



Department of Defense National Public Lands Day 2016

Project #16-086

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, local waterways, recreation areas, trails, community gardens and historical sites throughout the country. NPLD is coordinated by the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF). In 2016, 2,949 sites celebrated the 23rd National Public Lands Day. Events took place in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and US territories. As part of NPLD, NEEF connected and engaged 236,000 volunteers with public lands sites across the nation, contributing an estimated \$22 million in improvement projects. Their combined efforts resulted in the removal of 75 tons of trash; the collection and removal of 30,000 pounds of invasive vegetation; the building and maintaining of 1,200 miles of trails and the planting of 85,000 trees, shrubs and additional native plants. In 2017, NPLD will take place on Saturday, Sept. 30.

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 18 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 emphasize habitat and historical/cultural restoration. In 2016, the maximum amount awarded to each site was \$6,500. NEEF received a total of 37 applications and awarded the top 26 applicants. Funds were used for equipment, materials, and enhancements to land used by the public, but not for T-shirts, food, or labor. Information and application instructions are available on NEEF's website: [DoD Legacy Awards](#). Applications are due in the summer.

Benefit:

These projects enable the enhancement and preservation of precious natural resources on installations, as well as the upkeep of other manmade assets. DoD Legacy funding subsidizes maintenance projects like the repair, rehabilitation, or installation of infrastructure such as roads and bridges, visitor centers, trails, benches and signage.

This year's cultural and historical enhancement projects helped to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act. By inviting the community to learn about and to join in shared stewardship of these lands and their historical and cultural elements, the military is able to honor the significance of this anniversary while strengthening their relationship with neighboring residents, businesses, and organizations.

Accomplishments:

In 2016, 26 applicants were selected to receive Legacy funds. Projects were diverse and spanned a range of focuses including habitat improvement; restoration of monuments and memorials; infrastructure repair and more. The following are examples of work done at selected military installations:

- Redstone Arsenal: volunteers created a pollinator field and planted perennials to enhance germination.
- Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office: volunteers preserved the cultural heritage of Old Hunt Cemetery by clearing underbrush and saplings around graves, and adding a fence around the cemetery.
- Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center: volunteers helped to expand the Cultural Heritage Garden at the Archeology and Paleontology Curation Center.

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