

DoD and National Public Lands Day

Department of Defense
OFFICE OF PREPUBLICATION AND SECURITY REVIEW

Background

[National Public Lands Day](#) (NPLD) is the nation's largest, single day 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, local waterways, recreation areas, trails, community gardens, and historical sites. The National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) has been coordinating NPLD events across the country with federal, state, and private partners since the event began in 1994. Through NPLD, NEEF works to connect people to the public lands in their community, inspire environmental stewardship, and encourage use of public lands for education, recreation, and general health.



Volunteers at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek restore and stabilize dunes in 2016.

DoD Involvement

DoD joined the NPLD partnership in 1999. Through the Legacy Resource Management Program (Legacy Program), DoD provides funding to support natural and cultural resources projects on military installations. Since 1999, DoD has awarded nearly \$3 million to fund almost 550 NPLD projects that have directly benefited military lands throughout the United States.

Objective

NEEF's goal through NPLD is to bring together those who use public lands for recreation with those who care for these lands. NPLD educates Americans about the need for shared stewardship of our valued, irreplaceable natural and cultural resources.

Benefit

Natural and Cultural Resources

NPLD projects enable volunteers to enhance and conserve cultural and natural resources on installations, including manmade assets. For example, Legacy Program funding can be used for small maintenance, repair, or rehabilitation projects, or installation of signage, benches, and other improvements for historic structures, visitor centers, cemeteries and trails.



Air Force personnel and NPLD volunteers convert rock beds to pollinator gardens at Maelstrom AFB in 2015.

Partnerships

NPLD builds partnerships between the public sector and local communities based upon mutual interests in the enhancement and restoration of America's public lands. DoD's Natural and Cultural Resources Programs partner with NEEF to support NPLD projects. From 2012 to 2018, 12,450 volunteers contributed a total of 25,792 hours to improve military installation sites.



Outreach

NPLD provides an opportunity for the military to strengthen its relationship on base and with the local community. By inviting military personnel, their families, and the local community to participate in NPLD projects on installations, all of them can learn about the lands and their elements, and understand the unique challenges surrounding natural and cultural resources management on DoD installations.

DoD Installations

Participating in NPLD provides natural and cultural resources managers an opportunity to complete small installation-specific projects that, due to resource constraints, might not otherwise take place. Past projects included removing invasive species, planting native trees and pollinator gardens, cleaning up trash, building or maintaining trails or park areas, installing interpretive signage, providing secure and stabilized access paths for recreational and interpretive purposes, and installing or repairing site boundary fencing and edging. Collectively, these efforts help keep installation areas suitable and available for their intended purposes, and often reduce the need for future more intensive and expensive management efforts. More importantly, NPLD provides an opportunity for the on-base and surrounding communities to better understand the unique challenges surrounding natural and cultural resources management on active military installations.



Over several workdays in 2016, volunteers rehabilitated Bellows Air Force Station's Native Hawaiian burial vault.



Enabling the Mission, Defending the Resources
Department of Defense Natural Resources Program

NPLD Project Selection

Through a competitive proposal process, NEEF awards DoD Legacy Program funds for service projects at approximately 25 to 30 military installation sites across the nation each year. To be eligible for DoD NPLD funding, installations must have some lands open to the public for recreation. Volunteer-based projects emphasize habitat restoration, and preservation and interpretation of historic properties and cultural sites. Funds have been used for equipment, materials, and supplies. Information and application instructions are available on NEEF's website: [NPLD DoD Awards](#). Applications are due every July.

Accomplishments

From 2001-2015, in recognition of the precipitous decline in pollinator populations, DoD and NEEF placed an emphasis on pollinator projects on military installations. Because of this, almost [300 NPLD pollinator projects on military installations](#) – more than 85 percent of NPLD projects on DoD lands – have focused on pollinators.



At Fort Bragg, volunteers removed invasive plants and installed pollinator beds.

In 2016, DoD requested cultural enhancement projects that helped commemorate the 50th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act. In 2018, DoD NPLD projects highlighted the 100 year anniversaries of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (which served as landmark legislation, arguably saved billions of birds), and Armistice Day (which marked the end of World War I).

Through NPLD, military families, school children, and interested neighbors have improved habitats for bees, birds, bats, and insects; removed invasive plants; restored river beds and planted aquatic vegetation; enhanced dunes and beach habitats; built and maintained trails and wildlife viewing areas; planted native trees and wildflowers; cleaned up and conserved burial sites and cemeteries; improved historic properties and landscapes; and

installed educational and interpretive signage. DoD's Legacy Program received a 1999 Hammer Award from then Vice President Gore for its participation in NPLD.

2018 Summary

NPLD events took place on public lands in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories. NEEF provided \$180,000 in DoD funds to 26 projects, supporting 1,296 volunteers who contributed 411 hours to DoD lands. Following are a few highlights from DoD NPLD efforts:

- **Fort Custer Training Center (2015):** volunteers developed wheelchair accessible wildlife viewing stations and a native pollinator plot.
- **Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (2016):** volunteers helped to expand the Cultural Heritage Garden at the Archaeology and Paleontology Curation Center.
- **Umatilla Army Depot (2015):** volunteers installed and upgraded burrows for burrowing owls, a species of concern in the western U.S.
- **Fort Polk Cultural Resources Office (2016):** volunteers cleared underbrush and saplings around graves, and added a fence around the Old Hunt Cemetery.
- **Fort Bragg (2018):** volunteers installed over 400 native trees and shrubs in a migratory bird sanctuary, which helped to mitigate damages from Hurricanes Florence and Michael.
- **Bellows Air Force Station (2017):** Volunteers cleared invasive plants and out-planted native Hawaiian flora on the wetland perimeter of Pu'ewai wetlands and the adjacent Hawaiian burial vault.

For 2019, DoD is asking our applicants to **think creatively!** How can NPLD help DoD Natural and Cultural Resources Managers work more effectively? We seek proposals that enhance broader strategic or programmatic objectives, **particularly for cultural resources.**

Contact Information:

Alison A. Dalsimer
Program Manager
DoD Natural Resources
allyn.a.dalsimer.civ@mail.mil
www.DoDNaturalResources.net
<https://twitter.com/dodnatres>
www.denix.osd.mil/legacy
www.denix.osd.mil/nr

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