

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS

Kristin A. Nester / Secretary of Defense Environmental Quality Award - Individual

INTRODUCTION

Located on over 4,300 acres in northeastern Washington, Fairchild Air Force Base (AFB) is responsible for providing aerial refueling, as well as rapid and reliable passenger and cargo airlift and aero-medical evacuations. The base is home to the 92d Air Refueling Wing and multiple associate units including the 141st Air Refueling Wing (Washington Air National Guard) and the 336th Training Group (Air Force Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) School). The 92d and 141st operate and maintain thirty five KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft with the principal mission of air refueling. Another major tenant organization is the Armed Forces Reserve Center which opened in 2010 and is comprised of approximately 850 Army Guard and Reserve personnel assigned to 18 units with various missions. The largest employer in Eastern Washington State, Team Fairchild encompasses more than 5,100 active-duty military, members of the Air National Guard, tenant unit members, and civilian employees.

BACKGROUND

Ms. Kristin Nester is the Environmental Element Chief, 92d Civil Engineer Squadron, a position she has held for the last seven years. Prior to her current position, she was the Air Quality Program Manager, and before that she served six years on active duty as a Civil Engineering Officer. Ms. Nester's military service included three deployments, giving her a unique insight into the challenges of maintaining military readiness. As the spouse of an active duty officer, she has an invaluable perspective of the present day challenges faced by military families and a clear understanding of the numerous demands placed on shop-level personnel. Streamlining, simplifying, and promoting continuity and ownership are the hallmarks of her environmental leadership.

Ms. Kristin Nester displays outstanding environmental leadership and accomplishment in her many roles within the Air Force and her community. She is a shining example of environmental professionalism and maintains her outstanding standards of excellence through any challenge she encounters. She blends passion with common sense to project a balanced perspective that is embraced by her team and the base. She has developed mutually respectful relationships and credibility with regulators, external partners, and peers within the Air Force. As an EMS proponent, she has been effective in maximizing opportunities and increasing ownership throughout the base while minimizing fiscal costs and keeping the mission at the forefront of every environmental endeavor she takes on.



Ms. Nester's excellent communication skills proved valuable in implementing a basewide EMS.

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Ms. Nester supervises a team of nine environmental professionals dedicated to environmental restoration, compliance, pollution prevention, and conservation. In addition to being responsible for the overall execution of each program, she manages an annual budget of over \$2M. As the environmental lead, she is the focal point for developing and maintaining working relationships with other Civil Engineering Squadron sections and base organizations. Her long-standing record of dedication and passion for the environment has earned her the respect of others and brings a high-level of credibility to the programs she leads.

AWARDS AND SERVICES

Ms. Nester and the staff she leads have a long-standing tradition of excellence and strive to maintain a culture of environmental stewardship across the base. For the last ten years, Team Fairchild has been recognized as an environmental leader at the local, state, and national levels. These recognitions include:

- Twice receiving the Washington State Governor's Award for Pollution Prevention
- The first two-time recipient of the Spokane County Rideshare Pinnacle Award
- Washington State Governor's Commute Smart Award
- The White House Closing the Circle Award Honorable Mention for Alternative Transportation and
- 2007 Secretary of Defense Environmental Excellence in Weapon System Acquisition Award.

Ms. Nester continually seeks to improve and showcase the strengths of each environmental media area she leads. In 2011, Team Fairchild won five of the eight General Thomas D. White Environmental Awards given by Air Mobility Command (AMC), including winning the Natural Resources, Cultural Resources, and Installation Environmental Quality categories. Each award is the result of the outstanding teamwork between the Environmental Element and the installation. Fairchild's environmental program was noted by regulators evaluating award nominations as a "leader in the way employees examine their problems, create bold solutions and achieve results in excess of those they expect or that others achieve. They are consistently among the leaders in innovation and results." In 2010, Ms. Nester was recognized as the 92d Civil Engineer Squadron Civilian Manager of the Year. That same year, Fairchild AFB won Air Mobility Command's General Thomas D. White Environmental Excellence Awards for the Installation Restoration Program and the Installation Sustainability Program.



