

DoD Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Strategic Plan Implementation Workshop
7-29-2011

Location: Sustaining Military Readiness Conference, Nashville, TN

Opening Remarks and Announcements

Discuss the meeting purpose and review the agenda.

Seek additional input for the Strategic Plan.

Discuss the organizational structure, working groups and performance goals of DoD PARC.

Provide an introduction to the amphibian species database.

The Importance of Partnerships

DoD PARC is a necessary partnership because DoD currently has no process to consolidate and communicate across all of DoD for herpetofauna conservation, research, and management.

DoD PIF serves as a model for conservation partnerships.

Common problems and misunderstandings that can arise during the inception of a new working group may include:

- being at the bottom of the ladder;
- mistakenly thinking that the Strategic Plan represents new unfunded requirements;
- mistakenly thinking that the DoD PIF/PARC groups formally represent the Military Services;
- disagreements about the level of detail that should be in the Strategic Plan;
- wording/semantics;
- pictures vs. graphics;
- metrics development;
- how much to survey/how much to monitor;
- how to articulate mission integration; and
- how to articulate agreeable goals and objectives.

National PARC

- is an established coalition (founded 1999);
- is a diverse network that includes researchers/academics, representatives from state and federal agencies, NGOs, and any other groups interested in conserving amphibians, reptiles, and their habitats;
- is organized as a bottom up organization that feeds information from Regional Working Groups and Regional Steering Committees to the Joint National Steering Committee (JNSC);
 - DoD PARC also can serve as an external advisory group to PARC to provide input to JNSC;
- has a five region structure in the United States, but the group is expanding into Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Pacific Islands.

Legacy partially funded the PARC Inventorying and Monitoring Handbook

(<http://parcplace.org/publications/inventory-and-monitoring-guide.html>), and Legacy will provide free copies to all installations that request one. The Handbook is scheduled to be complete during the fall 2011.

Herpetofauna on DoD Lands

34 species are currently listed, and 18 species are at-risk of being listed.

Peter Boice, DoD Deputy Director, Natural Resources, will reach out to John Hall, SERDP Program Manager for Sustainable Infrastructure, to see if SERDP/ESTCP may be interested in funding future herpetofauna projects.

DoD PARC

- is a DoD-centric coalition;
- provides leadership on the conservation and management of herpetofauna;
- provides a defined course of action as defined in the Strategic Plan;
 - provides objectives, goals, and priorities; and
 - contains a mission and vision statement.

Summary of DoD PARC Accomplishments

2009 and 2011 transcontinental amphibian disease surveys – 2009 study just published.

Submitted final DRAFT Strategic Plan to OSD.

Secured project-specific funding.

Presentation of the DoD PARC Strategic Plan:

- National Military Fish & Wildlife Association Annual Meeting (2010 & 2011)
- Joint Meeting of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists (2010)
- Sustaining Military Readiness Conference (2011)
- The Western Section of the Wildlife Society Conference (2011)

Strategic Plan Performance Goals:

- One-year performance goals:
 - distribute and promote Plan;
 - maintain communication through conference calls and meetings;
 - form a DoD PARC working group to review Legacy proposals;
 - develop and submit proposals to implement Plan; and
 - conduct surveys to establish needs.
- Two-year performance goals:
 - assist installations with reviewing and updating INRMPs and NEPA documents;
 - create Amphibian and Reptile databases;
 - establish new partnerships; and
 - provide up to date information to installation managers.
- Three-year performance goals are listed in the Plan.

DoD PARC Strategic Plan Development

The Plan was first funded via Legacy project #09-423 in 2009.

Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense distributed a memo in support of the DoD PARC Strategic Plan on 2-12-2010

(www.dodnaturalresources.net/files/PARC_Memo_to_DASs_signed_2-12-10_2_.pdf).

Two regional DoD PARC workshops took place in 2010:

- Arlington, VA, in April 2010
- Tucson, AZ, in June 2010

The Strategic Plan outline was developed July-September 2010.

The Strategic Plan was drafted September 2010-January 2011.

The DoD Conservation Committee reviewed the DRAFT Strategic Plan in March 2011.

The Military Services reviewed the Strategic Plan and provided comments from May-July 2011.

DoD PARC Strategic Plan Structure

Plan objectives:

- introduce herpetofauna conservation on military lands;
- identify DoD's role;
- describe definitions;
- define a clear direction; and
- demonstrate management actions.

