



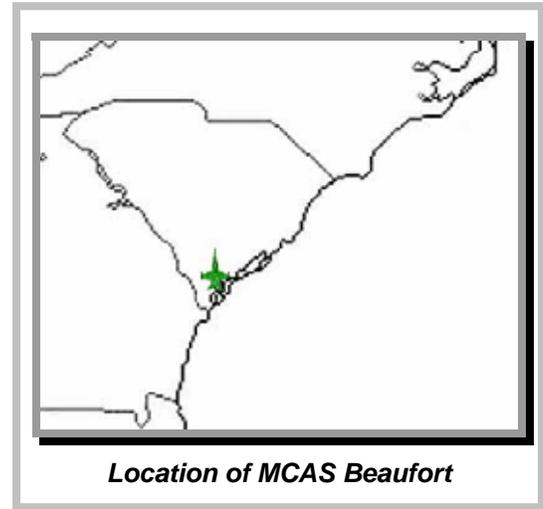
MARINE CORPS AIR STATION BEAUFORT



Nomination for
Secretary of Defense/Secretary of the Navy
2006 Environmental Awards
Cultural Resources Management – Installation

INTRODUCTION

Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Beaufort, South Carolina, serves as a home and base of operations for Fleet Marine Force units of the Second Marine Aircraft Wing and the Second Force Service Support Group. Marine Aircraft Group 31 (MAG-31) is the principal tenant and is composed of seven squadrons of F/A-18 aircraft, two of which are usually deployed. MCAS Beaufort also houses one Navy F/A-18 squadron. Our mission is to maintain and operate facilities in support of flight operations and to provide services and material to support the MAG, associated Wing units, and other activities and units as designated by the Commandant of the Marine Corps.



MCAS Beaufort supports a population of approximately 11,500 persons, which comprise almost 4,000 military personnel and their 7,500 family members; the Air Station employs an additional 600 civilian employees.

The main Air Station complex and the Laurel Bay Family Housing Area together encompass almost 7,000 acres. The MCAS Beaufort Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan (ICRMP) addresses both areas, plus the 5,183 acres of the Townsend Bombing Range in Georgia—a federal property for which MCAS Beaufort is responsible.

For at least 10,000 years, people have occupied the land that now houses the Air Station and the Laurel Bay Housing Area. Native Americans were drawn to the area by the bountiful estuarine resources, and evidence of their seasonal camps is found throughout the Air Station. By the mid 1700s, Native Americans had been displaced by English colonists and large rice and indigo plantations, which were worked by African and Indian slaves. After the Civil War, the large plantations were divided into small tracts and farmed by newly freed African-Americans. During the late 1890s to mid 1900s, lands that had grown cotton were converted to the cultivation of truck crops produced for northern markets. Forested lands were harvested for lumber. In the 1940s, the Navy and then the Marines adapted the land for airfields and began the construction recognizable today as the Air Station.

BACKGROUND

MCAS Beaufort's ICRMP was completed in September 2001 and is undergoing its five-year revision. The MCAS Beaufort ICRMP addresses cultural resources at the Air Station, the Laurel Bay Housing Area, and the Townsend Bombing Range in Georgia.



The Air Station houses one site, the Tabby Wall, listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). While the function of the long, low wall remains unknown, archival research suggests it is linked to one of the Broad River plantations that existed from the eighteenth through the early twentieth centuries. Tabby is a type of cement made from lime, sand, and oyster shells that was commonly used in the Low Country during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Beaufort County has the highest number of tabby ruins in the United States. MCAS Beaufort also manages twelve sites that are considered eligible for the NRHP and thirty sites that are potentially eligible.

In January 2005, MCAS Beaufort completed a **programmatic agreement** with the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regarding certain types of ground-disturbing activities and cultural resource management. This marks a significant accomplishment during this achievement period and is described below.

Also during this achievement period MCAS Beaufort signed **memoranda of understanding** (MOU) with eight Native American tribes. Another significant accomplishment, this too is described below.

- Alabama-Quassarte Nation
- Cherokee Nation
- Chickasaw Nation
- Choctaw Nation
- Thlopthlocco Tribal Town
- Kialegee Nation
- Muscogee Creek Nation
- Seminole Nation

The management of cultural resources is fully integrated into the management of other programs at the Air Station, Laurel Bay Housing Area, and Townsend Range. The Natural and Cultural Resource Manager, a full-time billet in the Natural Resource and Environmental Affairs Office (NREAO), spear-heads the effort, which includes long-term, ongoing efforts to investigate and protect known existing sites, punctuated by focused activity responding to regular activity and changes at the Air Station. The Environmental Impact Review Board conducts NEPA reviews for every proposed construction, earth-moving, or equipment installation project for any impact that the proposed project or undertaking might have on the environment—including natural and cultural resources. The NEPA Manager (also of NREAO) tracks undertakings that might impact archeological sites that have been determined eligible for the NRHP, just as she tracks other environment-affecting projects. She also provides assistance to this program as the tribal liaison. The Cultural Resource Manager contracts with the US Army Corps of Engineers for archeological work on the ground at the MCAS Beaufort properties, and the new Conservation Officer (funded and hired during this achievement period) provides protection of archeological sites from vandals and looters at the Air Station.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

MCAS Beaufort’s efforts in cultural resources management during this achievement period focused on and realized success in the areas of overall program management, the management of historic structures, the Native American program, and in education and outreach. In these achievements, the ICRMP objectives of compliance, mission enhancement, and public outreach were also furthered. The current revision of the ICRMP will update all information about currently known sites, the priority listing of investigations and evaluations planned, and the notification and consultation procedures—with particular emphasis on those that have been altered or simplified by the recent programmatic agreements and MOAs.

