

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION AWARD
(SMALL INSTALLATION)
NAVAL AIR STATION PENSACOLA, FLORIDA
October 2007- September 2009**

Ecosystem, Mission, People: “Good to Go”

Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola faced and conquered the biggest challenge to its Natural Resources Program since formal management began in the 1960’s. With 2004/2005 Hurricanes Ivan and Dennis making direct hits on the installation and Hurricane Katrina brushing past – all three just ten months apart – damage to natural resources was nearly catastrophic. Finally, after a long and arduous cleanup, NAS Pensacola has proven the resiliency of its Ecosystem, its Mission, and its People and has officially **“Risen From the Storm.”**

QUICK FACTS SUMMARY:

Logo: In 1936, after noticing that area ducks landed without minding their form, or how big a splash they made, flight students adopted the **Gosling** as their logo and it soon became that of the installation.

Mission: "Cradle of Naval Aviation" -- training military teams for combat

Home to the Blue Angels: U.S. Navy Flight Demonstration Team

Size: 8,423 acres

Elevation: Sea Level to 55 feet

Visitation: One Million Annual Visitors

Shoreline: 17 miles of beachfront and shorelines along five “Outstanding Florida Waterways.”

Forests: Southern Pineland Forests of Longleaf and Slash Pine buffer and protect training areas.

Wetlands: Coastal and forested wetlands linking shorelines biologically to mission areas.

Plant and Animal Life: Home to 22 State and Federally listed species including the Gopher Tortoise, Osprey, and White-topped Pitcher Plant.

Nature Trails: 10 miles of hiking trails from beaches to woodlands for adventurous discovery.



INTRODUCTION

Naval Air Station Pensacola is located in Escambia County in the panhandle of Northwest Florida. The installation occupies 8,423 acres of land -- 5,800 acres at the main installation and 2,623 acres at the Center for Information Dominance at Corry Station, Saufley Field, and Bronson Field.

Land use

Forest Management	2,449 acres
Wetlands	650 acres
Semi-improved	911 acres
Outdoor Recreation	350 acres
Improved	4,360 acres
Miles of Shoreline	17 miles

Total Acres = 8,423



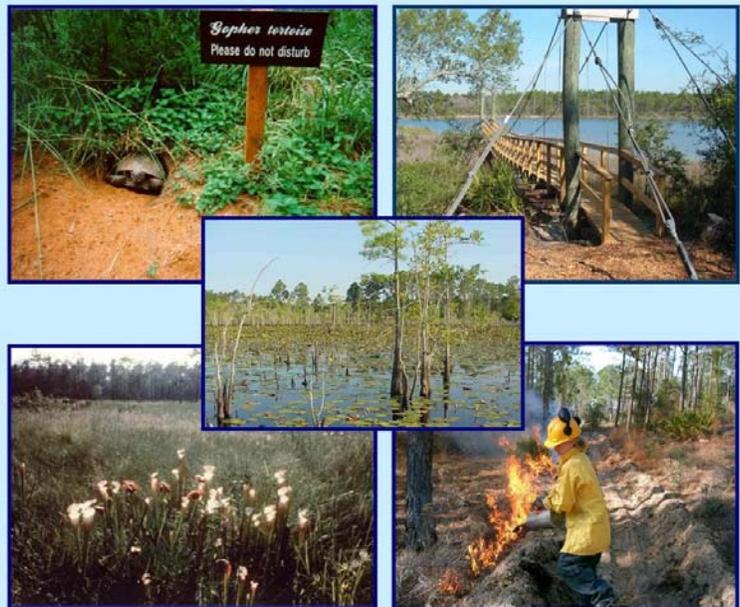
Mission Spanish explorers discovered Pensacola in 1559. In 1825, a Naval Yard was authorized and constructed in Pensacola to serve the Gulf Coast. The yard became the nation's first Naval Air Station in 1914, and became known as the "Cradle of Naval Aviation." The main mission of NAS Pensacola is to provide quality support for operations of the Naval Education and Training Command, headquartered on station, and over 100 Department of Defense (DOD) related tenant commands and customers, including Commander, Training Air Wing SIX, Naval Aviation Schools Command, Naval Aviation Technical Training Center, Naval Operational Medicine Institute, and Navy Public Works Department of Naval Facilities Engineering Command Southeast Jacksonville. Other support is provided for 27 non-defense related agencies located on Navy lands, including the National Park Service, U.S. Coast Guard, Barrancas National Cemetery, and the National Museum of Naval Aviation – a world class destination museum. Following the closing of the Vieques training range, NAS Pensacola also provides aviation and fleet support training for combat exercises. A combination of over 19,000 military and civilians make up the working population of NAS Pensacola.

