

# Department of Defense Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Group Charter

## Purpose

This Charter defines the Department of Defense Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (DoD PARC) group's mission, vision, organizational structure, membership, communication, resourcing, and goals and objectives.

## Background

### **Department of Defense Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (DoD PARC)**

In 2009, a group of approximately 40 DoD natural resource managers created an informal network for communication and collaboration focused on herpetofauna management and conservation at military installations. This DoD partnership for amphibian and reptile conservation has come to be called DoD PARC.

DoD PARC provides a network specifically for military installation biologists, natural resource managers, and professional herpetologists to collaboratively manage common and at-risk herpetofauna on public lands used by the military in ways that enable testing, training, and operational activities. DoD PARC interfaces with the national PARC organization by regularly communicating with the PARC Federal Agencies Coordinator and by partnering on specific projects that benefit DoD lands.

### **National Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC)**

Formed in 1999, the national [PARC](#) is a coalition of federal and state agencies, tribes, non-governmental organizations, and industry groups that have agreed to conserve amphibians, reptiles, and their habitats as integral parts of our ecosystem and culture through proactive and coordinated public/private partnerships.

In light of global amphibians and reptiles declines, and based on the success of the national [Partners in Flight](#) initiative, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, and National Marine Fisheries Service signed a *Memorandum of Understanding Among Federal Agencies for Achieving Objectives of the PARC* (2001). The PARC MOU provides a framework for cooperation and coordination among federal agencies to achieve objectives that ensure the long-term health of amphibians and reptiles. DoD became a signatory to [this MOU in 2007](#), and is an active member on the PARC Federal Agencies Steering Committee.

## ***Strategic Plan for Amphibian and Reptile Conservation and Management on Department of Defense Lands***

On February 19, 2015, John Conger, acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (Energy, Installations and Environment), signed a memo formally endorsing *The Strategic Plan for Amphibian and Reptile Conservation and Management on Department of Defense Lands*. The Plan is intended to help natural resource managers better address the conservation and protection of amphibians and reptiles and their habitats; to help Commanders comply with the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act; and to help both Commanders and resource managers achieve their mission objectives. DoD PARC, the Military Services, and the DoD Natural Resources Program played a major role in the writing and approving this Plan.

### **Who is DoD PARC?**

DoD PARC is an open-membership group dedicated to sustaining the Nation's mission readiness while managing, conserving, and understanding amphibians and reptiles and their habitats, especially with respect to military operations and land management practices. DoD PARC is voluntary, proactive, and non-regulatory. As of 2016, approximately 200 military and civilian personnel from across DoD and the Military Services had joined DoD PARC.

DoD PARC focuses on habitat and species management; inventory, research, and monitoring; and education, outreach, and training. By implementing actions as outlined in the Plan, DoD PARC provides a framework for effectively managing amphibians and reptiles on DoD lands. DoD PARC's primary responsibility is to ensure that the DoD has the operational and logistical flexibility necessary for testing, training, and operational exercises.

### **DoD PARC Mission**

In support of military readiness, strive to sustain amphibian and reptile populations and habitats through proactive environmental stewardship, conservation, outreach, and partnerships.

### **DoD PARC Vision**

To provide effective support at Departmental, Military Service, and installation levels that will benefit native amphibians, reptiles, and their habitats, while sustaining the military mission.

### **DoD PARC Function**

DoD PARC's primary responsibility is to help DoD implement *The Strategic Plan for Amphibian and Reptile Conservation and Management on Department of Defense Lands*. Activities and information disseminated are not of a policy-formation or directive nature (e.g., no data calls or tasking memos). DoD PARC also provides technical expertise to the DoD community regarding herpetofauna in general. All activities are supervised by DoD's Natural Resources Program Office.

## DoD PARC Structure

DoD PARC’s primary leadership positions are: National Representative, National Technical Representative, and Regional Representatives. The National and Technical Representative positions are selected by the DoD Natural Resources Program; all Regional Representative positions are voluntary (with supervisor approval).

Roles and Responsibilities:

The following *Roles and Responsibilities* will help achieve the objectives outlined above.

