

Managing the Land to Train the Soldier Fort Jackson Land Management Provides a Superior Training Environment for Soldiers

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Managing our natural resources at Fort Jackson is a key element in providing basic training for the Army's new recruits. Soldiers train hard and use the land hard. Their impacts on the land are sometimes severe. However, some of the most serious impacts are caused by activities not directly related to soldier training. Buildings must be built, ranges constructed, and roads blazed across the landscape to provide and support the training. Soldiers can train and infrastructures can be built without permanently damaging the environment. To accomplish this, the Army is embracing the benefits of sustainability planning and implementation. Aldo Leopold, a noted forester and ecologist in the early to mid-1900s said it best: "When the land does well for its owner, and the owner does well by his land - when both end up better by reason of their partnership - then we have conservation."

At Fort Jackson, we are working towards managing our land to provide the best possible environment for training soldiers. A rancher that is conservation minded will improve his land with fences, fresh water, and nutritious grass to raise more cattle per acre. This is called



This range was constructed in the 1950s or 1960s before consideration was given to storm water management and erosion control.

stocking rate. Similarly, as the number of soldiers trained on Fort Jackson significantly increases each year, we are trying to better manage our land to increase our "stocking rate" of soldiers. In the Southeast, we cannot look at forest management solely for timber production. We must also look at wildlife management, soil conservation, and water quality. When a pine forest is managed, the trees are thinned, the forest is burned, the understory is controlled and fire dependent shrubs and grasses begin to grow. The result is increased timber production, better habitat for wildlife, and a healthier ecosystem. A healthy forest is created every time these natural resource management practices take place. A healthy forest is a great place to train soldiers.

Another aspect of this land management concept is soils management. At Fort Jackson, we are primarily trying to control, remediate, and prevent soil erosion. Erosion results in impassible roads, damaged ranges, gullies in training areas, and flooding problems. Sand has to be shoveled from range cadre buildings, trees die, streams fill with sediment, and stream banks begin to erode. Costly repairs have to be made to fully utilize the training area. Sediment may leave our boundaries and deposit onto a neighbor's property. The end result is a damaged ecosystem, a reduced or compromised training area, or an unhappy neighbor. To sustain our ability to train soldiers and to protect our great freedoms into the next generations, Fort Jackson has enlisted the expertise of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).



The range was restored by controlling storm water runoff and stabilizing slopes using diversions, sediment traps, and permanent vegetation.

NRCS is a federal agency within the United States Department of Agriculture. NRCS works in every county in the United States offering assistance to farmers, ranchers, and home owners. The current 15 year partnership between Fort Jackson and NRCS began in 1990 and is probably one of the most successful Interagency Agreements that can be found. NRCS provides turn-key services: design, contracting, and inspection. The same person who designs the project also inspects the construction and monitors the success of the project. To date, NRCS has completed 25 contracts to rehabilitate 115 sites, reclaim 260 acres of training lands and improve 20 miles of unpaved roads. Working with NRCS is economical since we reimburse them only for hours worked, equipment needed and the cost of construction. The bids they receive for erosion control work are typically much less than other Army contracts. The partnership has been a win-win situation for both agencies.

We must continue to manage our military training lands to provide a quality environment for current and for future generations of soldiers. Victory, through land management, starts here.