



2022 Secretary of Defense Environmental Awards Natural Resources Conservation, Small Installation Award

Each year since 1962, the Secretary of Defense has honored installations, teams, and individuals for outstanding achievements in Department of Defense (DoD) environmental programs. These accomplishments include outstanding conservation activities, innovative environmental practices, and partnerships that improve quality of life and promote efficiencies without compromising DoD's mission success. The 2022 Secretary of Defense Environmental Awards cycle encompasses an achievement period from October 1, 2019, through September 30, 2021 (Fiscal Years [FY] 2020-2021). A diverse panel of 53 judges with relevant expertise representing Federal and state agencies, academia, and the private sector evaluated all nominees to select one winner for each of the nine categories. These nine categories cover six subject areas including natural resources conservation, environmental quality, sustainability, environmental restoration, cultural resources management, and environmental excellence in weapon systems acquisition.

About the Natural Resources Conservation, Small Installation Award

The Natural Resources Conservation, Small Installation award recognizes efforts to promote the conservation of natural resources, including the identification, protection, and restoration of biological resources and habitats; the sound management and use of the land and its resources; support of the military readiness mission; and the promotion of an ecosystem management perspective. Efforts may include preventing losses to threatened, endangered, and at-risk species; recovering species and their habitats; reducing bird/wildlife aircraft strike hazard incidents; proactively managing for wildfires; reducing and eradicating invasive species; and making landscapes more resilient to ensure access to realistic combat environments while protecting ecosystems and the species that live there. Small installations have fewer than 10,000 acres and can include leased, military-owned, or administered outlying ranges or training practice areas. The 2022 winner of the Natural Resources Conservation, Small Installation award is Marine Corps Base Hawaii.

About Marine Corps Base Hawaii

Marine Corps Base (MCB) Hawaii encompasses 4,500 acres on the island of Oahu and is rich with natural resources. MCB Hawaii's mission is to provide forward-based, sustainable training through operational facilities and services to support Operational Forces so that Marines and Sailors can accomplish their mission, while respecting the rich Hawaiian culture and biological diversity. The base supports over 20,000 personnel including Marines, Sailors, family members, civilian and contract employees, and veterans. The installation's offshore environment provides protection and safety for species such as the humpback whale, a variety of sea turtles, and the critically endangered Hawaiian monk seal to feed, rest, and reproduce. MCB Hawaii is also the only Marine Corps installation with coral reef resources. MCB Hawaii's property supports 133 acres of wetlands and is home to four endangered Hawaiian waterbird species. The base Environmental Compliance and Protection Division exists to enhance overall mission readiness through natural resources conservation.



MCB Hawaii, Kane'ohe Bay. In the foreground, Kane'ohe Range Training Facility, a live fire range, can be seen inside the Ulupa'u crater. Here, marines train to be combat ready adjacent to a thriving Red-footed Booby colony and Fossil beach.

Major Accomplishments in FY 2020-2021

- MCB Hawaii has become a regular nesting habitat for Hawaiian sea turtles and hosted between 14 and 28 percent of all known nesting on Oahu, equating to the emergence of at least 1,468 sea turtles during the achievement period. Much of this success can be directly attributed to the natural resources staff's protection efforts including cordoning off every presumed nest with high-visibility rope and clear signage. In addition, natural resources staff nourished collaborative relationships with volunteers, Federal agencies, researchers, and DoD partners to protect nests and collect data that will improve adaptive management.
- MCB Hawaii executed six outreach events in 2021 during sea turtle nesting season. Ninety-two participants, including MCB Hawaii leadership, local officials, and elementary school students and their families, learned about sea turtle conservation. MCB Hawaii used these events to showcase sea turtle conservation and partnership culminating in an article published in the January-February 2022 edition of *Hana Hou!* magazine, the Hawaiian Airlines in-flight magazine.
- MCB Hawaii facilitated regular beach monitoring by volunteers who gave over 1,300 hours collectively during the 2020 and 2021 sea turtle nesting season. MCB Hawaii developed sea turtle nesting protocol; mitigated artificial light sources known to disorient sea turtles; conducted educational events reaching 92 participants across all age classes; produced and distributed thousands of outreach materials; and is pursuing research on detecting active nests using canines and/or ground penetrating radar.
- In June 2021, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) selected MCB Hawaii as the top choice for the relocation of an adolescent monk seal named Lōli'i that had recently been weaned from his mother on Waikiki Beach. The move ensured protection of Loli'i and beachgoers. MCB Hawaii aided NOAA in logistical planning, execution, and subsequent data collection. Lōli'i is believed to be thriving to this day.
- To suppress invasive vegetation, natural resources staff teamed up with Marines Combat Assault Company in 2021 and supervised the annual "Mud Ops" training that involves maneuvering amphibious assault vehicles within the wetlands to support endangered waterbird nesting habitat, allowing natural resources management and military training to be one and the same.
- MCB Hawaii engages with researchers to better understand and manage natural resources including NOAA's annual whale counts, acoustic surveys for the Hawaiian bat, a waterbird study detailing breeding biology, a pueo population size study, a sea-bird attraction study to guide birds out of the impact area of a live-fire training range, and the banding of hundreds of seabirds to better understand fallout from lighting.



Threatened Hawaiian green sea turtle basking on Pyramid Rock beach, MCB Hawaii.



3rd Marine Regiment Combat Assault Company participating in the annual "Mud Ops" training event inside the Nu'upia Ponds Wildlife Management Area.