The program includes ongoing work to assess the eligibility of the many (several dozen) sites identified during the baseline Section 110 surveys as being potentially eligible for the NRHP. MCAS Beaufort averages testing and evaluation of at least two sites annually. This active testing and



evaluation program will eliminate sites that do not meet National Register criteria and significantly reduce the number of sites to be protected and managed. In addition to that long-term work, MCAS Beaufort conducts several Section 106 investigations yearly for proposed out-year projects, thus preventing potential project delays.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

OVERALL CULTURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Some of MCAS Beaufort's most significant accomplishments this achievement period have been in areas that affect cultural resource management overall, that is, enhancements of the program that extend beyond the discovery and evaluation of archeological resources. Most notably, these accomplishments are the MOUs signed with Native American tribes, the programmatic agreement reached with the SHPO and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the staffing addition of a Conservation Officer who (among other duties) will protect cultural sites. MCAS Beaufort achieved other notable successes in the maintenance of the listed historic structure and in education outreach.

The new Conservation Officer, funded and hired in 2005, has very broad responsibilities in conservation, resource management, and in environmental law enforcement. The latter extends to all federal, state, and local regulations, including those protecting historical sites. Sites identified as having historical or cultural interest are always at risk from illegal excavations, and illegal dumping can jeopardize others. This addition to the Cultural Resource Management team represents further efforts to improve the program and reflects MCAS Beaufort's commitment to protect the interests of all cultural resource management partners.

HISTORIC STRUCTURES

During this achievement period, MCAS Beaufort undertook and completed a project to protect and preserve the Tabby Wall from degradation caused by encroaching vegetation and water erosion. Planned in consultation with the SHPO, the project included treating vegetation on the wall itself and within five feet of it with herbicide; removing dead trees in close proximity to the wall to prevent the damage that might ensue from their falling; and, for trees less than 12 inches in diameter that are emerging from the wall, cutting them above the wall or soil line and stump treating with herbicide to prevent regrowth.

Finally, the restorers prepared a tabby mix that was appropriate to the structure based on research into its history and construction. Portions of the wall that were particularly exposed because the top had been damaged or eroded were capped with the tabby mortar to



Tabby Foundation, Laurel Bay



stabilize the wall and prevent further water erosion.

NATIVE AMERICAN PROGRAM

In March 2005, Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort became the first U. S. Marine Corps installation to sign an MOU with Native Americans. Colonel Harmon Stockwell, then commanding officer of MCAS Beaufort, traveled to Okemah, Oklahoma, to sign the MOU with the town king of Thloptlocco, the chief of the Alabama-Quassarte, and the mekko of the Kialegee—three Creek Nation tribal towns. Four years in the making, the MOU is the result of a 1994 presidential directive, which calls on federal agencies to implement tribal programs that respect tribal sovereignty, deal with tribes on a “government-to-government” basis, and consult with tribes when federal actions impact their lands or resources.



MOU Signing in Oklahoma

The MOU creates an agreement that if any cultural or sacred site is discovered aboard the Air Station or impacted by training or other operations, the tribes will be informed. The agreement established a process for MCAS Beaufort and the tribes to communicate their respective desires and needs regarding such discoveries.

It also recognizes that some ground-disturbing activities will not negatively affect sites of cultural, historical, or religious value, and specifies the circumstances under which MCAS Beaufort need not forward information to the tribes—further streamlining communication with the tribes.

Following the first groundbreaking agreement, MCAS Beaufort signed similar MOU with the “Five Civilized Tribes,” which designate the five American Indian nations that lived in the Southeastern U.S. before their displacement. Like the other MOU, these address the inadvertent discovery and intentional excavation of archaeological material of interest to the nations. Colonel Stockwell traveled to Tulsa in July 2005 to sign the MOU with the chiefs of the Cherokee, Muscogee Creek, Choctaw, and Seminole nations and the governor of the Chickasaw nation.

“This is fundamental to the future of our ability to train and protect all of our nations,” Stockwell said. “The heritage of the Marine Corps knows no borders between cultural backgrounds and our defense of America. The essence of the MOU is that it protects the American Indian heritage and history that existed in Beaufort long before the Marine Corps.”

For the past five years, MCAS Beaufort has invited Tribal Historic Preservation Officers to the Air Station to review plans and projects that will disturb the soil at properties managed by MCAS Beaufort. During these visits the officers also have an opportunity to study the plants and animals in the area, especially those having traditional medicinal and ceremonial uses.

