

Show Me the Money

Funding Sources for Biodiversity Conservation

By Fred Powlage, writer and editor

The United States spends lots of dollars on the environment at military installations—some \$42 billion in the past ten years. Even considering that this sum is spread over almost 30 million acres, that’s a lot of money. But the people who manage those acres are rarely heard to complain that their projects are overburdened with funding.

On the contrary: military land managers are always scrambling for more funds with which to conserve biodiversity. There’s hardly ever enough in the budget to conduct the inventories, swat the invasive species, protect the threatened and endangered plants and animals, write, update, and implement the Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans, administer the Environmental Management System, keep up to date with (and execute) the growing number of rules, regulations, and executive orders that govern environmental protection on military bases—and keep pace with the latest findings and discoveries in environmental science, explain all they have learned to their base commanders, civil works engineers, and trainers, and, while they’re doing all this, support the main mission of the military, which is to train people to win wars.

Interest in and understanding of the need to conserve biodiversity have grown in recent years as scientists, the public, and policymakers have probed deeper into the interconnectedness of nature and natural processes, as well as the growing public awareness of climate change and its influence on life. This has come at the same time that the military’s main mission—fighting a war—has become even more all-important. Thomas Warren, chief of environmental programs at Fort Carson, Colorado, has a reputation for being one of the most innovative of dollar-finders. But, he recently commented, the coordinated suicide attacks on American targets on 11 September 2001 had changed all that: “Most innovative funding sources have virtually dried up since the implementation of the global war on terrorism over the last five years,” he said. Many other installations’ natural resources managers would agree with his assessment.

To supplement their conservation budgets, managers have found it necessary to come up with innovative ways of finding money, and some of them have become quite expert at it. Kyle Rambo, the director of the conservation division at Naval Air Station Patuxent River in Maryland, does a lot of his work in coordination with the community surrounding his base (Rambo’s operation is discussed in greater detail in chapter 10, *Beyond the Fenceline*.) And much of the money for his conservation operations comes from organizations outside the base.

“Remember back to our smoking days?” Rambo asked. “What’s the cheapest brand of cigarette out there? It’s OP’s—‘other people’s.’ The best kind of money? Other people’s money.”

With that rule in mind, and with the knowledge that biodiversity conservation must proceed from a base of knowledge about what’s out there to be conserved, Rambo has produced detailed inventories of species on his base. “We’ve invested a lot of money in inventory,” he said. “So we know what we have.” The database shows where endangered species are, where archaeological sites are, where water, sewer, and electricity lines run—all of which helps Pax River plan future expansion. But the inventory also serves as a magnet for scientific researchers, who will pay with in-kind expert research for having access to military installations to conduct their information gathering. And the researchers’ findings go back into the database, so the inventory keeps growing.

“We don’t ever pay a dime for research. There’s plenty of people with research questions out there; we provide the laboratory, the space, and the opportunity.

We provide human-wildlife interactions that are interesting to study and have other people pay to come in and do our work for us.

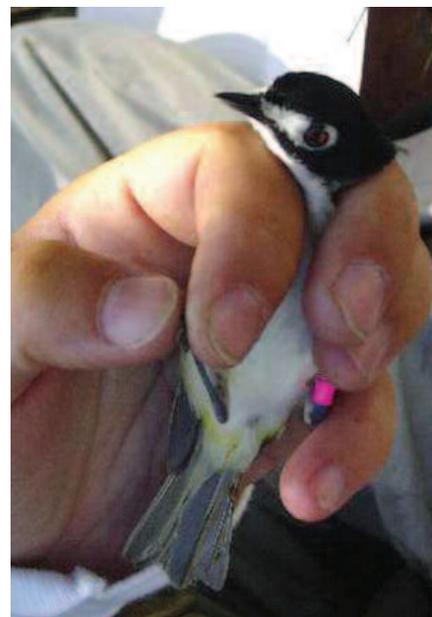
“We can offer access to the base, in a controlled environment and in an area with security—they can leave equipment out there. Cornell [University] is putting out automated listening devices, tracking big bird migrants and tracking migrations. We’ve got the land there; we’ve got controlled access. The researchers can then link what they find to on-the-ground bird researchers and say ‘We know these species arrived on this day because we caught them in our nets this day.’ They can add this information to the data from the listening devices, and it compounds the benefits of their research.”