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Roles and Responsibilities</b>
OASD (EI&E)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperate and coordinate with other federal agencies to conserve amphibians, reptiles, and their habitats through proactive and coordinated public/private partnerships.</li> <li>• Disseminate and promote the <i>DoD Plan for Amphibian and Reptile Conservation and Management on Department of Defense Lands</i> to designated Military Service headquarters points of contact.</li> <li>• Disseminate and promote the MOU between DoD and other federal agencies regarding the PARC Federal Agencies Steering Committee to designated Military Service headquarters points of contact.</li> <li>• Ensure that the Military Service headquarters points of contact incorporate sound reptile and amphibian management into their conservation programs.</li> <li>• Develop policy and guidance in full cooperation with designated Military Service headquarters points of contact to support the management of amphibians and reptiles on DoD lands, if needed.</li> <li>• Maintain regular communication with the Military Services headquarters points of contact.</li> </ul>
Military Service Natural Resources Headquarters Designated Points of Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designate Military Service headquarters points of contact.</li> <li>• Disseminate through their respective chains of command the <i>DoD Plan for Amphibian and Reptile Conservation and Management on Department of Defense Lands</i>.</li> <li>• Disseminate through their respective chains of command the MOU between DoD and other federal agencies regarding the PARC Federal Agencies Steering Committee.</li> <li>• Develop Military Service-specific policy and guidance to support the management of amphibians and reptiles on DoD lands, if needed.</li> <li>• Cooperate and coordinate with other federal agencies to conserve amphibians, reptiles, and their habitats through proactive and coordinated public/private partnerships as appropriate.</li> <li>• Ensure Military Service programs incorporate appropriate reptile and amphibian management into their natural resource programs and Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans with special emphasis on proposed, listed, and candidate species.</li> <li>• Maintain regular communication with OASD (EI&amp;E).</li> </ul>

## Communication among Group Members

Communication among group members is primarily through an email listserv, currently managed by the National Representative. Content consists primarily of news and information, announcements about upcoming webinars or courses, and exchanges about technical and educational topics.

Group members may also communicate and share information using the DoD PARC Photo Website (<https://dodparcphotolibrary.shutterfly.com/>). This website was developed primarily so group members may share pictures of herpetofauna for use in pamphlets, presentations and posters. The website may also be used stay up-to-date on group activities, pose questions in a forum, or visit web links specific to herpetofauna conservation and management.

## Resourcing

Funding for DoD PARC administrative duties has been provided by the DoD Legacy Program since 2009. This funding is not guaranteed, and is contingent upon yearly congressional authorizations and OSD approval. Funding is applied for annually by submitting a pre-proposal and proposal to the DoD Legacy Program. Applying for other service- or installation-specific funding is encouraged and may be sought independently.

## DoD PARC Logo

The DoD PARC logo was designed to reflect the long-standing commitment that DoD and the Military Services have to protecting both our nation and its resources. By intertwining the rattlesnake with the tasseled American flag, the DoD PARC logo harkens back to the original Gadsden flag image which served as ‘an emblem of vigilance... of magnanimity and true courage.’ By showing the Flag with tassels, the logo depicts heroics in battle and honors earned through victory. In the end, the logo is meant to represent how DoD protects the natural resources with which it has been entrusted, and how those resources in turn provide for and protect the military’s ability to prepare for its warfighting and peacekeeping duties.



## Supporting the Military Mission

DoD PARC supports and enhances military readiness by providing coordination, information, and guidance for Service Branch natural resources managers to sustain mission requirements and minimize training testing and operational restrictions. DoD PARC also ensures the targeted implementation of Secretary of Defense environmental goals and objectives as defined in the Plan. Additionally, DoD PARC increases communication and partnering among the DoD community, and facilitates working cooperatively to implement guidance and solve common problems.