Current Plan is 34 pages long, but it should be reduced to 20-30 pages. Essential elements include:

- Letter of Support;
- DoD PARC Mission and Vision Statements;
- DoD PARC Program Benefits to the Military Mission;
- Goals of the DoD PARC Program;
- Strategic Focus Areas;
 - Techniques for Management and Stewardship;
 - Research and Monitoring;
 - Education, Training, and Outreach;
 - Partnering;
 - Communication and Guidance;
 - Mission Support;
- The Path Forward and Measures of Success; and
- List of Contacts and Recommended Links.

Next steps:

- finalize, distribute, and advertise Plan;
- identify representatives to determine and implement the way forward;
- conduct a second implementation scoping workshop; and
- assign chair positions and establish working groups.

Headquarters Perspective:

- Good for the mission=good for species.
- Stress that the Plan is needed, and is not just optional/"nice-to-have."
- Identify significant success and benefits up front in the document. These include:
 - Minimizing regulatory burden
 - Leveraging support through partnerships
 - Access to a broad network of herpetofauna scientific/management experts
 - Ecosystem preservation actions can also maintain military readiness for training
 - Reducing costs:
 - \$20M/year spent on desert tortoise recovery (second only to Red-Cockaded Woodpecker); proactive measures for other species can prevent such costs.
 - Proactive successes already include the Flat-tailed Horned lizard and the measures that will prevent its listing under ESA. This reduces costs to the installations over the long run.
- Focus on avoidance of restrictions
- Focus on what is already being done

- Develop partnerships to reduce costs

Discussion Topics:

Outreach materials

There is a huge need to organize and produce outreach materials:

- develop OCONUS materials to educate troops in Iraq or Afghanistan about herpetofauna they may encounter in those specific geographic locations;
- develop a *Myth Busting for Snakes in Puerto Rico* pamphlet;
- develop topic-specific information for mobile devices such as iPhones;
- develop herpetofauna outreach informational materials for children living on military bases (Julie Ripley with Naval Media Relations may be a good contact);
- develop herpetofauna outreach informational materials for Grounds, Maintenance, and Pest Control staff on military bases;
- provide or develop opportunities for “soldier” (aka citizen) science involvement
- compile a list of installation-specific herp education, outreach or other efforts;
- create a *Commander’s Guide on Herpetofauna*; and
- collect gray papers from scientists and installations across the country, and scan and upload those to the DoD PARC website or another centrally located database.

The DoD PARC website is www.dodnaturalresources.net/DoD-PARC.html, but it is out of date.

Action Item: Update the DoD PARC website with:

- minutes from previous workshops;
- the current version of the DRAFT Strategic Plan;
- links to each regional PARC website;
- a field/ID guide from Dugway Proving Ground that includes herpetofauna;
- the White Sands poster; and
- Armed Forces Pest Management Board posters.

DoD has a new online forum (<http://dodbiodiversity.org/nrinform/>) to discuss issues such as the Strategic Plan.

DoD PARC will develop a photo gallery wherever they can obtain enough space, potentially on the natural resources page of DENIX.

Action Item: Contact Rob Lovich, Chris Petersen, Priya Nanjappa, or Terry Riley to obtain photos in the meantime.

There is a great need for specific outreach about the Strategic Plan itself, which would greatly increase the chances of buy-in from Military Service leadership.

PARC MOU with DoD

This is a way to combine funding, skills, and/or efforts to achieve certain goals.

Nine federal agencies signed this MOU in 2001, but it expires September 30, 2011.

The nine federal agencies that signed the original MOU have been circulating a draft MOU to replace the expiring version.

National PARC and DoD PARC want additional partners beyond the nine original agencies to sign the new MOU.

Comments from the Military Services regarding the Strategic Plan

Military Services should identify examples to show how herpetofauna impact the mission so they can work with DoD PARC to sustain the mission.

It will be very beneficial for the Military Services to meet and review comments on the Plan.

DoD PARC Program must demonstrate that they can make existing requirements cheaper, faster, and easier to complete due to opportunities to leverage resources.

All Military Services indicated that budget issues are the most important aspect to consider. Military Services are required to answer where they spent their funds.

Legal drivers are the key to leadership buy-in because legal drivers are used to justify how money is spent. Military Service representatives could say that DoD PARC helps to implement the Sikes Act and ESA, among others.

This Plan will reduce costs by preventing future species listings, and assisting in the recovery of threatened and endangered species.

