



2022 Secretary of Defense Environmental Awards Natural Resources Conservation, Individual/Team Award

Each year since 1962, the Secretary of Defense has honored installations, teams, and individuals for outstanding achievements in Department of Defense (DoD) environmental programs. These accomplishments include outstanding conservation activities, innovative environmental practices, and partnerships that improve quality of life and promote efficiencies without compromising DoD's mission success. The 2022 Secretary of Defense Environmental Awards cycle encompasses an achievement period from October 1, 2019, through September 30, 2021 (Fiscal Years [FY] 2020-2021). A diverse panel of 53 judges with relevant expertise representing Federal and state agencies, academia, and the private sector evaluated all nominees to select one winner for each of the nine categories. These nine categories cover six subject areas including natural resources conservation, environmental quality, sustainability, environmental restoration, cultural resources management, and environmental excellence in weapon systems acquisition.

About the Natural Resources Conservation, Individual/Team Award

The Natural Resources Conservation, Individual/Team award recognizes efforts to promote the conservation of natural resources, including the identification, protection, and restoration of biological resources and habitats; the sound management and use of the land and its resources; support of the military readiness mission; and the promotion of an ecosystem management perspective. Efforts may include preventing losses to threatened, endangered, and at-risk species; recovering species and their habitats; reducing bird/wildlife aircraft strike hazard incidents; proactively managing for wildfires; reducing and eradicating invasive species; and making landscapes more resilient to ensure access to realistic combat environments while protecting ecosystems and the species that live there. The 2022 winner of the Natural Resources Conservation, Individual/Team award is *Naval Air Station Pensacola Natural Resources Team, Florida*.

About Naval Air Station Pensacola Natural Resources Team, Florida

As the Cradle of Naval Aviation, Naval Air Station Pensacola's mission is steadfast and can be accomplished while conserving, preserving, and managing its vast and rich natural resources. Naval Air Station Pensacola is the second-largest training operation in the Navy with nearly 60,000 students graduating from training programs annually. Naval Air Station Pensacola employs over 23,000 personnel and its economic impact on the local economy exceeds \$6 billion. The Naval Air Station Pensacola Natural Resources Team consists of Natural Resources Manager Mr. Michael Hardy and Area Forester Ms. Anna Lizana. Despite consisting of only two individuals, the team accomplishes an extraordinary amount of natural resources conservation work by utilizing partnerships, interns, and innovative and cost-effective approaches. The team is committed to providing innovative and cost-effective approaches to wildlife conservation, habitat restoration and enhancement, and sustainable forest management to support the military mission.



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The Naval Air Station Pensacola Natural Resources Team consists of Natural Resources Manager Mr. Michael Hardy (left) and Area Forester Ms. Anna Lizana (right).

Major Accomplishments in FY 2020-2021

- Following Hurricane Sally in September 2020, the team assessed the installation and worked tirelessly to clean up the installation and restore natural resources. The team coordinated with the Public Works Department to address natural resources regulation and permitting concerns for all hurricane repair and cleanup projects; the team completed over 99 National Environmental Policy Act actions in FY21 alone. The team supported an emergency timber salvage to recover hurricane-damaged timber, producing \$19,167 in income. Team members spent several weeks in the field evaluating hurricane-damaged timber and pushed the timber sale through at a record pace.
- The team partnered with Naval Air Station Whiting Field's Air Operations and its Natural Resources Manager to evaluate and remove timber to maintain clear zones for flight operations; the efforts improved flight safety and communications. The team calculated timber volumes to produce timber payment values. This effort provided \$109,951 to the Navy Forestry Account, which contributed to the site preparation of 93 acres at Whiting Field for longleaf pine reforestation.
- The team partnered with the Student Conservation Association, Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP), and U.S. Forest Service Cooperatives to complete prescribed burning on 681 acres to improve forest health, prevent wildfires, and improve habitat for protected species. The team constructed all fire breaks, developed burn plans, obtained burn authorization, and coordinated with multiple agencies and Air Operations.
- The team partnered with GCPEP through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to treat 350 acres of invasive species at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Bronson Field, and Whiting Field. The team also treated 187 acres of invasive species in forested areas through two separate contracts. These treatments targeted Chinese tallow trees, Chinese privet, and cogon grass.
- The team coordinated with the USFWS to obtain nest removal permits and with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to complete nest monitoring when two bald eagle pairs nested at the airfield. The eaglets were allowed to fledge, and the team coordinated a permitted nest removal after the eaglets left the nest.
- The team actively participates in the Gopher Tortoise Candidate Conservation Agreement (GTCCA), which includes Federal, state, and private partners who work together to manage the gopher tortoise across the landscape in an effort to recover its population and re-establish its historical distribution. To support the GTCCA, the team completed longleaf pine and gopher tortoise habitat restoration for 217 acres.



This is a picture of the emergency timber salvage to recover hurricane-damaged timber and improve forest health following Hurricane Sally in September 2020.



Area Forester Ms. Anna Lizana conducts a prescribed burn at Naval Outlying Landing Field Holley Field.