



U.S. AIR FORCE

Natural Resources Management



Benefits

- Access for realistic training and testing
- Protects native ecosystems
- Conserves biodiversity and native species
- Provides natural habitat and prevents encroachment
- Creates revenue from agricultural and forest products

Overview

The U.S. Air Force is trustee to over **8 million** acres of land including forests, prairies, deserts, wetlands, and coastal habitats. The extraordinary biodiversity present on these lands is a priceless asset of the American people, and a great source of strength, providing capability to build, equip, train and deploy the world's most powerful and agile Air Force. Through the application of prudent ecosystem management practices, the Air Force protects and preserves the health, diversity and productivity of our environmental resources, or "the natural infrastructure", upon which the Air Force operates. Marrying mission objectives with effective environmental stewardship ensures military readiness and safeguards America's natural resources for generations to come.

Program Areas

Fish and Wildlife Management

Focuses on compatible uses of Air Force land for military training and wildlife conservation. Air Force bases provide habitat for over **70 threatened and endangered species**.

Wildland Fire Protection

Safeguards military lands from wildfire hazards. Air Force Fire Departments and Conservation personnel conduct controlled burns on over **100,000 acres** annually to reduce the risk of wildfires from military activities or natural occurrences.

Invasive Species Control

Controls invasive and exotic species that threaten the Air Force mission and ecosystem integrity, or could potentially pose an economic threat to the nation. Air Force natural resource management controls maintain native biodiversity in order to provide more realistic training scenarios.

Wetlands and Floodplain Preservation

Protects the water quality and the natural habitats of fish and wildlife on over **234,000 acres** of wetlands.

Coastal and Marine Resource Conservation

Preserves the countless number of marine resources and habitats along **200 miles of coastline**.

Forest Management

Fosters the careful nurture of over **570,000 acres** of forested landscapes, and provides economic benefit from the harvest of forest products.

Agricultural Outlease

Provides economic value and reduces land maintenance costs by making Air Force land available for crop production and livestock grazing. Revenue from land use is expected to exceed **\$750,000** in 2006.

Major Initiatives

Threatened and Endangered Species Conservation - The Air Force employs an integrated conservation management approach to preserve the health and diversity of many impacted species. This approach facilitates the tracking, inventory, monitoring, and management of Threatened and Endangered species and harmonizes critical habitat preservation needs with military mission demands.

Conservation Partnerships - Innovative and constructive partnerships with Federal and State agencies, universities, and non-governmental organizations limit encroachment and habitat destruction/fragmentation concerns. These mutually beneficial relationships also leverage personnel and resources to achieve common goals and reduce overall costs of land management.

Wildland Fire Management - Air Force trains, certifies, and equips wildland fire management teams to help sustain base and training range operations by offering wildfire control through prescribed burning operations.

Successes

Mutually Beneficial Cooperation

The northwest Florida panhandle is one of the most biologically diverse regions in the United States, harboring 75% of Florida plant species, 23 federally endangered species, 13 threatened species, old-growth longleaf pine and numerous rivers, bays and estuaries. The Florida panhandle also provides essential air space and land for training and munitions testing. The Northwest Florida Greenway, a unique partnership between the Air Force, local communities and non-profit organizations, was formed to address the conservation of critical ecosystems, and consequently prevent the encroachment of non-compatible land uses that threaten military operations.



Eco-Urban Balance

The Natural Resources Team at Tinker AFB in Oklahoma is committed to preserving, rehabilitating, and enhancing natural areas on the base to provide a balance between the built and natural environment. Tinker's efforts renewed disturbed areas and transformed excavated land into a marsh for wildlife with substantially improved water quality. The Urban Greenway is comprised of three reserve areas and provides base residents and employees with the opportunity to develop a greater appreciation of our natural world.

Preserved for Future Enjoyment

As a result of recovery actions taken by Arnold AFB, Tennessee, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service removed the *Eggert's Sunflower* from the List of Threatened and Endangered Plant Species. The delisting was a first for the Department of Defense, demonstrating flexibility in land use management and speaking volumes on the Air Force's good relations with regulators and the conservation community. This recovery effort was made possible largely through the successful implementation of the base's Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan. The focused and attentive efforts of the Arnold AFB conservation team resulted in the preservation of one of America's natural treasures to be enjoyed by all.