Environment Natural resources on board and surrounding NAS Pensacola are typical of the Florida panhandle, southern Alabama ecosystem. Wetlands, forests, sand hills, rivers, streams, and sensitive ocean coastal zones create an environment abundant with animal, plant, and marine life. Located at the focal point of the regional ecosystem, NAS Pensacola serves as a unique interface for air, water, and land resources. The protection of these environmental treasures is vital to the sustainability of NAS Pensacola, its military mission, and continued community support in achieving the public trust. In addition to its natural resources, NAS Pensacola is also home to significant historical and cultural resources managed by both the Navy and the National Park Service, including Fort Barrancas and Barrancas National Cemetery, hosts to over 100,000 visitors per year.

BACKGROUND The NAS Pensacola Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) was completed in FY 2001, and signed into action in compliance with the Sikes Act Improvement Act of 1997. The INRMP combined the management of natural resources of three formerly independent commands into one organization and one document. NAS Pensacola Natural Resources staff also provides forestry and agriculture management assistance for NAS Whiting Field. Annual INRMP reviews and “Metrics” with the stakeholders were conducted in 2002, 2003, and from 2005 – 2009. The annual review for 2004 was canceled due to Hurricane Ivan. INRMP revisions were completed in November and the Natural Resources Data Call Station has been completed *every year since 2002*.

Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan For the Naval Air Station Pensacola Complex Pensacola, Florida

