



## 2016 Secretary of Defense Environmental Awards Natural Resources Conservation, Individual/Team Award

Each year since 1962, the Department of Defense (DoD) has honored individuals, teams, and installations for their outstanding achievements and innovative work protecting the environment while sustaining mission readiness. The 2016 Secretary of Defense Environmental Awards recognize accomplishments from October 1, 2013 to September 30, 2015. A diverse panel of 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 that cover six subject areas: natural resources conservation; environmental quality; sustainability; environmental restoration; cultural resources management; and environmental excellence in weapon system acquisition.

### About the Natural Resources Conservation, Individual/Team Award

The Natural Resources Conservation, Individual/Team award recognizes individuals and teams who have made a significant and lasting contribution to natural resources conservation. This award acknowledges efforts to promote the conservation of natural resources, including the identification, protection, and restoration of biological resources and habitats; the sound long-term management and use of the land and its resources; support of the military readiness mission; and the promotion of a conservation ethic. Protecting endangered plant and animal species on our installations and other DoD lands ensures the preservation of these valuable environmental assets for current and future generations and assures the availability of these resources to sustain military readiness. The 2016 winner of the Natural Resources Conservation, Individual/Team award is *Fort McCoy Natural Resources Branch, Wisconsin*.

### About Fort McCoy Natural Resources Branch

Fort McCoy is a 60,000-acre Installation Management Command Total Force Training Center that includes 7,538 acres of impact area, 47,000 acres of forest, 3,475 acres of grassland, 4,400 acres of wetlands, 71 miles of streams, 10 lakes and 60,000 acres of leased land for military training. The purpose of Fort McCoy is to support the Army as a training center and a support site for power projection missions.

The Fort McCoy Natural Resources Branch (NRB) Team consists of six federal professionals including an endangered species biologist, forester, forestry technician, fisheries biologist, wildlife biologist, and Branch Chief. The NRB Team's mission statement is to foster the wise stewardship of natural and cultural resources to support and sustain a realistic military training environment, biological diversity, the integrity of sensitive or unique sites, and commercial and recreational opportunities.



*Garrison Commander, Colonel David Pinter, Sr., and Command Sergeant Major, Deann Dunstan, accept the 25th and 26th Tree City USA Award from the National Arbor Day Foundation. Fort McCoy is one of 3,400 Tree City USA communities. Volunteers planted 4,000 pine seedlings during these events.*

## Major Accomplishments in FY 2014-2015

- The Fort McCoy NRB team partnered with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to successfully remove the aged Alderwood Lake Dam. This project involved re-routing a road which was located within an active range's surface danger zone, adding a low water crossing, and mitigating of 6.5 acres of wetlands. The team improved Fort McCoy's military readiness by eliminating active range surface danger zone concerns and improving traffic.
- The NRB Team collaborated with the Army's Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security to analyze internal mission encroachment and increase the amount of usable acreage. The analysis resulted in reduced environmental and safety restrictions on 34,562 acres without adding additional risk to the environment, personnel, property or training, while maintaining compliance with state and federal laws.
- In collaboration with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) and the WDNR, the Fort McCoy NRB Team completed the 2013 - 2014 annual reviews of the Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP). Fort McCoy had no net loss of training capability while executing and implementing 241 out of the 247 high priority INRMP projects.
- The NRB Team developed an Inter-Agency Agreement (IAA) to mitigate incidental take of the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly. The agreement transfers funds to FWS, who partners with the WDNR to create or enhance habitat on WDNR property.
- The Fort McCoy NRB Team used the IAA between the Army, FWS, and WDNR to complete stream habitat improvement along Stillwell Creek, which flows through the installation. Stillwell Creek is listed as an impaired water according to 303(d) of the Clean Water Act due to sediment buildup and degraded habitat. Together, the partners improved nearly 2,000 feet of stream habitat in 2014 and made progress towards removing the creek from the impaired waters list.
- The NRB Team hosts an information booth at the Fort McCoy Open House and Safety Day each year. During the Open House, the NRB staff educates over 10,000 visitors about recreational opportunities, conservation projects, and native flora and fauna on the installation.



*This endangered male Karner blue butterfly is perched on a flower within a South Post goat prairie in Fort McCoy, WI.*



*The Wisconsin Air National Guard - 147th Aviation Regiment completed flight training during a prescribed burn. UH60 Blackhawk helicopter pilots extinguished active fires, dropping about 22,000 gallons of lake water.*