

# DoD Natural Resources Program

## Program Overview

The Department of Defense's (DoD) Natural Resources Program (NR Program) supports the military's combat readiness mission by ensuring continued access to realistic habitat conditions, while simultaneously working to ensure the long-term sustainability of our nation's priceless natural heritage. The NR Program provides policy, guidance, and oversight for management of natural resources on approximately 25 million acres of military land, air, and water resources to achieve this goal.

The three principles that guide the NR Program are stewardship, leadership, and partnership. **Stewardship** initiatives assist DoD in safeguarding its irreplaceable resources for future generations. By embracing a **leadership** role as part of the program, DoD serves as a model for respectful use of natural and cultural resources. Through **partnerships**, the NR Program strives to access the knowledge and talents of organizations and individuals outside of DoD.

*DoD manages and protects approximately 400 federally-listed species and over 500 species at-risk.*

The NR Program's primary responsibilities are to:

- oversee Military Service natural resources programs, including expenditures and compliance with legislative obligations, Executive Orders, and DoD policies;
- assess, develop, and implement natural resources-related legislation, policy, guidance, procedures, and metrics;
- provide tools for DoD natural resources managers, such as training courses and outreach materials;
- develop and maintain partnerships with external stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, state governments, and other federal agencies;
- promote awareness of the NR Program to the DoD community, Congress, and other interested parties; and
- advocate and ensure adequate resources for the NR Program and for installation natural resources managers.

## Sikes Act

First passed in September 1960, the Sikes Act as amended authorizes DoD to manage the natural resources under its stewardship. It requires that DoD develop comprehensive Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans (INRMPs) that are fully coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and appropriate state agency. To assist the Military Services, the NR Program provides policy and guidance on preparing and implementing INRMPs.



## Policy and Guidance

Through policy statements, procedures, and supplemental materials, the NR Program provides broad guidance to help the Military Services comply with all federal environmental laws, including the Sikes Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and all relevant Executive Orders. DoD Instruction 4715.03 is the NR Program's primary policy document.

DoD Instruction 4715.03 formalized new conservation metrics that evaluate seven key performance areas for each installation's INRMP. These are:

1. INRMP Implementation
2. Listed Species and Critical Habitat
3. Sikes Act Cooperation
4. Fish and Wildlife Management and Public Use
5. Team Adequacy
6. Natural Resources Management
7. INRMP Impact on the Installation Mission

DoD Manual 4715.03, issued in November 2013, provides procedures to prepare, review, update, and implement INRMPs in compliance with the Sikes Act.



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

## Wildlife and Habitat Management

DoD is responsible for the lands and waters under its control. This includes managing and protecting approximately 400 federally-listed species and over 500 species at-risk. In addition to providing policy and guidance, the NR Program accomplishes this by:

- participating in partnership-based conservation efforts, such as Partners in Flight, Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, and the Pollinator Partnership;
- creating outreach materials, such as the *Invasive Species Outreach Toolkit*, *Biodiversity Outreach Toolkit*, and *Commander's Guide on Invasive Species*;
- developing educational events, such as a national pollinator workshop and regional invasive species courses; and
- supporting safety programs, such as Bird/Animal Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) and wildland fire efforts.

## Funding

The DoD NR Program manages the Legacy Resource Management Program and the Forestry Reserve Account, both of which are funding mechanisms.

The Legacy Program awards projects through a competitive process to help manage and sustain natural and cultural resources under DoD stewardship. Since its inception in 1991, Legacy has funded approximately 3,000 projects, totaling over \$300 million.



*Black-Capped Vireo*  
Photo: USFWS

To be eligible, projects must:

- have regional or DoD-wide significance and involve more than one Military Service;
- be necessary to support military operations or meet legal or statutory requirements that go beyond installation-specific needs;
- be more effectively managed at the DoD level;
- not be an assigned responsibility of a Military Service; and
- emphasize crosscutting conservation projects that support or leverage ongoing or new DoD initiatives, demonstrate cost efficiencies and time savings, or exhibit new and innovative ways of managing resources on DoD lands.



*Mojave Desert, Fort Irwin, CA*

Forestry Reserve Account funds are awarded to projects on a competitive basis, and are primarily used to benefit forest resources. Funds result from the sale of forest products from military installations, with approximately \$1-2 million per year awarded.

## Outreach and Education

The DoD NR Program participates in natural resources and conservation-related conferences and meetings across the country as opportunities arise. The Program's *Natural Selections* newsletter is disseminated quarterly.

The NR Program has also sponsored educational courses and workshops, such as the Sikes Act Introductory and Advanced Sikes Act training courses, Endangered Species Act Implementation training course, regional State Wildlife Action Plan/INRMP Integration workshops, and a variety of other workshops focusing on topics DoD or the Military Services identify as high priority.

Outreach materials and online training resources are available at [www.DoDNaturalResources.net](http://www.DoDNaturalResources.net).

## Emerging Issues

DoD advances strategies to deal with emerging natural resources issues. Areas the NR Program will focus on in the near future include species at-risk, species of concern and declining species and habitats; ecosystem services; the impacts and implications of adapting to global climate change; water resources; and energy efficiencies.

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## Contact Information:

Alison A. Dalsimer  
Director, DoD Natural Resources Program  
[alyn.a.dalsimer.civ@mail.mil](mailto:alyn.a.dalsimer.civ@mail.mil)  
[www.DoDNaturalResources.net](http://www.DoDNaturalResources.net)  
[www.denix.osd.mil/nr/](http://www.denix.osd.mil/nr/)  
<http://twitter.com/#!/DoDNatRes>