

National Public Lands Day

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 and effort 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 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 has awarded nearly \$2.8 million to fund more than 500 NPLD projects that have directly benefited military lands across 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 all 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 projects like the repair, rehabilitation, or installation of historic structures, visitor centers, cemeteries, trails, benches, and signage.



Air Force personnel and NPLD volunteers convert rock beds to pollinator gardens at Malmstrom Air Force Base 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 2017, 11,154 volunteers contributed a total of 25,381 hours to improve military installation sites.

Outreach

By inviting military personnel, their families, and the local community to participate in NPLD projects on installations, all stakeholders can learn about the lands and their elements, and understand the unique challenges surrounding natural and cultural resources management on military lands.

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. Typical projects include 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 or bird boxes. Collectively, these efforts can make a difference.



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

NPLD Funding

To be eligible for DoD NPLD funding, installations must have some lands open to the public. Information and application instructions are available on NEEF's website: [NPLD DoD Awards](#). Applications are due every August.

2017 Summary

NPLD events took place on public lands in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories. For DoD, NEEF received 28 applications and distributed almost \$135,000 to all 28 applicants; 1,105 volunteers worked more than 2,220 hours on those sites.

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Funding Priorities

Since 2001, 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. Going forward, other priorities will be featured.

In 2016, NPLD emphasized cultural enhancement projects to help commemorate the 50th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act. In 2018, DoD NPLD projects will highlight efforts that support and relate to the 100 year anniversaries of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act – which has arguably saved billions of birds, and Armistice Day – which marked the end of World War I.



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

Accomplishments

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 received a 1999 Hammer Award from then Vice President Gore for its participation in, and support of, NPLD.



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 McClellan Army National Guard Training Center (2014):** volunteers installed sportsmen blinds with wheelchair accessible trails for disabled hunters.
- **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.

In total, DoD's 2017 NPLD volunteers built or maintained 15 trails, planted 2,531 trees and 25,318 plants, rebuilt or repaired 16 structures, disposed of 825 pounds of trash, and removed 5,675 pounds of invasive vegetation.

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