Pax River’s own outlay for such services is small and consists mostly of staff time. “And the other people are bringing in money,” says Rambo.

Other People’s Energy, Too

Rambo uses OPE (other people’s energy) as well as their funds on a lot of his conservation work. Invasive species are a problem at Pax River, as elsewhere, but the base doesn’t have a huge budget for controlling them. So the base invited Eagle Scouts to come to the base and pull up invasive foliage. The base and its native species obviously benefit, but so do the Scouts: they win points for their service projects. And the installation wins some friends. (Pax River also enjoys a steady stream of environmental help from sailors who are convicted of misdemeanors in the on-site federal magistrate’s court and who prefer community service to, as Rambo puts it, “cleaning toilets.”)

At Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, David Beckmann is the natural resources manager for an artillery and maneuvering range that spans some 60,000 acres. The base mobilized troops during Operation Desert Shield and Storm, Desert Fix, and most



Monitoring to assess the impacts of military training on the endangered Black capped vireo and Golden-cheeked warbler at Fort Hood, Texas, is accomplished through a cooperative agreement with The Nature Conservancy. (Photo: U.S. Army)

What DoD spends on the environment

According to its Fiscal Year 2006 report to Congress, the Department of Defense in that year obligated approximately \$4.1 billion for environmental activities at more than 425 military installations. The breakdown for environmental expenditures:

- \$1.5 billion for compliance with applicable federal, state, and local environmental rules
- \$1.4 billion for environmental restoration at active and formerly active military sites
- \$568.2 million for activities required by the Base Realignment and Closure Act

- \$261.3 million for environmental technology
- \$204.1 million for conservation (natural and cultural resources programs)
- \$125.2 million for pollution prevention

Sources: Defense Environmental Programs: Annual Report to Congress: Fiscal Year 2006. <https://www.denix.osd.mil>; Environmental Compliance: Better DoD Guidance Needed to Ensure That the Most Important Activities Are Funded, GAO-03-639, June 17, 2003. <http://www.gao.gov/docsearch/abstract.php?rptno=GAO-03-639>.

DoD Legacy Resource Management Program

Congress established the Legacy Resource Management Program in 1990 “to provide financial assistance to DoD efforts to preserve our national and cultural heritage.” A guide to the program states: “The program assists DoD in protecting and enhancing resources while supporting military readiness. A Legacy project may involve regional ecosystem management initiatives, habitat conservation management efforts, development of historic contexts, archaeological investigations, invasive species control, Native American consultations, archaeological collections management protocols, and/or monitoring and predicting migratory patterns of birds and animals.”

When originally established in Fiscal Year 1991, the Legacy Program provided funding for specific projects on individual installations. Now, however, the guidelines prohibit such “installation-specific” projects unless they are part of a larger demonstration project that can be applied to many installations.

Three principles guide the Legacy Program: “stewardship, leadership, and partnership . . .” For details on the program, including information on how to submit proposals for project funding, see <http://www.dodlegacy.org/Legacy/intro/guidelines.aspx>.

recently for the war in Iraq. The base’s mission changed dramatically after 9/11; before, it was most active as a summertime training station for Army National Guard and Reserve troops, leaving the winter months for conservation efforts. “Now,” says Beckmann, “it’s pretty much constant.”

