

# Recovery and Sustainment Partnership Initiative



2025

## ABOUT THE RASP INITIATIVE

The Department of War's (DoW) ability to conduct live-fire training, weapons testing, and essential operations is vital to preparing a more lethal and resilient combat force. To meet these needs, warfighters rely on unencumbered access to lands and ranges that encompass diverse environments (e.g., deserts, forests, tundra, grasslands) and replicate combat conditions. These environments also support many Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species whose conservation may require training adjustments and habitat management on DoW lands. To balance national defense and critical operational requirements with species needs, DoW engages in partnerships that support its mission and installation priorities while improving outcomes for species and habitats.

Established in 2018 and reaffirmed in 2025 by the Principals, the Recovery and Sustainment Partnership (RASP) Initiative builds on years of ESA collaboration and innovation between DoW and the Department of the Interior (DOI). The RASP preserves military readiness by alleviating ESA regulatory requirements on DoW lands while simultaneously contributing to species recovery. Through the RASP, DoW, and DOI develop solutions that increase military operational flexibility, streamline ESA compliance, and optimize resources to support DoW's mission, landscapes, and future decision space.

## STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS FOR THE WARFIGHTER

The RASP provides military installations with more efficient and flexible tools to support DoW's evolving mission while meeting ESA requirements. By developing proactive strategies, innovative ESA concepts, and decision-support tools, the RASP minimizes impacts to readiness, eases consultation workloads, promotes management efficiencies, facilitates regulatory predictability across installations, and supports species conservation.

## ENHANCING MISSIONS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

DoW and DOI also partner with federal, state, non-governmental, and academic organizations to align efforts, leverage expertise and capacity, and promote regulatory relief and predictability by recovering ESA-listed species and preventing the need for new listings that could constrain mission-critical activities.



4th Infantry Division best ranger competitors at Fort Carson, Colorado. (U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Woodylyne Escarne)



Soldiers prepare for static-line jumps from Blackhawk helicopters at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. (Photo by JBLM PAO)

## SUSTAINING THE MISSION, RECOVERING SPECIES: SUCCESS STORY

In **2023**, DoW, DOI, and their partners celebrated the recovery of **six species** that **no longer require ESA protection** due to years of effective management on **DoW lands**.

This accomplishment represents approximately **10% of all U.S. species delistings** from the **ESA** between **1973 and 2023** and demonstrates how **DoW and DOI** can advance both **military readiness** and **species recovery**.

**Species recovery** helps achieve **DoW's mission** by eliminating associated **ESA consultation requirements**—**reducing training delays, increasing operational flexibility, freeing up staff capacity, and reducing environmental planning costs**.

## DoW LAND MANAGEMENT AND SPECIES CONSERVATION: FAST FACTS

**DoW lands** comprise only **5%** of the total Federal land yet include **82.6%** of the ecosystem diversity in the **contiguous U.S.**

**DoW manages over 550 ESA-listed species** on its installations and ranges – **54 of which exist only on DoW lands, making DoW stewardship essential to national conservation outcomes and uninterrupted mission access**.

**DoW lands support the highest density of threatened, endangered, and at-risk species** among any Federal agency, requiring Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans to sustain training and testing capabilities.

The **RASP** focuses on **over 75 species** to improve **regulatory flexibility** and **conservation outcomes**.



These photos represent a subset of species prioritized by the RASP.

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## RASP ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Recognizing Success in the Southeast

In October 2024, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) reclassified the red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) from endangered to threatened under the ESA, recognizing years of effective management efforts by DoW and its partners. This reclassification supports military readiness by increasing flexibility and efficiencies for training, testing, and operations on DoW lands.

The RCW relies on mature longleaf pine forest habitat, which have declined across the southeast but remains intact on many military installations.

These forests provide natural and realistic training environments for mechanized forces while supporting habitats for species. Active forest management enables both mission-essential training and species recovery.



Soldiers conduct gunnery training with the M1 Abrams tank at Fort Benning. (U.S. Army photo by Joey Rhodes II)

### Developing Nationwide Solutions for ESA Compliance

In December 2024, USFWS proposed listing the monarch butterfly as a threatened species under the ESA. Because monarchs inhabit a wide variety of habitats throughout the U.S., this ESA listing could introduce new regulatory requirements for DoW, affecting military installation readiness.

Through the RASP, DoW and USFWS developed a nationwide strategy for the monarch that streamlines ESA consultation, reduces potential impacts to readiness, and facilitates consistent management practices across the range while promoting meaningful conservation.

Monarch butterflies primarily live in prairies and grasslands, which are key environments for military training. The RASP's streamlined approach allows uninterrupted training while meeting conservation goals.



The 82nd Brigade Engineer Battalion conduct a live-fire training at Fort Riley. (Photo by Quinn O'Hara)

## For more information about the RASP Initiative:

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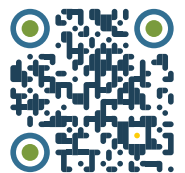
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Monarch Butterflies migrating