

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS INSTALLATION NAME



Fort Stewart/Hunter Army Airfield Cultural Resources Management - Team

INTRODUCTION

Fort Stewart/Hunter Army Airfield (FS/HAAF) is the largest Army installation east of the Mississippi River and serves as home to the 3rd Infantry Division. The central emphasis of FS/HAAF's Cultural Resources Management (CRM) Program to fully support and complement the military mission by reducing training land encumbrances, supporting conservation efforts, enhancing range sustainment through archaeological survey and evaluation, and reinforcing the Installation's public relations efforts to demonstrate the Army's commitment to the community's history and our cultural resources.

Led by DA Civilian CRM Program Manager, Brian Greer, the HAAF Tide Gate Project Team collaboratively worked together to preserve two 19th century water control structures at HAAF as part of

repairs to a breached tide gate that was damaged by previous weather events. Supporting this effort along with Mr. Greer, the Tide Gate Project Team includes Kyle Daniels, FS/HAAF Engineering; Dena Thompson and Mark Puhalla, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Project Managers; Melissa Kendrick, FS/HAAF National Environmental Policy Act Program Manager; Larry Carlile, FS/HAAF Fish & Wildlife Branch Chief; and contract staff provided by Aerostar SES (Ashley Moss, Archaeological Field Technician; Jessie Larson, Archaeological and Curations Specialist; and George Harris, Wetlands/Water Resources Specialist). This tide gate is located on the boundary of Hunter Army Airfield, and expands between the historic structures and an adjacent training area affectionately referred to as



PROGRAM
MANAGEMENT



ORIENTATION
TO MISSION



IMPACT &
OUTCOMES



TECHNICAL
MERIT



STAKEHOLDER
INTERACTION



TRANSFERABILITY



“Sleepy Hollow.” The training area, an upstream rail structure, and the historic structures were all being significantly impacted by the breached tide gate. This project is indicative of the collaborative spirit used to implement CRM on all FS/HAAF projects/training actions as needed to efficiently and effectively support FS/HAAF’s military mission.

BACKGROUND

With a lean cultural resources staff of three onsite and one offsite professionals that meet the Secretary of Interior’s Professional Qualification Standards (48 FR 44738-9) in disciplines appropriate to the Installation’s historic properties, FS/HAAF manages 4,244 archaeological sites and isolated finds, 64 cemeteries, as well as 310 historic buildings in accordance with (IAW) the FS/HAAF Integrated Cultural Resource Management Plan (ICRMP). Systematic review/remediation and conservation of existing archaeological collections is performed using on-site curation IAW 36 CFR 79 to include approximately 600 cubic feet of archaeological collections, 400 linear feet of records, and over 94,000 database entries. FS/HAAF employs business practices to streamline CRM through the use of a Programmatic Agreement (PA) with the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and probability modeling as necessary to support review and execution of nearly 600 projects annually (avg).

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During the award period, FS/HAAF:

1. Developed a successful project that protects two historic water control structures, prevents ongoing flooding of a military training area and further erosion of an upstream railway causeway and trestle that supports deployment of military equipment to the port via train, while protecting water resources and threatened and endangered species through collaborative navigation of a multitude of regulations.

2. Created an archaeological avoidance plan to preserve the two 19th century water control structures at HAAF as part of repairs to the breached Tide Gate without costly mitigation and undue construction delays through close coordination with the SHPO.
3. Mitigated a National Register Listed 18th century Ranger Outpost that was being adversely affected by river erosion, finalizing the report of investigation and development of the Public Outreach documents as required per terms of the Programmatic Agreement (PA) with the SHPO.
4. Streamlined the Section 106 Process for FS/HAAF projects and training missions operating under a dynamic PA with the SHPO and began development of a new PA, introducing even more streamlined mitigation measures for archaeological sites and historic structures, which will be implemented in FY21.
5. Supported the Installation Strategic Plan through active participation in the Sustainability Management System’s (SMS) Training Lands Process Action Team (PAT) and the Integrated Management Prescription Team.
6. Reinforced FS/HAAF community relations through a comprehensive public outreach program including archaeology discussion panels at Georgia Southern University, Historic Communities and Cemeteries Council meetings, hands on historic cemetery preservation events with local school children, presentation, briefings, and training for FS/HAAF personnel and our military Families, and Earth Day and Native American Heritage Day celebrations.

The HAAF Tide Gate Project Team

The HAAF Tide Gate Project Team was created to address the unique combination of engineering and regulatory issues related to the tide gate located at HAAF that was breached during previous weather events. The location of the breach in proximity to two 19th century water control structures at HAAF was causing erosion to and around the structures.



