

Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), with the assistance of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the states, is responsible under the Sikes Act (16 U.S.C. 670a-670f, as amended) for carrying out programs and implementing management strategies to conserve and protect biological resources on its lands. Because military lands and waters often are protected from human access and impact, they contain some of our nation's most significant remaining large tracts of land with valuable natural resources. Congress established the Sikes Act in 1960 to manage these lands for wildlife conservation and



Avon Park AF Range, FL

human access. The Sikes Act was amended in 1997 to develop and implement mutually agreed upon Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans (INRMPs) through voluntary cooperative agreements between the DoD installation, FWS, and the respective state fish and wildlife agencies.

INRMPs are planning documents that allow DoD installations to implement landscape-level management of their natural resources while coordinating with various stakeholders. They are extremely important management tools that ensure military operations and natural resources conservation are integrated and consistent with stewardship and legal requirements.

What Does an INRMP Do?

INRMPs are based on the principles of ecosystem management. INRMPs provide for the management of natural resources, including fish, wildlife, and plants; allow multipurpose uses of resources, and provide public access, where appropriate for those uses, without any net loss in the capability of an installation to support its military mission.

To the extent appropriate and applicable for a given installation, an INRMP:

- Integrates conservation measures and military operations
- Reflects cooperation between the FWS, state, and installation relative to the proper management of fish and wildlife resources
- Documents requirements for the natural resources budget
- Serves as a principal information source for NEPA documents
- Aids planners and facility managers
- Guides the use and conservation of natural resources on lands and waters under DoD control
- Balances the management of natural resources unique to each installation with mission requirements and other land use activities affecting an installation's natural resources
- Identifies and prioritizes actions required to implement goals and objectives

How Are INRMPs Changing Natural Resources Management of Military Lands?

The INRMP provides a comprehensive approach to ecosystem management. Natural resources must now be looked at holistically on a watershed or physiographic basis. INRMPs are living documents that provide direction for daily natural resource management activities and are the foundation for sustained military training.

All traditional component areas of natural resources management are integrated through the INRMP planning process. The process also takes into account military mission requirements, installation master planning, environmental planning, and outdoor recreation. The focus and intent of current INRMPs on involving all appropriate stakeholders to address installation requirements and regional issues will provide for more efficient and effective management of natural resources on a landscape basis while maintaining military readiness.

Development of the INRMP is a collaborative effort between the appropriate field office staff in conjunction with Regional Office of the FWS and state fish and wildlife agency. The goal is for all agencies to agree on the fish and wildlife management decisions in the plan. Each INRMP must provide for public participation.

What Does an INRMP Include?

INRMPs identify specific actions required to attain natural resource management goals. Although there is some variation among the different military services, a basic INRMP includes:

- A description of the installation, its history and its current mission
- Management goals and associated timeframes
- Projects to be implemented and estimated costs
- Discussion on how military mission and training requirements are supported while protecting the environment
- Legal requirements and biological needs of the natural resources
- The role of the installation's natural resources in the context of the surrounding ecosystem
- Input from the FWS, state fish and wildlife agency, and the general public



Bells Vireo Nest, San Pedro River, AZ



In addition, the Sikes Act requires, to the extent appropriate and applicable, that INRMPS provide for:

1. Fish and wildlife management, land management, forest management, and fish and wildlife-oriented recreation.
2. Fish and wildlife habitat enhancement or modifications.
3. Wetlands protection, enhancement, and restoration, where necessary for support of fish, wildlife, or plants.
4. Integration of and consistency among the various activities conducted under the plan.
5. Establishment of specific natural resources management goals and objectives, and time frames for proposed actions.
6. Sustainable use by the public of natural resources to the extent that the use is not inconsistent with the needs of the fish and wildlife resources.
7. Public access to the military installation that is necessary and appropriate for the use described in #6, subject to requirements necessary to ensure safety and military security.
8. Enforcement of applicable natural resources laws and regulations; and
9. No net loss in the capability of military installation lands to support the military mission of the installation.



Riverine craft on a raid, New River intracoastal waterway, Camp Lejeune, NC – US Marine Corps

What Period Does an INRMP Cover?

All INRMPS must be kept current. INRMPS undergo internal review annually, and are updated as necessary. Every effort should be taken to evaluate INRMPS at least annually for effectiveness and mid-course corrections with the FWS, and the appropriate state agency. Each INRMP must be reviewed for operation and effect at least every 5 years.

Who Tracks INRMP Implementation?

The Sikes Act requires that all DoD installations with significant natural resources prepare and implement INRMPS. Some of the projects that are implemented through an INRMP include natural resource assessments, monitoring programs, forestry and rangeland management, noxious weed control, native species restoration, threatened and endangered species restoration, wildlife education, and recreational hunting and fishing programs. Each of the military services has additional specific policies for developing and implementing INRMPS. Each service tracks the INRMP progress for its installations and reports findings directly to the DoD using metrics for seven focus areas – INRMP implementation; partnership effectiveness; INRMP impact on the installation mission, status of federally listed species and critical habitat; ecosystem integrity; fish and wildlife management and public use; and tripartite team adequacy.

The Sikes Act requires the Secretary of Defense to monitor this process, and report annually to Congress on the status of plan development and the amounts expended by each military installation in implementing INRMPS. The Secretary of the Interior also reports annually on the amounts expended by the FWS and state fish and game agencies on INRMP-related activities.

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Military training on the prairie, Fort Riley, KS

Who Prepares the INRMP?

Installation commanders are responsible for preparation and implementation of INRMPS. Trained natural resource professionals – installation staff, personnel from other federal or state agencies, or contractors – prepare the plans.

Installation natural resources managers should actively involve individuals and organizations that have a vested interest in natural resources management on the installation early in the process. These stakeholders may include:

- Managers of military operations/ training activities
- Environmental managers
- Master planning staff
- Federal and state agencies (at a minimum the FWS, and state fish and game departments)
- Agricultural lessees
- Recreational groups
- Environmental and conservation groups
- Cultural resources managers
- Installation pest management professionals
- Neighboring land owners



August 2009