Where does Beckmann look for funds? “We try to rely a lot on the DoD,” he says. “Even before 9/11, we never were guaranteed any type of funds. And then, especially after 9/11, it got even tighter.” But the fort’s conservationists kept searching for money. “The DoD’s Legacy Resource Management Program¹ is an important one that we had worked with,” says Beckmann, “and also the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation². We got grants from them. . . to really get our invasive species program off the ground. So that was a big source there.” There are other sources: Beckmann does habitat restoration with funds obtained from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources’ turkey stamp program; funds have come from Whitetail Unlimited and the Rough Grouse Society and are used to support the fort’s hunting and fishing programs.³

Friendly Organizations

As will be seen in chapter 10, successful military land managers are wizards at forging partnerships with local, regional, and national organizations both private and public. These partnerships almost always produce sources of funding—or at least in-kind assistance that reduces the base’s burden for conservation financing. But the Department of Defense is a good supplier of conservation money itself. As David Beckmann pointed out, the Legacy program itself is a valued source of funding. In early 2007, DoD announced the release of more than \$7 million in Legacy funding for 69 projects.

Partnerships of another kind produce savings that allow conservation managers to free up other funds for their projects. These are the product of the Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (CESU), which provide cooperative agreements with colleges and universities to conduct multidisciplinary research in partnership with federal and state agencies. Although the overall program is overseen by the Department of the Interior, one of the participating agencies is the Department of Defense.

“This is a valuable partnership for DoD,” says Jane Mallory, natural resources specialist in the Legacy headquarters, “because there’s an agreement [for the participating universities] to hold overhead cost ‘way below what otherwise would be charged. Instead of 40 percent or so of a project’s budget going to university overhead, CESU universities agree to keep overhead down to 17.5 percent. This works out great for DoD in that more of our project money actually goes to the study at hand.”⁴

Another community resource that can help chase down funding is a “conservation partnering team,” usually comprising representatives of the installation itself, the local U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) field office, and state fish and game field office. Steve Helfert, who is USFWS’s liaison with DoD and who is based in Albuquerque, New Mexico, says participants in these teams frequently are able to suggest, and find, sources of additional funding for base biodiversity conservation projects.⁵

Helfert is a strong advocate of seeking funding outside DoD’s usual channels, or even those of the military’s favorite partners, and to tailor those searches to seeking grants for specific projects. “There’s never enough funding from the mil-



Left: Perimeter fence at Savannah Air National Guard Base, Georgia. Some natural resources projects can be justified also on the basis of security needs. For example, clearing of undesirable vegetation along the base perimeter is often funded using security funds, rather than environmental ones, because of the importance of maintaining an open roadway along perimeter fences for security purposes. (Photo: Douglas Ripley)

Below: Research on the Lower Keys Marsh Rabbit (*Sylvilagus palustris hefneri*) at Naval Air Station Key West, Florida, must surely be one of the more interesting cases of using "Other People's" money to finance research for endangered species on military lands. Mr. Hugh Hefner, of *Playboy* magazine fame, financed research on this endangered species provided that the university zoologist doing the research named the rabbit after him. (Photos: Douglas Ripley)

itary chain of command, or the Fish and Wildlife Service, or the states or anybody," he says. "But there are grants available—again, through the Fish and Wildlife Service, through [the U.S. Department of Agriculture], through other federal entities, through quasi-governmental organizations like the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The Nature Conservancy sometimes will contribute funds as well as in-kind help." The innovative military land manager, he said, will keep "a shopping list of those entities, and a record of their websites, and how to contact them—and how to apply to them for grants. There are all sorts of opportunities."

All the installation natural resources managers who were interviewed on the subject of funding agreed on two basic tenets: (1) There isn't enough of it, and there's not likely to be enough of it in the future; (2) There is money out there, waiting for an imaginative and resourceful manager to pursue and obtain it.

NOTES

1. See <http://www.dodlegacy.org/Legacy/intro/about.aspx>.
2. <http://www.nfwf.org>.
3. For more about hunting, fishing, and other multiple use programs, see chapter 5.
4. From 2001 to 2006, the Department of Defense funded 57 projects, totaling \$6.3 million, through CESU. DOD estimates that this has provided "cost avoidance" of about \$2 million over the four-year period. For more about CESU, see <http://www.cesu.psu.edu>.
5. There's more on Helfert's ideas about partnerships in chapter 10.