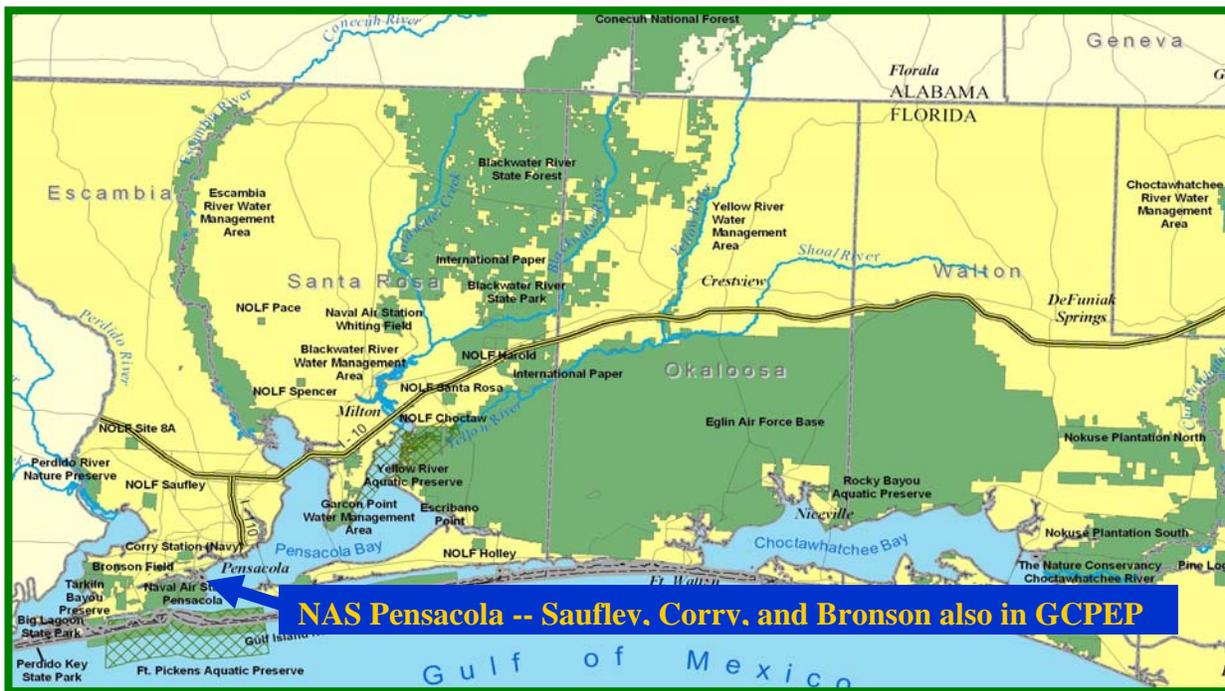
November 2006



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
Naval Facilities Engineering Command, SE
Jacksonville, Florida



Cooperative Agreements A cooperative agreement between the Navy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC), INRMP “stakeholders,” was signed in 1979 and continues to be effective for fish and wildlife projects. For outdoor recreation, a cooperative agreement between the Navy, the National Park Service, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection was signed in 1987. Other agreements include a Mutual Aid Agreement between the Navy and the Florida Division of Forestry revised in 2009; The Longleaf Alliance-Navy-Auburn University cooperative established in 1998; The Student Conservation Association-Navy Agreement revised and current; the U.S. Forest Service Prescribed Fire-Navy Agreement of 2004 revised and current; and the NAS Pensacola-Nature Conservancy Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP) Agreement of 2004 – an agreement involving a regional landowner consortium protecting over 1.1 million acres of area natural lands. *The GCPEP partnership is key to the Navy’s encroachment partnering program which protects Navy mission sites.* Navy lands in the GCPEP consortium are key connector lands for species range and diversity and contribute significantly to research and education elements for region-wide goals and objectives.



Organization Natural Resources management for NAS Pensacola is performed by two government positions in the Pensacola Public Works Department of Naval Facilities Engineering Command Southeast Jacksonville (NAVFAC SE Jax). Two professional foresters manage the program, one forester designated as the Natural Resources Manager and one forester designated as the Area Navy Forester. *Both foresters are “Certified Foresters” by the Society of American Foresters.* Work is accomplished for NAS Pensacola, Saufley Field, Corry Station, and Bronson Field, as well as for NAS Whiting Field for forestry and agriculture under a NAVFAC staffing plan for the efficient and economic sharing of professional staff and resources dating back to the 1980’s. Commanding Officers, Public Works Officers, and department staff at each installation are highly active in support of the Natural Resources Program. The Natural Resources Branch, NAVFAC SE Jax, provides administrative, technical, and financial support along with NAVFAC HQ, Washington, DC. Environmental requirements funding and oversight are provided by Commander, Navy Region Southeast and Commander, Navy Installations Command. Additional and innovative staffing during 2007-2009 included *three Americorps Student Conservation Association (SCA) Interns who provided 2,500 hours of conservation support.*

To sponsor these interns, NAS Pensacola partnered with the Student Conservation Association, Cazenovia College (NY), George Mason University (Washington DC), and University of California (San Diego). The SCA interns supported the Natural Resources Program with additional professional staff while gaining their own valuable experience. In addition, the use of the Americorps program followed the initiative set by the Commander-in-Chief.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan Goals and Objectives The overall goal of the NAS Pensacola INRMP is “to implement an ecosystem-based conservation program that provides for conservation and rehabilitation of natural resources in a manner consistent with the military mission.” Five stated goals, 17 objectives, and 28 projects constitute the INRMP. The land of NAS Pensacola provides the buffer and boundary for conducting the aviation training mission. *The new and revised INRMP* became the focal point for storm damaged resource restoration. Projects such as Biological Monitoring, Beach Renourishment, Establish Shoreline Vegetation, International Beach Cleanup, Invasive and Exotic Species Control, Urban Forestry, and Forest Product Sales were all implemented to repair and restore the land resources of the base. These projects, partnering with the installation’s *Historic Mitigation and Landscaping Project*, restored the base “back on line” as Ecosystem, Mission, and People joined together.

