



Department of Defense National Public Lands Day 2020

Project #NEEF-
NPLD-20

Background:

National Public Lands Day (NPLD) is the nation's largest volunteer effort for public lands. Each year, thousands of Americans come together on the fourth Saturday of September to volunteer their time to improve parks, refuges, waterways, recreational areas, historical sites, trails, community gardens, and other public land sites throughout the country. NPLD is coordinated by the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF). In 2020, 652 sites celebrated the 26th National Public Lands Day. As part of NPLD, NEEF connected and engaged approximately 80,000 volunteers with public land sites across the nation, contributing an estimated \$1.1 million in improvement projects. Events took place in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and US territories. In 2020, NPLD took place on Saturday, September 26.

The DoD Legacy Resource Management Program joined the NPLD partnership in 1999 to support volunteer habitat restoration as well as cultural and historical projects on military installations throughout the United States. Legacy has provided financial support for NPLD events over the past 20+ years.

Objective:

A primary objective of NPLD is to enlist those who use public lands for recreation to help care for the natural places they enjoy. NPLD educates Americans about critical environmental and natural resource issues, and the need for shared stewardship of these valued, irreplaceable lands.

Summary of Approach:

NPLD projects that take place on military installations with some lands open to the public for recreation are eligible for DoD Legacy funding. This is a competitive funding application process. Volunteer-based projects must emphasize habitat and/or historical/cultural restoration. In 2020, the maximum amount awarded to each site was \$9,000. NEEF received a total of 18 applications and ultimately awarded 14 applicants. However, due to the coronavirus pandemic, 2 sites were forced to withdraw, and funds were either allocated to other sites or to the 2021 Legacy awards program. Funds can be used for equipment, materials, and enhancements to land used by the public. Information and application instructions were available on NEEF's website. Applications were due on August 16, 2020, and applicants were notified of their status shortly thereafter.

Benefit: These projects enable the enhancement and preservation of precious cultural and natural resources on installations, as well as the upkeep of other man-made assets. DoD Legacy funding subsidizes maintenance projects like the repair, rehabilitation, or installation of infrastructure such as roads and bridges, visitor centers, trails, and waterways. This year's natural resource restoration projects included educational components, beach

restoration, invasive species removal, construction, and cultural sites, and improving wildlife habitat.

In 2020, NPLD focused on conservation activities supporting in-person and virtual events designed to engage volunteers and connect people to public lands from their homes. This year focused on agile engagement approaches and virtual events designed to engage and connect people to public lands. NPLD Project Managers were prompted to incorporate these themes into their project proposals and to encourage project participants, including service members, their families, retirees, veterans, and community members to restore their public lands with the aim of conservation for future generations and military members.

Accomplishments:

In 2020, 14 applicants were selected to receive Legacy funds, however 2 withdrew from the Legacy award due to circumstances caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Projects were diverse and spanned a range of focuses including invasive vegetation removal, restoration of habitat, infrastructure repair, and more. The following are examples of work done at military installations:

- **Eglin AFB:** Eglin Air Force Base restored forest habitat and provided wildlife habitat in a former borrow pit surface mine.
- **US Marine Corps Base Hawaii Kaneohe Bay:** This installation removed non-native invasive vegetation, planted native coastal vegetation, and installed signage to educate the local community on restoration efforts to preserve and protect Hawaii's threatened and endangered wildlife species.

In total, this year's DoD NPLD sites hosted approximately 920 volunteers who donated 479 hours of volunteer time to accomplish the following:

- **5,227 native plants added**
- **4 installation structures and facilities built, rebuilt, or repaired**
- **Disposal of 1,085 pounds of trash**
- **Removal of 31,616 square feet of invasive vegetation**
- **Restoration of 1,000,000 square feet of land**
- **1 mile of waterway restored or maintained**
- **6 cultural resources or historical properties affected.**

Although some numbers are lower than last year's Legacy award program, the metrics reflect the difficulties of hosting events during physical distancing practices brought on by the pandemic.

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