“The MOU is not a one-way street, it is a union of sharing,” Stockwell said. “Over the past several years we have worked very hard to get to this point. Today we have reached an agreement that will protect each group’s best interest: their culture and our ability to train and operate.”

The Jet Stream, July 15, 2005



MCAS Beaufort (with the TriCommand) was the first to institute such a program in the Marine Corps. This outreach supports the ongoing relationships MCAS Beaufort maintains with the Native American tribes and contributed to the success marked by the MOU signed in 2006. In 2005, the Cultural Resource Program Manager, USMC HQ, attended the gathering to determine how programs of this type can be implemented at other Marine Corps installations.

CULTURAL RESOURCES AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

This year MCAS Beaufort completed a multi-faceted public outreach project that was developed to fulfill a mitigation requirement for a data-recovery project at a prehistoric archeological site at the Air Station. The outreach project consisted of the design and installation of two permanent exhibits at the Air Station, the design and construction of a traveling exhibit, the development of three lesson plans, the development of a related website, and the creation of an archaeology trunk. The programs present a prehistoric and historic overview of Beaufort County, specifically the area that is now the Air Station. Cultural resource management is also a theme presented in each of the programs.

The two permanent exhibits were installed in Headquarters Building 601 and the Air Station library, respectively. The headquarters exhibit includes three hanging panels and two exhibit cases that contain artifacts from Air Station sites. The exhibit explains what cultural resources are and how they are managed at MCAS Beaufort; details one historic site, the Tabby Ruin, which is listed on the NRHP; and describes one prehistoric site, the Track Site, which is a large camp site considered eligible for the NRHP. The headquarters exhibit showcases some of the exceptional cultural resource management efforts that have taken place at MCAS Beaufort and is intended for visiting military officials and civilians.

Intended to introduce a general audience of military personnel and family members to the concepts of cultural resource management and archaeology in particular, the three-panel exhibit installed in the library answers the questions: What are Cultural Resources? What is Archaeology? and What Resources are There? The last panel discusses specific archaeological sites, prehistoric and historic, that have been found on MCAS Beaufort.

The traveling exhibit consists of three double-sided panels, which can be used collectively or individually and are displayed on a frame. This exhibit presents a chronology of American Indians dating from approximately 17,000 years ago to the present day. The mostly generic chronology of the first panel is punctuated with events specific to Beaufort County and the Air Station. The reverse of the panel presents detailed information





about prehistoric pottery and stone tools that have been found on the Air Station and in Beaufort County. A second panel presents a timeline for the historic settlement of the Beaufort County area, again highlighting events that occurred on what is now the Air Station, and the different types of historic sites that have been found on MCAS Beaufort. The third panel presents an overview of MCAS Beaufort cultural resource management. The exhibit is available through the NREAO for loan to organizations located in the community.

The associated website is accessible through the MCAS Beaufort homepage. Like the exhibits, the website contains information about the prehistoric and historic resources found at MCAS Beaufort, cultural resource management, and a kids' page that contains information and games tailored to a younger audience.

Finally, three lesson plans were produced for Grades 3-4 and Grade 8 in the local schools on topics ranging from historic preservation to Native Americans in South Carolina. Educators and faculty from the Department of Defense schools at Laurel Bay and from Beaufort County were consulted during the development of these lesson plans to ensure they met curriculum standards. Although most of the lessons use information and examples that are specific to Beaufort County, the lesson plans may be used by anyone and are available for download from the cultural resource website. An archaeology trunk that contains "artifacts," tools, and additional lesson plans and exercises can be combined with the other lesson plans to enhance the learning experience or used alone. This trunk is available for loan through the NREAO.

MISSION ENHANCEMENT

By completing the programmatic agreement with the State and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (described below) and the MOA with several Native American entities, MCAS Beaufort has ensured that many projects for Air Station maintenance and expansion of operations can proceed without potential delays from outside review. Further, procedures for notification and consultation with those parties in other cases have been clarified and simplified.

CULTURAL RESOURCES COMPLIANCE

During this achievement period, MCAS Beaufort also reached an agreement with the SHPO and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regarding operation, maintenance, and development of property at the Air Station and Laurel Bay Housing Area.

The programmatic agreement recognizes that certain activities at MCAS Beaufort may affect historic properties that are subject to review under Sections 106, 100(f) and 111 of the National Historic Preservation Act but that many will not. It therefore seeks to minimize undue burden on both parties for the notification and review of proposed undertakings when they occur in areas that do not contain historical properties. Like the MOU with the tribes, the agreement specifies the various situations in which MCAS Beaufort will not have to consult with the SHPO or the Council, including construction in any area that has been previously surveyed for historic properties and many maintenance, construction, landscaping, and forestry management activities in other areas.

This agreement sets forth the conditions and terms to resolve potential adverse effects to historic properties when routine management actions are undertaken at the installation and outlines a streamlined process that reduces man hours and funding required for such reviews. And, indeed, since this agreement was implemented, MCAS Beaufort has been able to proceed in a number of projects with a much more efficient preconstruction screening process and the SHPO has been spared the task of reviewing individual undertakings having little potential to affect historic properties.