Attention to detail and documentation are critical components of Ms. Nester's success in building on a record of environmental excellence.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A hard working, insightful leader, Ms. Nester effectively uses her experience, knowledge, and communication skills to promote environmental stewardship within her base, throughout the surrounding community, and across the nation. Through her dedication and passion, Fairchild environmental programs are dynamic, vigilant, and progressive. Ms. Nester's relationships with stakeholders foster trusting relationships with off-base partners and community members.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (EMS)

In 2011, the Washington State Department of Ecology formally recognized the Fairchild EMS and approved having State pollution prevention reporting requirements reside within the existing EMS framework. As the base EMS coordinator, Ms. Nester led the development of the EMS and the push to achieve formal State recognition and approval. State approval resulted in elimination of more than 120 man-hours in redundant reporting requirements. The EMS has earned "green" metrics and "in-conformance" status five years in a row.

In 2010, Team Fairchild was the first base in Air Mobility Command (AMC), and one of the first in the Air Force, to undergo a joint external Tier 3 Environmental Compliance Assistance Management Program (ECAMP) and EMS audit. All programs graded "green" and zero major non-conformity findings were identified. Senior leaders recognized Ms. Nester for "...always being prepared, knowledgeable and passionate about her job."

The ECAMP Assessment Team recognized several aspects of the base's programs as best management practices to be emulated by other installations. The EMS Cross-Functional Team, co-chaired by the Deputy Commanders of the Mission Support and Maintenance Groups, was lauded for providing multi-functional representation at the senior leader level and program continuity throughout deployments and rotations. Ms. Nester developed a readily understandable chart identifying the eight major ISO 14001 EMS elements and used it to brief Wing, Group, and

Squadron leaders at quarterly Environmental, Safety, and Occupational Health Council (ESOHC) meetings. Her efforts were recognized for ensuring EMS visibility. In addition, a complete management review occurs each quarter rather than the minimal annual requirement.

Training and awareness is a cornerstone of the environmental programs led by Ms. Nester. An EMS auditor noted, "...senior leaders, unit environmental coordinators, and program managers have a great understanding of environmental policy." She ensures new unit commanders receive a letter identifying the unit's key compliance sites and vulnerabilities, providing ECAMP information, and providing contact information for Unit Environmental Coordinators (UEC). Letters are delivered immediately after a change of command occurs to ensure the new commander is aware of the environmental aspects of the unit and to foster an on-going culture of environmental awareness.

Ms. Nester streamlined and strengthened the UEC program by combining multiple environmental committees across the base into a single EMS Cross-Functional Team. Concurrently, an environmental awareness training class was developed and made mandatory for all UECs. The class is offered quarterly, includes briefings by all environmental media managers, and concludes with a slide summarizing UEC specific roles to emphasize the desired, media-specific take-away.

Ms. Nester has avoided more than \$100K each year on external environmental training costs by having her team of environmental professionals develop and provide media-specific training. Her efforts have ensured that hazardous waste satellite accumulation managers, underground storage tank operators, facility managers, government purchase card holders, asbestos facility maintenance personnel, and air emission unit managers have all received customized and effective training.

WASTE REDUCTION EFFORTS

Proactive waste reduction efforts are a result of the incorporation of pollution prevention in the installation EMS, and teamwork between shops throughout the base and environmental staff. Ms. Nester facilitated developing goals with associated EMS objectives and targets to minimize hazardous waste impacts. Floor wash water contaminated with heavy metals was identified as a key target and was successfully reduced by 25,000 pounds to achieve a 94% decrease in generated waste, improve workplace health and safety, a saved over \$10,000 per year in disposal costs. Fuel contaminated spill pads, another identified target, were cut 83% by implementing better controls. Additional analysis indicates that similar actions may be possible to achieve an annual savings of \$5,000 and eliminate 1.5 tons of waste.