Additionally, repairs to the tide gate raised issues with wetlands, coastal marshlands, and aquatic species that all needed to be addressed to implement a project. As a result of these unique conditions, the degree of teamwork and coordination required for this project was noteworthy.

In consort with installation team members (Wetlands/Water Resources, Fish and Wildlife, Engineering and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Integration), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) Project Managers, and the SHPO, a Cultural Resource Impact Analysis was completed, to include data collection efforts for the two 19th century water control structures. Both structures, a probable 19th century bridge or dock and an earthen dam/causeway, were recommended eligible for the National Register for Historic Places (NRHP). Archaeological impact minimization and avoidance measures were subsequently incorporated into the proposed project to preserve the two 19th century water control structures that included encapsulation of the exposed historic structure back to its original pre-tide gate breach condition and monitoring of the construction activities to ensure no adverse impacts would occur during repairs to the existing tide gate which were approved by the SHPO.

 As a result, the installation will avoid costly mitigation and prevent additional delays to construction timelines.

The tide gate is situated at the confluence of a salt marsh and fresh water environment – forming a very unique marine habitat that attracts numerous aquatic species, most notably the West Indian manatee, three sea turtle species, two sturgeon species, and a wood stork. A biological assessment was completed in close coordination with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR), US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

 These agencies concurred with the project action with mitigation measures incorporated into the project to prevent and monitor for potential entrapment of species of concern such as starting work late December/January to ensure both the manatee and sea

turtles would have already migrated to warmer waters. Additionally, engineering developed a very unique removable grate system to help protect from the possibility of future manatee entrapment in the tide gate flex tubes. This system will also make future maintenance easier and more economical.



This tide gate was breached during recent weather events and required repair.

To protect yet another valuable resource, close coordination with GA DNR and USACE-Wetland Regulatory was required. IAW Georgia's "Coastal Marshlands Protection Act," a Letter of Permission for repair and maintenance of the tide gate and the significant historical features at this site with revocable license was successfully secured. Additionally, IAW the Clean Water Act, a Nationwide Permit (#3 for maintenance) was submitted to the USACE, currently undergoing its 10-day review period to all the regulatory agencies for which the Tide Gate Project Team pre-coordinated with throughout the development of the project to ensure success. Best management practices to prevent erosion and sedimentation at the site and to protect coastal marshlands were incorporated into the project as required to perform the work which included placing fill and riprap in the marsh to stabilize and protect the historic causeway and wharf structure. Additionally, FS/HAAF's Engineering Branch was a vital player in providing support to complete several design and engineering assets in order to provide the elevation survey requested by GA



DNR of the historic causeway in their assessment of the request. Successful implementation of this project will alleviate flooding at the “Sleepy Hollow” Training Area, reduce continued erosion of the upstream rail assets that support deployment, and protects the natural and cultural resources that have been entrusted to FS/HAAF

While this project was unique, this type of project coordination and NEPA integration is not unique and has served FS/HAAF well to support project execution. FS/HAAF regularly reviews all real property, range, maintenance, engineering projects, and non-routine training events that will potentially impact cultural resources. To coordinate Section 106 review under the PA, CRM reviews are integrated in the FS/HAAF NEPA Work Coordination System for expedient environmental clearances, completing 1,147 archaeological and architectural reviews during the award period.

Archaeological Resources

In FY18, FS/HAAF consulted with the SHPO regarding erosional impacts to Fort Argyle, an early 18th century Ranger outpost, which protected the then new colony of Georgia, and the only NRHP-listed property on FS/HAAF. Due to its close proximity to the Ogeechee River, a systematic monitoring plan was conducted to determine the rate of site loss. As a result, it was determined that an archaeological data recovery effort was required to adequately mitigate the adverse effects to this important cultural resource. The immediate and long term maintenance costs associated with stabilization of the river bank far exceeded the data recovery cost. FS/HAAF implemented this mitigation plan through the installation’s existing PA and the associated fieldwork was conducted from FY18-FY20. The final report of the investigation is currently being finalized and development of Public Outreach documents is underway to meet mitigation requirements per terms of the PA with the SHPO.

Archaeological surveys have been completed on 265,911 acres of FS/HAAF’s 266,862 combined

accessible acres (99.6%). By proactively surveying areas to meet multiple missions (i.e., training, forestry silviculture management, TES management) and collaborating with the SMS Training Lands PAT and the Installation Natural Resources Management Plan Team for training lands, CRM has reduced the total number of training areas that are off-limits due to cultural resource concerns. In reducing the number of encumbered areas and allowing for more unrestricted access for training and land management activities, CRM ensures its continued support of FS/HAAF’s Strategic Plan.

