

Fort Stewart Case Study

Multiple Uses: Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield

Cooperative Conservation Planning Helps Reduce Conflicts Between Competing Natural Resources Programs

Use of prescribed fire at Fort Stewart; Longleaf habitat immediately after prescribed burn; Recovery of longleaf habitat after burn. (Photos: U.S. Army)

Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield are the home of the 3rd Infantry Division. Combined, they form the Army's Premier Power Projection Platform on the Atlantic Coast. It is the largest, most effective and efficient mechanized infantry training base east of the Mississippi, covering 280,000 acres in southeast Georgia. Hunter Army Airfield is home to the Army's longest runway on the East Coast (11,375 feet) and the Truscott Air Deployment Terminal. Together these assets are capable of deploying units such as the heavy, armored forces of the 3rd Infantry Division or the elite light fighters of the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment.

The natural resources on Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Air Field are extensive and diverse. Fort Stewart has over 90,000 acres of wetlands, including 500 acres of ponds and lakes and 260 miles of streams and rivers. Fort Stewart is home to a number of wildlife species whose existence has been jeopardized for many reasons. These animals include the red-cockaded woodpecker (endangered), eastern indigo snake (threatened), wood stork (endangered), flatwoods salamander (threatened), and shortnose sturgeon (endangered).

Fort Stewart's forestry program is one of the largest in the Department of Defense. Fort Stewart is also home to the largest remaining acreage of longleaf pinewiregrass ecosystem in Georgia. Recent notable accomplishments of the forestry program include: uninterrupted military training during the worst wildfire season on record in Georgia; reforestation of longleaf pine; endangered species habitat improvement, and a record timber harvest for the installation. Also, Fort Stewart has one of the largest prescribed burning programs in North America, having burned 1.52 million acres since 1992, with no injuries to soldiers or civilians. The success of Fort Stewart's forestry management can be measured by the installation's immensely valuable timber resources (approximately \$5 million of revenue annually) and its role in developing and sustaining an excellent military training environment. <http://www.stewart.army.mil/dpw/fish/resource.htm>

Need for Cooperative Management: The Fort Stewart natural resources program is extensive and diverse and managed by an environmental division consisting of three branches: environmental compliance, fish and wildlife, and forestry. Although overall management of the program is prescribed by a detailed Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP), the potential for conflicts among proposed activities of the individual environmental branches is always present.

Internal Coordination Process

To reduce conflicts between competing INRMP goals and objectives, Fort Stewart developed an internal coordinating process, as outlined below: The process starts with three levels of planning:

- INRMP (very broad)
- Integrated Management Prescriptions (IMP) (intermediate). The integrated management prescription team develops approximately 25 IMPs annually
- Specific management prescriptions (most specific and detailed of the three levels of plans)

The INRMP requires that imps will be prepared for each of the installation's 121 training areas by a team of coordination partners consisting of:

- Forestry
- Fish and wildlife
- Environmental branch (wetlands, cultural resources, borrow pit manager)
- Range division (ITAM)
- Resident forester (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)

Advantages of the Internal Coordination Process

- Allows for all involved agencies to have a say in specific actions (e.g., timber sales, prescribed burns, longleaf wiregrass restoration)
- Provides a forum for discussing the best approach and timing for specific INRMP projects
- Eliminates or significantly reduces potential conflicts (natural resources objectives vs. the military mission)
- Ensures "buy-in" and consensus to meet INRMP goals and objectives

Conclusion

By focusing on cooperative management, and establishing a system of internal coordination, Fort Stewart has established a highly successful natural resources program that address a wide range of specific, and potentially conflicting, goals and objectives. See www.DoDbiodiversity.org for examples of an Integrated Management Prescription and a specific Timber Harvest Prescription. Both illustrate the benefits of careful, detailed cooperative coordination in reducing conflicts between multiple natural resources uses.

http://www.dodbiodiversity.org/case_studies/ch_5_1.html