The Letter of Support is an important, one-page section of the Plan that needs to clearly list the main reasons for the Plan.

Action Item: Develop a one page summary discussing why DoD needs or should have a DoD PARC Strategic Plan. Bear in mind that there are concerns among installation leaders that more knowledge of species may lead to additional mission restrictions; therefore, emphasize the proactive opportunities to prevent future listings and long term benefits/low cost of implementation. Note that the Plan can create “a future condition to support the military mission.”

It may be beneficial to ask Chris Eberly if he can quantify the savings DoD PIF has generated for DoD.

DoD Installation Amphibian Database

The platform for this database is Microsoft Access, which the Military Services are approved to use. Allows people to determine if amphibian species are present at a military installation based on their occurrence at the U.S. county level – some installations cover only a portion of a county or multiple counties, which is important to consider when reviewing the results.

The database has several data tables, one of which contains species names, common names, and the federal ESA status and NatureServe status for each amphibian species in the continental U.S.

A second data table lists 700 DoD facilities and the counties where they are located.

The database links the amphibian species data table with the DoD facilities data table.

Future version of the database will identify DoD facilities that have INRMPS (approximately 339).

Will be continually updated.

Will be located in an easily accessible location, such as DENIX, availability TBD.

It may be beneficial to have an administrator once the database becomes active via the internet.

A reptile database will be coming soon.

There is the need to identify within the database what species have been confirmed on an installation, and not just the county where the installation is located.

Implementation

Ideally, DoD PARC needs leadership who:

- are motivated and driven;
- are real subject matter experts;

- are respected nationally and/or locally;
- are respected on the installation where they work;
- have support from their leadership to participate in a couple meetings per year and help produce some products and services; and
- can pay their way, or be able to justify time spent and travel to respective meetings.

DoD PARC Organizational Structure

One way to create the DoD PARC structure, and which was discussed, includes five CONUS regions with two regional co-chairs. Co-chairs would serve two years each with staggered duration, each serving one year as co-chair followed by one year as chair.

DoD PIF has regional representatives who stay in their roles year after year, which may be more beneficial than naming new chairs each year. They started with 5 regions, now have 12 and each has its own representative.

It would be beneficial to rotate Military Service representatives between chairperson tenure.

It is best to allow Commands to delegate down or approve representatives rather than going straight to the installation level.

It would be important to get Headquarters members or budget staff involved to get their perspectives, particularly in the first few years.

DoD PARC membership is free and open to all.

It was suggested that Headquarters determine their representatives.

The final recommendation of the group to move forward is to alter the DoD PARC regions so they match USFWS regions. USFWS is the lead on T&E species issues and this regional arrangement would provide opportunities to focus on those species in the region most at risk in order to prevent regulatory burden/future listings. USFWS also has Sikes Act/INRMP coordinators by region, which is an added benefit of this scheme.

Branding

DoD PARC now has a logo, but the group offered suggestions to slightly alter it. These included:

- rotating the frog and snake silhouettes so they face the outer, upper corners of the quadrants they occupy;
- rotating the shield so its pointed tip faces up (or a differently shaped shield, as it was suggested that the downward point may subconsciously suggest decline rather than an upward point suggesting gains);
- creating versions that have only the “DoD PARC” acronym rather than all of the words; and
- defining or otherwise updating the number of stars (perhaps each star represents each branch of the Military).

The group will create letterhead including the logo and other information.

It would be beneficial to create a DoD PARC fact sheet.

The group could create a checklist for golf courses to become DoD PARC certified, similar to the New York Audubon Society golf course initiative.

Communication

Annual meetings are a priority, and scheduling them during larger conferences, such as NMFWA, is important during the initial phase of the group’s formation.

Action Item: Rob and Chris will contact Rich Fischer to try to schedule a DoD PARC workshop during the 2012 NMFWA annual meeting.

Future meetings could be jointly conducted with the Herp Working Group.

Videoconferencing may be beneficial for DoD PARC.
It is important to have weekly, monthly, or quarterly conference calls.
Facebook or other social media outlets may be useful options for future consideration.

Action Items

Finalize workshop minutes.
Contact NMFWA planners to get on the agenda.
Incorporate red line comments on the Strategic Plan.
Write and submit the DoD PARC article for *Natural Selections*.
Update the DoD PARC website.
Potentially alter and finalize the DoD PARC logo.

Attendees:

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