



## 2024 Secretary of Defense Environmental Awards Environmental Quality, 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 2024 Secretary of Defense Environmental Awards cycle encompasses an achievement period from October 1, 2021, through September 30, 2023 (Fiscal Years [FY] 2022-2023). A diverse panel of 47 judges with relevant expertise representing Federal and state agencies, academia, and the private sector evaluated all nominees to select 1 winner for each of the 9 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 Environmental Quality, Individual/Team Award

The Environmental Quality, Individual/Team award recognizes efforts to ensure mission accomplishment and the protection of human health and the environment in the areas of environmental planning, waste management, and compliance with environmental laws and regulations (e.g., Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, Toxic Substances Control Act). Meeting or exceeding all environmental requirements not only enhances the protection of our environmental assets, but also sustains DoD's ability to effectively train and maintain readiness. The DoD Components may nominate any individual or team. The 2024 winner of the Environmental Quality, Individual/Team award is *Guam Environmental Quality Team, Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz, Guam*.

### About Guam Environmental Quality Team, Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz, Guam

Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz (MCBCB) is the first new Marine Corps base activated since March 1, 1952, encompassing approximately 4,276 acres, and will be home to almost 5,000 Marines from III Marine Expeditionary Force relocating from Okinawa, Japan. MCBCB's mission is to provide the Fleet Marine Forces with operational functionality to enhance warfighting capabilities and help strengthen coalition partnerships and joint region relationships while projecting forward presence. The MCBCB Guam Environmental Quality Team (Guam EVQT) is composed of Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) employees assigned to support Joint Region Marianas and MCBCB's implementation of the 2010 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and 2015 Supplemental EIS and Records of Decision. The Guam EVQT ensures the protection of human health and manages the environmentally responsible implementation of the \$8.7 billion Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI) construction program, spanning more than 1,000 acres within MCBCB.



*Guam EVQT (left to right): Charles Omar Damian, Richard Salas, Albert Borja, Claire Baradi, Maria Cherry Hoya, Bertina Mendiola, and German Nuestro.*

## Major Accomplishments in FY 2022-2023

- In October 2022, the team published a new Environmental Policy Statement for MCBCB, directing environmental compliance, preventing pollution, and continually improving toward a robust environmental management system with the goal of full operating capability in FY 2029. Consistent with this policy, the Guam EVQT obtained reimbursable funding. The team is developing solicitations for the award of contract task orders to develop critical plans and other services regulated by the Clean Air Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, Clean Water Act, and Resources Conservation and Recovery Act. Example projects include inventorying air emissions, sampling drinking water, controlling and preventing spills, and composing hazardous waste management plans.
- The Guam EVQT completed two major pollution prevention projects: reuse of soil and green waste, and cleanup of legacy contamination from range construction. The team managed and reused over 3 million cubic yards of soil and green waste to date since base construction. These waste diversion efforts saved an estimated \$9 million. Additionally, the waste management program is the largest managed composting operation in Guam history. Guam EVQT also successfully oversaw the cleanup of an old explosive range by obtaining regulatory approval and safely managing the open detonation and site screening process to render the 3-acre range safe.
- The team promoted local partnership by working with the Civilian Military Coordination Council, which establishes working groups to analyze and develop solutions for government services impacted by Guam DPRI and other aspects of mission growth. Through tracking projections of permitting staff shortfalls and developing recommended actions, the team's efforts resulted in a memorandum of agreement between the NAVFAC Marianas Commanding Officer and the Guam Environmental Protection Agency (GEPA) Administrator. The memorandum of agreement reflects both parties' commitment to collaborate on activities that increase GEPA's ability to respond effectively to the new workload.
- The Guam EVQT has successfully advocated for more than \$11 million in environmental funding to improve the protection of land and water resources and address installation resilience by improving green infrastructure. The team is currently coordinating an MCBCB Installation Climate Resilience Plan, which focuses on identifying climate risks to installation operations and developing strategies to increase resilience to the most damaging aspects of climate change impacting Guam.
- Super Typhoon Mawar directly hit Guam in May 2023, resulting in widespread damage of facilities and interruption of public services on Guam. The EVQT team ensured continuity of operations despite island-wide limitations by working tirelessly to assist with damage assessments. The team also managed increasing environmental planning demands to address repairs. The MCBCB Public Works Department recognized the team with a certificate for outstanding support during typhoon preparation and recovery efforts.



*Military and Civilian solid waste managers visit the composting operations at MCBCB, which has yielded 3 million cubic yards of material suitable for final landscaping and site stabilization.*



*This mosaic depicts the challenges of post-Typhoon Mawar recovery, with heavy damage to infrastructure, debris from nearby forests and construction areas, and damaged water and power infrastructure. Center: Richard Salas (Physical Scientist).*