



# Department of Defense National Public Lands Day 2023

Project #NEEF-  
NPLD-23

## Background:

National Public Lands Day (NPLD) is the nation's largest volunteer effort for public lands. Each year, thousands of Americans come together on the fourth Saturday of September to volunteer their time to improve parks, refuges, waterways, recreational areas, historical sites, trails, community gardens, and other public land sites throughout the country. NPLD is coordinated by the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF). In 2023, over 600 sites celebrated the 30th NPLD. As part of NPLD, NEEF connected and engaged approximately 43,460 volunteers with public land sites across the nation, contributing an estimated \$11.6 million in improvement projects. Events took place in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and US territories. In 2023, NPLD took place on Saturday, September 23.

The Department of Defense Legacy Resource Management Program joined the NPLD partnership in 1999 to support volunteer habitat restoration as well as cultural and historical projects on military installations throughout the United States. The Legacy Program has provided financial support for NPLD events for the past 24 years.

## Objective:

The primary objective of NPLD is to enlist volunteers in educating Americans about critical environmental and natural resource issues, emphasizing the need for shared stewardship of these valuable and irreplaceable lands.

## Summary of Approach:

NPLD projects on military installations open for recreation are eligible for competitive Legacy Program funding, with a maximum award of \$20,000 per site. These volunteer-based projects focus on habitat and/or historical/cultural restoration and can utilize funds for equipment, materials, and public land enhancements. NEEF received 27 applications in 2023, ultimately awarding 10 applicants. Application instructions were provided on NEEF's website, with a deadline of July 14, 2023, and applicants were promptly notified of their status.

## Benefit:

These projects funded by the Legacy Program aim to enhance and preserve cultural and natural resources on military installations while maintaining man-made assets. The funding supports various maintenance projects, including infrastructure repair, rehabilitation, and

installation such as roads, bridges, visitor centers, trails, and waterways. In addition, natural resource restoration projects for this year focused on activities such as riparian restoration, invasive species removal, cultural site preservation, educational tours, and improving wildlife habitat. In 2023, NPLD emphasized conservation activities and events to engage volunteers and connect people to public lands. This year, NEEF continued to offer a scope of work centered around climate resiliency, increasing the ability of installations to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events, trends, or disturbances related to climate.

## Accomplishments:

In 2023, 10 applicants received Legacy funds. Projects included invasive vegetation removal, habitat restoration, and infrastructure repair, among others, showcasing the diverse work done at military installations.

- **Bellows Air Force Station:** engaged with natural and cultural resources by removing invasive vegetation, planting native plants, repairing burial vaults, and cleaning up trash along the Pu'ewai Wetland.
- **Office of the Chief of Army Reserve (Fort Belvoir):** replanted neglected pollinator gardens and added trees to enhance migratory bird and pollinator habitats.

This year, DoD NPLD sites had approximately 790 volunteers who contributed 190 hours of volunteer time to accomplish the following:

- *19,495 native plants and trees added*
- *1 installation structure and facility built, rebuilt, or repaired*
- *Disposal of 2,355 pounds of trash*
- *Removal of 90,320 square feet of invasive vegetation*
- *Restoration of 991,805 square feet of land*
- *1 mile of waterway restored or maintained*
- *11 cultural resources or historical properties affected.*

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