Outstanding Program Features

- Land, Facility, and Resource Restoration: *Completed restoration of damaged natural resources - the Natural Resources staff worked each and every day toward this goal.*
- Biological Monitoring: Assigned by Navy Region Southeast to lead the Navy’s *Gopher Tortoise Candidate Conservation Agreement* with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Completed *Dune Restoration* using native vegetation plantings.
- *Beach Cleanups*: Quarterly and annual cleanups by volunteers restored waterways; 21st and 22nd consecutive year of participation in the International Coastal Cleanup.
- Invasive and Exotic Species Control: *Influx of storm related invasive species controlled.*
- Urban Forestry: Planted 2,000 new trees; *Tree City USA award, 15th year.*
- Forest Restoration, Prescribed Burning: Timber salvage completed, first regular timber sale since hurricane damage completed, and prescribed burning “*back on line.*”
- *Conservation Partnering* for mission buffers with The Nature Conservancy, the State of Florida’s Pitcher Plant Prairie, Garcon Point Preserve, and Jones Creek Swamp Preserve.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Overall Conservation Management

- *Completing storm damaged restoration was the top Conservation Management Priority.*
- *INRMP project implementation, annual reviews, and metrics up to date and “on track.”*

Mission Enhancement

Land and natural resources restoration led directly to mission continuance at the base. Training areas where tree and site damage posed safety problems were recovered by the removal of 7,000 hazard trees and the pruning of 4,000 trees around mission areas. Native vegetation, including the planting of 2,000 new trees and new dune establishments along shorelines, improved the quality of life and provided a buffer for newly constructed training and housing facilities. This allowed training in both indoor and outdoor settings to resume. At Forrest Sherman Field and the Bruce L. Tanner Forest, 80 acres of aviation clear zones were cleared using the Navy’s GYROTRAC, immediately improving flight safety and reducing a Bird Animal Aircraft Strike

Hazard (BASH). The BASH Response Team, led by the Natural Resources Division, responded to an increasing wildlife hazard at the airfield and quickly reduced the encroachment of deer and coyotes through a team effort with Air Operations and INRMP stakeholders. *Using the INRMP to restore and manage natural resources served a critical role in protecting the land and mission, achieving public trust, quality of life, safety, and quality training environment.*



GYROTRAC clears brush for aviation safety.



Land Use Management

- Planted 25,000 dune plants and established “Back to Nature” areas at former building sites.
- Restored Urban Forests; 15th consecutive Tree City USA award. *Planted 2,000 new trees, Pruned 4,000 trees, Removed 7,000 damaged trees and used wood chips on nature trails.*
- Conducted International Coastal Cleanups in both 2008 and 2009. *800 volunteers participated to cleanup 10,000 pounds of debris and shoreline trash; Six Adopt-A-Beach groups.*



Tree Planting and Beach Cleanups Get All Hands Involved in Restoring the Base



Forest Management

- Timber Sales completed providing \$48,650 income to the Navy Forestry Account.
- Planted 15 acres to Longleaf Pine; GYROTRAC Brush Clearing on 80 acres.
- Prescribed burning on 550 acres; 18 miles firebreaks reconstructed. *Prescribed burning back on track using the Student Conservation Association, GCPEP, and US Forest Service Cooperatives to supplement the Navy Foresters with professional labor.*



Fish and Wildlife Management

- Repaired 18 Osprey nesting platforms; produced 40+ fledglings.
- Conducted Gopher Tortoise inventory with GIS mapping and data for 200 burrows; Navy lead for Gopher Tortoise Candidate Conservation Agreement with US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Restored bluebird nestbox program with Girl Scouts; 100 fledglings.
- Restored the Lake Frederic Freshwater Fishery.
- Updated the biological inventory with The Nature Conservancy.