Ms. Nester established and supervises the Commute Trip Reduction Program, a state program and national leader in promoting rideshare. Taking advantage of incentives offered through the Department of Defense Transit Reimbursement Program, Ms. Nester successfully facilitated commuting alternatives by establishing 28 transit vanpools. With 250 riders, it is the largest vanpool program in the region, and one of the largest in the Air Force. Consistent with DoD greenhouse gas reduction goals the program has reduced commuter mileage by 1.5 million miles and eliminates 755 tons of greenhouse gases annually. The program has received numerous awards and is cited as a shining example to other businesses in the County and State.

Under Ms. Nester's leadership in 2010, Fairchild AFB was one of the first bases in the Air Force to implement centralized software programs for managing and tracking the purchase and use of hazardous materials and resulting hazardous waste. Base personnel dedicated hundreds of in-house man hours to the effort and demonstrated the value of the program for the rest of the Air Force. Continued feedback and problem-solving efforts strengthen Fairchild's ability to support other bases now working through program implementation.



Ms. Nester prepares to utilize the Environmental Element's electric vehicle to perform shop visits. The electric vehicle is always a huge hit at the base Air Show garnering many questions from community members.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (ECAMP)

Another major initiative undertaken by Ms. Nester was the development and deployment of self-inspection ECAMP checklists in compliance with recently implemented Air Force policy. Ms. Nester directed all media managers to modify incomplete and/or inaccurate centrally developed checklists with local program and permit requirements. UECs reviewed each checklist and provided comments, an implementation protocol was developed and approved by the installation ESOHC, and final checklists were distributed through unit commanders. Final checklists provided helpful and relevant information and were accepted as being credible requirements by shop personnel and process owners.

As each unit completed its first quarter self-inspection process, its checklists were sent to appropriate Environmental Program media managers who then reviewed each checklist, answered questions, and identified areas for improvement. This collaborative effort ensured each shop completed its required self-inspection checklists and that problems were rapidly identified and corrected.

Ms. Nester implemented a schedule to spread required annual environmental audits of installation processes and facilities over a 12 month period to provide unit Commander's a written report of findings that included EMS participation, UEC training and involvement, potential areas of regulatory vulnerability, and unit-specific findings. Additionally, each assessment was closely synchronized with annual ground safety inspections to facilitate comprehensive assessments while minimizing the overall assessment and inspection footprint. As a result, Unit Commanders and their UECs have taken ownership of identified issues are consistently quicker to follow-up on and resolve them.

A huge advocate of documentation, organization, and written plans, Ms. Nester ensures all installation environmental management plans are reviewed and updated annually using in-house expertise. These reviews enhance continuity, and ensure requirements and procedures, and roles and responsibilities are clearly documented and defined. In addition to allowing for flexibility in scheduling, conducting the reviews in-house ensures all plans are responsive, reflect actual, current practices, and eliminates over \$100,000 in contractor provided services annually.

Ms. Nester's outstanding professionalism, dedication, and perspective have garnered base-wide support for Fairchild's environmental program efforts and she has successfully maintained environmental program funding levels with no unexpected funding deficits. Even with a 30% percent deficit in media managers over the last two years, she has successfully ensured completion of all critical reports, trained new employees and ensured all program requirements were accomplished, maintained relationships with regulatory and shop personnel, and mentored a college graduate through a two-year internship program that provided a wide-range of work experience and training.

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ANALYSIS

Ms. Nester was selected to lead much of the Civil Engineering Squadron's efforts to support the nine month closure of the Fairchild AFB runway during a \$44 million runway replacement project. Ms. Nester successfully facilitated the relocation of installation aircraft to locations throughout the region, secured a required environmental waiver to allow aircraft painting operations to be moved to the municipal airport, and ensured development of hazardous material, hazardous waste, and recycling operations plans. Ms. Nester maintained a continuity book to document accountability throughout the transition process and skillfully maintained contact with rapidly rotating site personnel to maintain compliance with established procedures. Ms. Nester's efforts not only contributed to the smooth transition of aircraft from Fairchild to their temporary locations; she did so in full compliance with environmental laws, a fact substantiated by a short-notice, joint inspection conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Washington State Department of Ecology that resulted in no negative findings.

