria for sufficient resources) have developed an initial INRMP, several are seeking to meet all the Sikes Act requirement by reviewing for “operation and effect” no less than every five years. An effort is underway to re-double efforts to ensure these plans have been coordinated internally through the Commands offices (Environmental and G-3/5/7) and reviewed for operation and effect by having external stakeholders from USFWS and State Fish and Wildlife agencies review and sign the document for adequacy in meeting federal fish and wildlife conservation requirements. This review, every five years, defines the document as “compliant” with the Sikes Act (the overarching legislation for Department of Defense Natural Resources Management Program/Plans). Each installation establishes metrics and measures progress toward achieving the INRMP objectives. These metrics are monitored by DoD for determining the health of the program.

INRMP:

A Compliant INRMP may produce many benefits for an installation:

- Incorporates Planning Level Survey data. Integrate goals of Integrated Training Area Management for rehabilitation of training lands, Pest Management, Cultural Resources Management, etc.
- Effectively considers Missionscape plans within the context of the natural environment.

- Avoids mission delays, reduce conflicts, and avoids personal liability due to unforeseen conflicts.
- Assists in achieving common goals across all planning documents.
- Provides optimum mission landscape requirements for improving the capability, availability and accessibility of land.
- Provides for no net loss in the capability of the installation lands to support the military mission.
- May preclude the designation of critical habitat for endangered species based on effective INRMP and measure beneficial to the species.
- Reduces “off limit” areas by surveying, consulting and implementing INRMP recommendations.
- Decreases risk of liability in not meeting the Sikes Act and various legal requirements (e.g. CWA, ESA, Magnuson Stevens Act, E.O. Invasive Species) without effective planning.
- Abates mission delays resulting from unforeseen conflicts and/or potential government or personal liability.

INRMP Tool in concert with Endangered Species Program:

The 2004 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) granted relief to DoD on compliance with certain provisions of the ESA.

The NDAA Allows exclusion from critical habitat designation on military installations provided that the installation had an INRMP, as required by the Sikes Act, and the resources to effectively implement the plan.

To preclude a Critical Habitat designation, INRMP must:

- **Provide a benefit to the species**
- **Provides certainty in implementation**
- **Provides certainty conservation effort will be effective**

- Ensures the DPTMS provides optimum mission landscape requirements for improving the capability, availability and accessibility of land for installations that have training or testing missions.
- Increases use of U.S. lands with troops returning from abroad through mutual planning and integrations efforts with G-3/7 and natural resources offices.
- Incorporates Geographic Information components/overlay maps to visualize the best land use and constraints for effective training plans and scheduling.
- Offsets Operations and Maintenance expenses through effective planning and implementation.

Army Teamwork - It takes teamwork to ensure Army soldiers can train as they fight. Access to training lands is a key purpose for the Natural Resources Conservation Program. Teamwork for natural resources management planning to maximize training availability and meet land stewardship requirements will

address: managing lands; conserving soil; reducing sedimentation; protecting endangered species and other sensitive species; and, managing forests, fisheries and wildlife. Managing resources on Army lands to provide the maximum flexibility to support the mission and sometimes scarce natural resources habitat for sensitive species, may be a complex task. That is why teamwork is key to bridging the gap in determining the needs of the trainer and matching with compliance and stewardship goals for maintaining and rehabilitating the lands to support the mission. Natural resources managers in the Department of Army and across Department of Defense deserve a special “badge” for the difficult tasks they must perform. Their jobs are not only to provide Federal land management measures to preserve the land for the next generation (similar management as a wildlife refuge); but they have an added challenge to maximize that use to balance the mission needs as well as conservation, meet legal compliance issues, rehabilitates the land for future training and requirements and ensure training is sustained. That is where the teamwork comes into play.

First, we assemble the internal stakeholder team to meet regularly and work on these types of questions: *What is the military operation and training requirement? What training or impacts can the land support? Where are the protected/sensitive resources? Where are the best areas to train to avoid impacts/delays/seasonal requirements? Are there special operational needs (topography, roads, training cover or missionscape (e.g. percent forest cover)? Are there sensitive cultural resources sites? How can the landscape be modified to best support combined needs for training and the biological resources habitat protection? If training needs must be redoubled with troops coming back from overseas, are there land areas that can support additional training or do they need rehabilitation?*

The teamwork begins with effective communication and all the essential personnel such as: DPW, Natural & Cultural Resources Managers, Range Officers, Integrated Training Area Management personnel, Training Officers, Pest Management professionals, and others as needed. Routine meetings discuss training schedules, modernization needs/schedules, pending listing of endangered/threatened species, soil conditions, forest management practices to support missionscape, seasonal changes, soil moisture, erosion/sedimentation issues, regulatory actions, etc.

G-3 and Training

Training soldiers with the survival skills needed and with the battlefield training necessary to fight and win war is the ultimate goal. Facilities development, training, equipment use and foot traffic can take a toll on the natural environment. Through the Army’s best planning and integration of plans, stakeholder involvement, regulatory trust, stewardship actions and rehabilitation efforts, we can work to maximize use of the environment while sustaining it for future generations. The Army’s has demonstrated a long-term commitment to stewardship since the 1930’s-- hosting the nation’s Tree Army “the Civilian Conservation Corps”, reforestation with roughly 3 billion, improving forest fire fighting capabilities, building 800+ parks for the nation’s

use, improving most of the state parks, and building a network of service buildings and public roadways in remote areas. This ethos continues today with work and dedication of natural resources and ITAM professionals to effectively coordinate with planners, trainers, the testing community and external stakeholders for conserving Army lands.

The Army does not rest on its stewardship heritage, but continues its legacy of integrating plans and programs and building stakeholder regulatory trust to meet and exceed compliance requirements for premier legal drivers such as Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, Sikes Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and many others. That stewardship commitment and wise management of the lands entrusted to the Army's use ensures access to those lands and maintains the flexibility to conduct training with fewer restrictions long into the future.