During the award period, 10 Phase I survey sites and 19 Phase II survey sites were evaluated. Of these, 11 sites were recommended NRHP-eligible and five sites are pending NRHP finalization with the SHPO. To protect these and other sites, FS/HAAF’s ICRMP details a comprehensive site protection program, including site marking and regular visits to protected sites and cemeteries by the CRM staff and Conservation Law Enforcement.



CRM Team member, Ms. Jessie Larson, maps a historic 19th century gristmill from the water impoundment wall. Structural elements of the mill that have remained under water for nearly 25 years were exposed during a local drought enabling data collection efforts.

As a result of this monitoring program, and partnership with Conservation Law, an Archaeological Resource Protection Act violation at a 19th century Millpond was identified, an



investigation completed, and report of investigation submitted to the SHPO. This identification was due in large part to efforts made on the part of CRM staff to establish a baseline condition of property in FY11 for the majority of the NRHP-eligible properties under management. Site condition was recorded and a numbered scoring system was developed to determine which sites were the most susceptible to vandalism and/or natural damage. This system allows CRM staff to determine which of the NRHP-eligible/indeterminate protected sites required additional time and resources to protect. As new sites are added to the inventory, they are added to the Cultural Resource Action Plans for long-term protection and monitoring.

Historic Buildings and Structures

 FS/HAAF utilizes multiple NRHP-eligible structures for their original purpose. Fire towers at Fort Stewart constructed in the 1950s are still in use. Hangars and aircraft maintenance shop buildings, constructed for bomber operations in World War II and for Strategic Air Command in the 1950s, continue this mission with Army helicopters and fixed wing aircraft.

 FS/HAAF completed building surveys for all buildings built through 1990, which included consideration for exceptional significance under the U.S. Army Cold War Military-Industrial Historic Properties Context. Since completion of that survey, the building surveys have been continually updated as buildings approach their 50-year mark, consulting with SHPO as required to reassess buildings under standard criteria. These updates provide installation planners with enough lead time to take into account the effects of any projects impacting newly assessed NRHP-eligible facilities. Additionally, since 91 percent (282 of the 309) NRHP-eligible buildings have been mitigated, coordination with Real Property, Engineering and Operations and Maintenance is streamlined - ensuring projects involving building construction, modification and demolition are executed in a timely manner with minimal consultation. As part of the FY19-FY20 survey

updates, 22 FS and 11 HAAF buildings were assessed all were recommended ineligible for the NRHP. With completion of these surveys, Real Property Inventory historical status codes can be updated annually.

Curation

FS/HAAF's onsite Curation Facility is used exclusively for the storage of FS/HAAF CRM artifacts, original documents, and associated files. A duplicate records annex is located at HAAF and supplemental record storage is housed in a separate facility to augment the main Curation Room at FS. FS/HAAF reorganized and installed mobile shelving in FY20 to allow for additional storage and more efficient organization of artifacts, increasing the artifact box capacity from 540 to 888 within the main Curation Room. FS/HAAF's on-site curations saves tens of thousands of dollars annually that would otherwise be diverted to private facilities. Artifacts and data are maintained IAW 36 CFR 79 standards which allows more efficient research by CRM, outside researchers, and the interested public.

Agreements

The FS/HAAF PA with the SHPO covers the standard operations and maintenance of the installation. It serves to streamline the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 review process by removing the standard 30-day SHPO review period for all undertakings that will not adversely affect historic properties. It has enabled FS/HAAF to reduce the overall Phase I survey requirements through the implementation of revised probability models and eliminating certain archaeological survey requirements associated with areas of low probability for cultural resources within areas of elevated concern for unexploded ordnance. It has also established a categorical exclusion for survey areas, and streamlined archaeological site mitigation plans.

FS/HAAF's PA with the SHPO was first established in 2000, was renewed twice, and then completely revised in FY11. Building upon the existing PA, FS/HAAF began development of a new PA in FY20



for FY21 implementation. The revised PA will add additional categorical exclusions for Section 106 review, introduce more streamlined mitigation processes and measures for both archeological sites and historic structures, outline standard treatment of inadvertent discoveries, and other time/cost saving measures associated with NHPA compliance.

Native American Program

 FS/HAAF regularly consults with eight affiliated Native American Tribes and began participation in  Regional Consultation efforts in partnerships with other southeastern Army installations. Access provisions are outlined within the ICRMP, as are procedures for any Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)-related inadvertent discovery. Based on current consultation with the Tribes, there are no known cultural resource use issues on FS/HAAF. FS has one significant Native American burial mound and two potential burial mounds discovered during recent archaeological inventories. These three NRHP-eligible properties are considered potential Sacred Sites and their location is kept undisclosed to prevent potential looting.

