

Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans

Congress established the Sikes Act (16 U.S.C. 670a-670o) in 1960 to ensure that the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) conserves and protects the natural resources they use. Because military lands often are protected from human access and impact, they contain some of our nation's most significant remaining large tracts of valuable natural resources. In 1997, Congress amended the Sikes Act to require DoD to develop and implement Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans (INRMPs).



Avon Park AF Range, FL

How INRMPs Guide Natural Resources Management on Military Lands

INRMPs are planning documents that outline how each military installation with significant natural resources will manage those resources. They integrate military mission requirements, environmental and master planning documents, cultural resources, and outdoor recreation to ensure both military operations and natural resources conservation are included and consistent with stewardship and legal requirements.

INRMPs provide a comprehensive approach to natural resources management on installations.

INRMPs require installations to look holistically at natural resources on a landscape or ecosystem basis. They are living documents that provide direction for daily natural resources management activities, and they provide the foundation for sustaining military training and testing.

What an INRMP Includes

INRMPs are based on the principles of ecosystem management. They describe how to manage natural resources, allow for multipurpose uses of those resources, and define public access—all while ensuring no net loss in the capability of an installation to support its military mission.

Although variations exist 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;
- a discussion of how the military mission and training requirements are supported while protecting the environment;
- natural resources' biological needs and legal requirements;
- the role of the installation's natural resources in the context of the surrounding ecosystem; and
- input from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), state fish and wildlife agency, and the general public.

The Sikes Act further requires, to the extent appropriate and applicable, that INRMPs include provisions for:

- fish and wildlife, land, and forest management, or fish and wildlife-oriented recreation;
- fish and wildlife habitat enhancement and/or modifications;
- wetlands protection, enhancement, and restoration where necessary to support fish, wildlife, and/or plants;
- consistency among the various activities conducted under the plan;
- specific natural resources management goals and objectives, and time frames for proposed actions;
- sustainable natural resources use by the public to the extent that the use is not inconsistent with the needs of the fish and wildlife resources;
- public access to the military installation that is necessary and appropriate for the use described above, subject to the requirements necessary to ensure safety and military security;
- applicable natural resources laws and regulations enforcement; and
- no net loss in the capability of military installation lands to support the military mission.



Bells Vireo Nest, San Pedro River, AZ



Examples of projects that are implemented through an INRMP include natural resources assessments, monitoring programs, forestry and rangeland management, noxious and invasive weed control, native habitat restoration, threatened and endangered species management, wildlife education, and recreational hunting and fishing programs. Each of the Military Services has specific policies for developing and implementing INRMPs.



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

Preparing the INRMP

Trained natural resources professionals prepare the INRMP. Installation managers should actively involve individuals and organizations with a vested interest in managing the installation's natural resources early in the process. Stakeholders may include:

- military operations/ training activities managers;
- environmental managers;
- master planning staff;
- federal and state agencies;
- agricultural lessees;
- recreational groups;
- environmental and conservation groups;
- cultural resources managers;
- installation pest management professionals; and
- neighboring land owners.



Military training on the prairie, Fort Riley, KS

Tracking INRMP Implementation

Each Military Service tracks the INRMP progress for its installations, and reports findings to Headquarters for each of seven focus areas:

1. implementation;
2. partnership effectiveness;
3. impact to the installation mission;
4. status of federally listed species and critical habitat;
5. ecosystem integrity;
6. fish and wildlife management and public use; and
7. team adequacy between DoD, the USFWS, and the state fish and wildlife agency.

The Sikes Act requires the Secretary of Defense to report annually to Congress the status of each INRMP, and the amounts expended by each military installation to implement its INRMP. The Secretary of the Interior also reports the amounts expended by the USFWS and state fish and game agencies on INRMP-related activities each year.

INRMP Updates

All installations must keep their INRMPs current. INRMPs undergo an annual internal review and are updated as necessary. Each installation, along with the USFWS and the appropriate state agency, should strive to evaluate INRMPs at least annually. The same offices must formally review INRMPs for operation and effect at least every five years.

The INRMP planning process integrates all traditional elements of natural resources management; the process also takes into account military mission requirements, installation master planning, environmental planning, and outdoor recreation. To address installation requirements and regional issues, INRMPs involve appropriate stakeholders, thereby providing for more efficient and effective management of natural resources on a landscape-scale basis, all while ensuring that military readiness is sustained.

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