



## 2016 Secretary of Defense Environmental Awards Natural Resources Conservation, Small Installation 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, Small Installation Award

The Natural Resources Conservation, Small Installation award recognizes efforts by small installations 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, Small Installation award is *Camp Dawson Army Training Site, West Virginia Army National Guard, West Virginia*.

### About Camp Dawson Army Training Site

The West Virginia Army National Guard's (WVARNG) Camp Dawson had a modest beginning as a tent facility used only in the summer. Since the 1980s, the Army transformed the campsite by acquiring land, building new ranges and training capacities, and constructing significant infrastructure. Today, Camp Dawson encompasses approximately 5,000 acres. Camp Dawson has established an exemplary Natural Resources Conservation (NRC) program to manage this busy installation. In addition to its training lands, Camp Dawson's live fire ranges include a modified record firing range, demolition range, and a live fire shoot house, many of which are new or have been recently updated. It is also the site of the second largest conference center in the state and a state-of-the-art fitness compound, including a \$10 million gym facility and Olympic pool. With the expansion of Camp Dawson's training capacities, its troop throughput has increased from an average of 110,000 per year to 130,000 soldiers in FY 2015 with expected increases of 20-30 percent over the next five years.



*Camp Dawson's NRC Manager, Ryan Snyder, holds an at-risk banded Golden-winged warbler prior to release. NRC staff conducts yearly monitoring of the warblers using protocol outlined by Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the Golden-winged Warbler Conservation Initiative.*

## Major Accomplishments in FY 2014-2015

- In FY 2014, the NRC staff completed a five-year project to construct an interpretive wetland boardwalk, with volunteer assistance, using National Public Lands Day grants. The new recreation site includes a boardwalk and picnic area with educational exhibits on natural resources and ecology.
- Camp Dawson staff improved upon an old field/strip mine rehabilitation project encompassing nearly 100 acres. The project restores native grasslands that support wildlife and creates new drop zones and bivouac areas for training. The NRC staff also restructured their progressive invasive species program to better facilitate other installation mission needs.
- The NRC staff successfully secured grant funding and created volunteer opportunities to support the new recreation and education area on post. Specifically, the Army created the new recreation and education area entirely with volunteer labor and approximately \$30,000 in National Public Lands Day funds over a five-year period.
- The NRC staff focused on bringing activities in-house, making use of the skills within the WVARNG and reducing costs. Along those lines, the NRC staff conducted the prescribed fire program and associated training in-house. They also integrated the installation's pond construction and demo range remediation projects into Annual Training activities for engineering units.
- The NRC staff completed a pond construction project adjacent to a new modified record firing range this year. This effort tied together habitat enhancement with the training mission and partnered the NRC staff with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, project managers, and trainers. Excess clay excavated from the construction of the pond also benefited WVARNG's river bank stabilization project and implementation was incorporated into training exercises.



*NRC staff assist with trout stockings of the cantonment area pond that provides recreational fishing opportunities for soldiers, their families, and other Camp Dawson guests.*



*Camp Dawson's , NRC Manager, Ryan Snyder, and Environmental Program Manager, Rick Chaney, conduct in-house stem count surveys on restored native grassland habitat. The NRC staff has developed a Native Grass Workplan that maximizes training opportunities while restoring native habitat.*