



# News Release

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## Army's top environmental leader visits PTA

POHAKULOA TRAINING AREA, Hawaii—The commander for the Army Environmental Command (AEC) spent a day to gain firsthand knowledge by viewing and discussing the work being done by the natural and cultural resource programs at Pōhakuloa Training Area (PTA), Jan. 8.

“As the commander of the Army Environmental Command it is important for me to understand the environmental challenges our installations are facing, so I can determine how my command can best help,” said Col. Maria Gervais, commander, AEC. “My visit here is critical because at PTA there are a lot environmental challenges due to the nature of the location and endangered animal and plant species that naturally occur in this location. I also wanted to observe what PTA environmental personnel are doing to protect the environment and ensure Soldier readiness so that Soldiers can train here.”

“It is very important for me to understand how environmental work is done here, why it is done and to determine where the AEC can help PTA in the execution of both training Soldiers and continuing to be good stewards of the environment,” Gervais added.

After receiving a command brief from Lt. Col. Warline Richardson, PTA garrison commander, Bill Godby, PTA archaeologist and cultural resources program manager, and Steve Evans, PTA biologist and natural resources program manager, showed Gervais the PTA interpretive garden and propagation facility.

Later, Gervais and six other AEC staff members were taken to the western edge of the installation, known as the western fuel break, where they witnessed a fencing demonstration, viewed a weed control buffer area for the Mauna Kea Pamakani plant and viewed an emergency exclosure and planned fence unit for the Hawaiian Prickle Leaf plants. They also visited Training Area 5 where Godby gave Gervais and AEC staff a firsthand view and description of an ancient Hawaiian site.

“The natural and cultural resources personnel at PTA are doing what they can to protect the environment in order to allow the Army and the other services to train at this location,” Gervais said. “Without the work that they do, the Army and the other services would not be able to train because we would not meet our obligations in accordance with wildlife regulations, historic preservation laws and the endangered species act.

Natural and cultural resources issues were discussed throughout the day. Before her visit to PTA, Gervais visited and meet with various officials on Oahu, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services and the Corps of Engineers Honolulu District

Gervais wrapped up her visit on the Big Island and took note of the significance of PTA’s exceptional natural and cultural resource program efforts.

“My visit to PTA was a great experience. In fact my visit to both Hawaiian islands of Oahu and the Big Island was very important,” Gervais said. “I needed to understand how completely different the challenges on Oahu are different from PTA.”

“I’ve learned a lot in terms of the complexities, challenges and the dynamics that PTA has to understand and implement and take into consideration for execution,” Gervais added. “The PTA environmental personnel’s job is extremely important: protecting the environment and supporting Soldier training; and they are leading the way.”