The installation's NAGPRA inventories are up-to-date. FS/HAAF manages only one set of fragmentary NAGPRA-related human remains. Consultation with culturally affiliated Tribes occurred during the late 1990s regarding the remains; thus far, the remains have not been formally claimed. As a result of recent consultations with the Tribes, select Tribes have expressed an interest in repatriation of the remains and the installation plans to move forward with this effort in FY21.

Mission Enhancement

 FS/HAAF CRM is implemented in close and continued interaction with DPTMS as well as other  land management units such that impacts to the military mission are negligible to non-existent. Annual review/input of the Environmental Risk Planning Information Document is provided,

affording units guidance on the use of the Dig Planning Training Tool. The tool identifies areas that require no further coordination with natural and cultural resource reviewers and allows the military to streamline its planning process for major and minor training exercises by eliminating lengthy individual reviews. By accomplishing almost 100 percent archaeological survey of both installations, the Trainer has been informed of isolated areas of cultural resource concerns. By concentrating on conducting NRHP evaluation of potentially eligible sites, the overall encumbrances to the training mission can be reduced. Through these efforts, the FS/HAAF's CRM efforts have reduced the overall number of acres that are off limits to training to approximately 0.25 percent of the installation.

Community Relations & Cultural Resources Awareness/Education

FS/HAAF complies with Executive Order (EO) 13287 (Preserve America), in particular those stipulations regarding involvement with outside groups and increased public access to historic resources. In FY19-FY20, FS/HAAF's Cultural Resource Manager, Mr. Brian Greer, was on the  Board of Directors of the Society for Georgia Archaeology and participated in organizing bi-annual meetings for the Society. Mr. Greer also serves on the  Selection Team for Society-sponsored student research grants. In addition to participation with the Society for Georgia Archaeology, all FS/HAAF CRM staff actively participate in local and regional archaeological conferences in the southeast and are members of several different organizations including the National Trust for Historic Preservation and other local preservation societies.

In cooperation with the FS/HAAF Public Affairs Office, CRM has had a central role in coordinating cemetery tours for the Fort Stewart Historic Communities and Cemeteries Council, an outside group with a historical interest in the installation's



cemeteries and displaced former communities. During each bi-annual tour, the Council visits 4-5 of the 64 cemeteries located on Fort Stewart. Also, the CRM website includes a searchable cemetery database and CRM publications in electronic format.

 FS/HAAF engages in Earth Day and Native American Heritage Day celebrations as part of its CRM comprehensive public education program to increase public awareness of cultural resources. CRM offers a publication series, which includes six historical and archaeological booklets as well as a children's coloring and activity book. As part of the ICRMPs goals for public awareness, FS/HAAF has been incrementally upgrading the existing historical publications and introducing mini-booklets focusing on individual archaeological sites. As part of the reporting process for each site evaluated under NRHP, a public-format booklet is developed that is suitable for public distribution for all Phase II evaluation sites during FY19-FY20.

CRM staff instruct Soldiers and civilians on each unit's cultural resource compliance and stewardship responsibilities through quarterly Environmental Compliance Officer courses, Environmental Quality  Control Committee meetings, and newspaper articles. A cultural resource protection poster was developed and is annually distributed to every on-post residence and unit headquarters. Archaeological Resources Protection Act briefings are routinely given to FS/HAAF's Conservation Law Enforcement and Land Management personnel. FS/HAAF routinely consults with CRM managers from other installations, provides assistance to other Cultural Resource Managers, and participates in IMCOM's Best CRM Practices Working Group to expand our collective knowledge and to disseminate lessons learned to other Army installation managers.

 Installation archaeology and historic preservation presentations are routinely provided to the DoD Schools' Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM) Expo. CRM staff provide information about the Army's archaeological stewardship

responsibilities and serve as panel judges for the students' STEM projects.



Children from the Youth Center assist in cleaning headstones during a cemetery cleanup event at Taylor's Creek Cemetery.

In July of 2020, the CRM staff partnered with the Directorate of Family, Morale, Welfare, and Recreation's Child & Youth Services for a cemetery cleanup event. During the event, the children were given a brief historical tour and instructed on the proper care and cleaning of headstones. The event provided an excellent opportunity to learn about civic responsibility, the installation's cultural resources, and the importance of protecting and preserving them for future generations. 

Conclusion

Through the collaborative efforts of the HAAF Tide Gate Project Team, regulatory hurdles were overcome to preserve two historic structures, protect natural and cultural resources, and eliminate flooding and erosion that harmed military assets. Coupled with streamlined management processes, FS/HAAF's CRM efficiently and effectively supports the military mission.