



Department of Defense National Public Lands Day 2017

Project #17-086

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 2017, 2,108 sites celebrated the 24th National Public Lands Day. As part of NPLD, NEEF connected and engaged approximately 168,640 volunteers with public land sites across the nation, contributing an estimated \$16.7 million in improvement projects. Events took place in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and US territories. In 2018, NPLD will take place on Saturday, September 22.

The DoD 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. Legacy has provided financial support for NPLD events over the past 18 years.

Objective:

A primary objective of NPLD is to enlist those who use public lands for recreation to help care for the natural places they enjoy. NPLD educates Americans about critical environmental and natural resource issues, and the need for shared stewardship of these valued, irreplaceable lands.

Summary of Approach:

NPLD projects that take place on military installations with some lands open to the public for recreation are eligible for DoD Legacy funding. This is a competitive funding application process. Volunteer-based projects must emphasize habitat and/or historical/cultural restoration. In 2017, the maximum amount awarded to each site was \$6,500. NEEF received a total of 28 applications and ultimately awarded 26 applicants. Funds were used for equipment, materials, and enhancements to land used by the public, but not for T-shirts, food, or labor. Information and application instructions were available on NEEF's website. Applications were due on August 21, 2017 and applicants were notified of their status shortly thereafter.

Benefit:

These projects enable the enhancement and preservation of precious natural resources on installations, as well as the upkeep of other manmade assets. DoD Legacy funding subsidizes

maintenance projects like the repair, rehabilitation, or installation of infrastructure such as roads and bridges, visitor centers, trails, benches and signage.

This year's natural resource restoration projects included a sand dune restoration; birdhouse construction; invasive plant removal; pollinator habitat improvements; restoration of raised garden beds; and more.

This year's grant cycle highlighted the public health aspect of outdoor activity. NPLD Project Managers were reminded to encourage project participants, including service members, their families, retirees, veterans, and community members to enjoy the many physical and mental health benefits that outdoor experiences such as these provide.

Accomplishments:

In 2017, 26 applicants were selected to receive Legacy funds. Projects were diverse and spanned a range of focuses including habitat improvement; restoration of gravesites and memorials; infrastructure repair and more. The following are examples of work done at military installations:

- **Bellows Air Force Station:** volunteers cleared invasive plants and out-planted native Hawaiian flora on the wetland perimeter of Pu'ewai wetlands and the adjacent Hawaiian burial vault.
- **Eglin Air Force Base:** volunteers constructed and installed bat houses at two Eglin AFB pond areas. They also improved 5.1 acres of land on the Spence Parkway.

In total, this year's DoD NPLD sites hosted approximately 1,105 volunteers who donated over 400 hours of volunteer time to accomplish the following:

- **Building or maintenance of 15 trails**
- **Planting of 2,531 trees and 25,318 plants**
- **Rebuilding or repair of 16 structures**
- **Disposal of 825 pounds of trash**
- **Removal of 5,675 pounds of invasive vegetation**

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