Throughout the transitions, Ms. Nester also had oversight of garrison operations and the runway reconstruction project; reviewed project specifications; coordinated with regulators and the general contractor; obtained permits for an on-site crusher and batch plant; and ensured operations complied with permit requirements. Her management and oversight synchronized a 13,500 cubic yard dig-haul remedial project with runway closure efforts with no negative impacts to the mission and a cost savings of nearly \$200,000.



A comprehensive Tier 1 self-inspection ECAMP program and a rolling Tier 2 internal ECAMP program has contributed to media managers dedicating over 2,500 manhours per year to one-on-one contact with shop personnel.

Ms. Nester expertly completed a Section 106 Historic Review consultation to complete a \$100,000 demolition project with zero mitigation, and obtained State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) approval to install a fire sprinkler system within the base's premier historic aircraft maintenance facility while maintaining the integrity of this valuable cultural resource. She personally facilitated in-person meetings between the SHPO and base senior leaders, engineers, and architects effectively garnering increased mutual understanding.

Ms. Nester fosters positive relationships and cost-effective partnerships with agencies at all levels of government. She successfully programmed a project in which the Corps of Engineers will perform the first-ever survey of amphibians and reptiles to meet Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP) goals and identify potential threatened or endangered species. She completed a project with the US Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Wildlife Services to complete a Wildlife Hazard Assessment and immediately took action to execute the primary recommendation of the assessment in partnership with the Washington Department of Fish and Game. Ms. Nester also facilitated the annual monitoring of a federally threatened plant species by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources and oversaw conservation efforts that netted a 20% increase in the species population on the base. Her ability to involve other agencies with specialized expertise streamlined acquisition efforts and saved more than \$75,000.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Ms. Nester is driven by a desire to make a positive difference for her base, her community, and the Air Force for generations to come. She recognizes people are our greatest asset and strives to mentor and support her environmental team and others to build and maintain sustainable practices that will last well into the future. All base personnel, from senior leaders to young children, are instrumental in achieving the objectives established by the Fairchild Air Force Base Environmental Policy Statement. Ms. Nester takes positive and assertive actions to support their efforts.

Ms. Nester initiated multiple partnering and outreach efforts with the base Child Development Center, Youth Center, elementary school, and privatized housing developer. To celebrate Earth Day, volunteers from throughout the base were solicited to read "The Lorax" and other environmentally-themed books to preschoolers and kindergartners at the Child Development Center, and older students at the Youth Center were given Earth Day themed T-shirts to decorate. As the Director of Base Youth Programs noted, "Ms. Nester clearly has a strong passion for both the environment and support of our future generation. Her support of our programs throughout the years is much appreciated." Ms. Nester also worked with the privatized housing owner to sponsor an Earth Day lunch with activities attended by more than 600 family housing residents. Additionally, each year she plans an Arbor Day celebration with participation by senior leaders, a state forester, and over 120 students from the base elementary school.

Ms. Nester diligently promotes environmental education among younger generations and has served as a leader in numerous community organizations. A member of the Lewis and Clark Post of the Society of American Military Engineers, she served on the Board of Directors and as the Scholarship Committee Chair. Ms. Nester volunteered more than 130 hours to lead Scouts to satisfy badge requirements for water and energy conservation and has served as a troop leader and on the Board of Directors.



Fairchild fully implemented the new Air Force web-based hazardous material database tracking system in 2010 and the hazardous waste module in 2011. Having the hazardous material pharmacy and central 90-day hazardous waste accumulation site collocated means one-stop shopping for customers and increased efficiency in manhours to support the joint operation.



Many resources are used to promote environmental awareness. Bulletin boards originally provided to support the rideshare program were expanded to promote all general environmental awareness.