Invasive Species Control and Pest Management

- Conducted nuisance wildlife management for the control of deer, beaver, and coyote using facilities funding; \$15 K per year. The BASH team, led and coordinated by Natural Resources, was responsive and active in maintaining the safety of flight.
- Controlled 40 acres of invasive species - Chinese Tallow trees.
- DOD Pest Control Recertification for the Area Forester.



Other Natural Resources

- Restored completely seven interpretive natural trails and two youth camping areas.
- Restored the Trout Point Nature Trail as a part of the Great Florida Birding Trail.
- Restored public access to nature trails and camping areas following restoration.

Conservation Education

- Participated in eight continuing education conferences/training meetings.
- Completed Wildland Firefighter certification for two Student Conservation interns.
- Achieved Society of American Foresters “Certified Forester” for the two foresters.

Community Relations

- Averaged 5,000 hours per year of community and volunteer service for area natural resources conservation; COMNAVREG SE “Flagship” Award winner in 2009.
- Conducted Earth Day Open House in 2008 at the base.
- Published 15 press release news articles.
- Host site for one Eagle Scout project and three youth projects.
- Presented three programs for public schools.



Environmental Enhancement and Natural Resources Compliance Program

NAS Pensacola continues to perform a model natural resources conservation program. INRMP work restored the base mission at a critical time and ensured the long-term sustainability of the land, forests, water, and plant and animal life. Compliance with integrity in such a way has allowed NAS Pensacola the freedom to train in a healthy ecosystem with the complete trust of the public and agencies. Cooperatives with the INRMP stakeholders, project work, volunteerism, and community involvement are day-to-day tools. Environmental Conservation and Natural Resources Stewardship funding were instrumental to the restoration effort.

Environmental Funds

FY 08 \$ 82 K
FY 09 \$133 K

NR Stewardship Funds (Reimbursable NR)

\$ 73 K
\$ 84 K

Summary

Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola faced and conquered the biggest challenge to its Natural Resources Program since formal management began in the 1960's. With 2004/2005 Hurricanes Ivan and Dennis making direct hits on the installation and Hurricane Katrina brushing past – all three just ten months apart – damage to natural resources was nearly catastrophic. Finally, after a long and arduous cleanup, NAS Pensacola has proven the resiliency of its Ecosystem, its Mission, and its People and has officially ***“Risen From the Storm.”*** As a critical element of base recovery, the Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) stepped up to the plate when it counted and delivered, taking a major role in getting the installation back on track. Training areas where tree and site damage posed safety problems were recovered by the removal of 7,000 hazard trees and the pruning of 4,000 trees around mission areas. Native vegetation, including the planting of 2,000 new trees and new dune establishments along shorelines, improved the quality of life and provided a buffer for newly constructed training and housing facilities, allowing training in both indoor and outdoor settings to resume. At Forrest Sherman Field and the Bruce L. Tanner Forest, 80 acres of aviation clear zones were cleared using the Navy's GYROTRAC and prescribed burning was accomplished on 550 acres, immediately improving flight safety and reducing the Bird Animal Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH). The base also restored seven interpretive nature trails, two youth camping areas, a freshwater fishery, and reopened natural resources facilities to the public. Beach cleanups involved 800 volunteers as All Hands pitched in to restore the base, day-to-day, monthly, quarterly, and annually. In addition, 18 osprey nesting platforms were repaired, the base bluebird nestbox program with the Girl Scouts of America was restored, gopher tortoise surveys were completed in preparation for the Candidate Conservation Agreement with the INRMP stakeholders, 40 acres of invasive species were treated, and 15 acres of longleaf pine planted. Supporting the natural resources staff in this enormous tasking, three Student Conservation Association Interns were hosted by the base, resulting in 2,500 hours of dedicated, determined, and professional conservation support. In addition, teamwork in the Public Works Department and the Environmental Division was critical to accomplish such a large extensive restoration. As a result of this total base-wide team effort, Naval Air Station Pensacola and its natural resources are now back online and ***“Good to Go.”***