## Program Goals

DoD PARC seeks to understand, manage, and conserve amphibians and reptiles on DoD lands by:

1. Reducing or eliminating population declines of both common and at-risk species, thus helping avoid or minimize an increase in ESA-listed species and designated critical habitats.
2. Identifying sound, science-based strategies, tools, information, and objectives for managing amphibian and reptile populations that can be incorporated into existing natural resources and land management programs.
3. Promoting awareness, involvement, communication, and coordination both within DoD and among national, regional, and local experts.
4. Providing outreach tools to the military community, natural resources managers, and other partners to promote collaborative efforts that increase understanding of mission and conservation compatibility.
5. Providing technical resources that may be incorporated into land management programs and planning documents such as Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans (INRMPs) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents.
6. Identifying management, research and technical needs, and helping address them through partnerships with herpetofauna experts, public and private stakeholders, and DoD leadership.
7. Providing technical expertise to the DoD community regarding herpetofauna management and stewardship.

## Priority Areas

DoD PARC provides technical expertise to the DoD community in the following Priority Areas:

### **Research and Monitoring**

DoD natural resources managers require baseline data to make informed decisions. Some examples of required baseline data for herpetofauna management include species distribution, population size, population trends, and habitat requirements. Such information can guide conservation, management, planning, programming, and implementation. Individual installations can identify knowledge gaps by reviewing current and historic records and pertinent literature. DoD PARC can help with this task, as well as with developing and implementing research and monitoring projects; promoting partnerships with outside entities; and standardizing monitoring methods to allow for repeatable and comparable datasets, and to ensure scientific rigor.

### **Management and Stewardship**

DoD natural resources managers protect and enhance natural resources on DoD lands, including herpetofauna populations and their habitats, by implementing Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) actions, as authorized by the Sikes Act. An INRMP is a long-term planning document designed to guide a natural resources manager in the management of natural resources to support the installation mission while protecting and enhancing installation resources for multiple use, sustainable yield, and biological integrity. DoD PARC will provide guidelines, tools and technical information that installations may incorporate into INRMPs to support more effective and efficient management and stewardship of amphibian and reptile populations and habitats, while at the same time supporting the military mission objectives and ensuring environmental compliance with national laws.

### **Education and Training**

Educating personnel about the ecological importance of amphibian and reptile species can benefit the military by increasing awareness of natural resources conservation on DoD lands in general; contributing to a more proactive stewardship ethic; and decreasing the potential for negative interactions with amphibians, reptiles and other native species, thereby helping both military and civilian personnel to become more vigilant and better informed when encountering these species. DoD PARC can assist with this task with the development of educational and outreach tools (such as educational posters and brochures) in addition to providing targeted training to natural resources managers using webinars and training modules.

### **Partnership, Communications, and Outreach**

DoD PARC is a partnership network. Only by working together across installation boundaries with federal, state, and NGO partners, as well as among installations nationally and regionally, can DoD truly achieve its conservation goals. We strive to increase communication, information sharing and partnerships among Military Services, federal and state organizations, and other stakeholders.

## The Path Forward

DoD PARC is committed to achieving the goals and priorities described in this document. Following are the metrics we have established to track our growth and effectiveness.

### Performance Goals (1-3 years):

- Maintain frequent communication among DoD PARC members through conference calls, webinars and email.
- Form a DoD PARC working group that reviews amphibian and reptile DoD research and management proposals, educational and outreach materials and scopes of work.
- Help installations, as requested, to review INRMPs and NEPA documents to ensure they contain language specific to amphibian and reptile conservation initiatives and management programs.
- Create and maintain an amphibian and reptile species database for all military installations with an INRMP.
- Establish new partnerships to promote regional conservation and cost-sharing opportunities.
- Provide military installation natural resources managers with up-to-date information on the management of ESA-listed, at-risk, and common species.
- Create new training and education materials specific to DoD, as needed.
- Provide educational materials to help overcome amphibian and reptile misconceptions.
- Encourage the monitoring and surveying of amphibians and reptiles using standardized surveying techniques.
- Increase membership and number of photos on the DoD PARC Group and Photo Site (<https://dodparcphotolibrary.shutterfly.com/>).
- Monitor and educate group members of the potential negative results of new diseases impacting herpetofauna, such as *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* (Bs).
- Educate group members of the significant impacts of invasive herpetofauna species on the military ecosystems.