



Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oahu Army Natural Resources wins top Secretary of Defense award

SCHOFIELD BARRACKS, Hawaii—Local Army environmental efforts caught the eye of the Secretary of Defense—in a good way—garnering one of the Secretary of Defense’s top honors.

The Department of Defense announced U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii’s Oahu Army Natural Resources Program as the winner of the 2012 Secretary of Defense Environmental Award in the “Natural Resources Conservation—Individual/Team” category, in a press release May 1.

“This year the Army earned more than half of the Secretary of Defense environmental awards, and with programs like the one here in Hawaii, that is no surprise,” said Hershell “Hew” E. Wolfe, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Environment, Safety and Occupational Health.

“The Oahu Army Natural Resources team truly is a leader in the conservation field. We depend on hard work like theirs to sustain the environment for the secure future of our installations,” he added.

Earlier this year, the OANRP won the Secretary of the Army natural resources conservation team award in the Armywide competition, and then went on to compete against all military services—Navy, Air Force and Marines—in the DOD-level competition. Wolfe is officially presenting the Secretary of the Army award to the OANRP in a ceremony here May 3.

These awards recognize excellence in the development, management and transferability of environmental programs that increase environmental quality, enhance the mission and help make the military installations sustainable.

“Recognition by the Secretary of the Defense as having one of the finest natural resource programs within all four military services is a real testament to the commitment, professionalism and dedication of the Garrison’s natural resources staff. Their work allows the Army to continue to train here and prepare for any contingency our nation requires of its Soldiers,” said Col. Douglas Mulbury, commander, USAG-HI.

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“This program, over many years, has not only stabilized threatened and endangered species here on Oahu, but serves as the model across the Army and federal government on how to collaborate with state, federal and private organizations to manage fragile populations,” Mulbury added.

The OANRP is responsible for balancing the military mission with managing more than 60 federally listed species on more than 50,000 acres of land, with an annual budget of approximately \$6 million. The team supports six Army training ranges on Oahu through strict management of natural resources, enabling approximately 20,000 service members from the Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, National Guard and Reserves, as well as local law enforcement, to successfully conduct missions critical to training.

Fifty-one native plants species, seven species of kahuli tree snails, the Oahu elepaio bird, the Hawaiian hoary bat, two picture wing flies species, and one damselfly species keep the tight-knit OANRP staff on the go, perfecting management techniques, as needed, in order to ensure the survival of these unique Oahu species.

What began as a small staff of four in 1995 has now grown to more than 50 personnel, comprised of species experts, a fence crew, three resource management crews, and a nursery/seedbank management crew. Ninety percent of the staff is in the field daily, working with rare species in remote areas of the island across the Waianae and Koolau mountain ranges.

“We’re doing something special, and that’s what motivates us each and every day,” said Michelle Mansker, OANRP chief, Environmental Division, USAG-HI. “When we’re out in the field with our hands in the aina (or earth), we’re making a difference. We’ve actually saved two species from extinction; that’s huge. Words can’t describe how satisfying the feeling is.”

Major 2010 and 2011 team accomplishments include the collection of 5,800 endangered plants for genetic storage, the outplanting and reintroduction of 8,500 endangered plants to their native habitat, and the fencing of more than 1,200 acres of endangered species habitat to stop destruction by wild goats and pigs.

“We’ve come so far in conserving natural resources here on Oahu,” said Kapua Kawelo, who has been a federal biologist with the OANRP since its inception. “The great strides we have made are largely due to our staff’s combined knowledge and skills for resource management, along with their shared passion for protecting Hawaii’s endangered species.”

Each year since 1962, the Secretary of Defense has honored individuals, teams and installations for their outstanding achievements to conserve and sustain the natural and cultural resources entrusted to the Department of Defense. The award recipients were selected by a panel of judges convened by the Secretary of Defense, representing federal and state agencies, academia and the public. A ceremony honoring the 2012 winners is scheduled June 6 at the Pentagon.

Visit <http://www.garrison.hawaii.army.mil/sustainability> to view photos, videos and learn more about Army natural resources efforts in Hawaii.

MEDIA NOTE: Army Natural Resources staff can be made available for interviews; field escort opportunities are also available. For more information, please contact U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii Public Affairs at (808) 656-3154/3160 or cell 226-2706.

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1. Photo1.OANRPAward.Dan Foreman.jpg

Dan Foreman, natural resource management specialist with the Oahu Army Natural Resources Program, U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii, monitors the health of an endangered akoko plant, in a remote native forest of the Waianae Mountains. The OANRP staff regularly measures plant growth, health and reproductive status to gauge the success of plants that they re-introduce in the wild.

Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii



2. Photo2.OANRPAward.Greenhouse.jpg

Kim Welch (red shirt), environmental outreach specialist, Oahu Army Natural Resources Program, U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii, leads volunteers on a tour of the upper elevation rare plant nursery in the Waianae Mountains. The OANRP staff processes and cares for seeds collected from endangered plants in the wild, at the greenhouse. Some of the plants and seeds are stored, while others are planted back into the forest, helping boost populations of Oahu's endangered plants.

Photograph courtesy of Roy Kikuta

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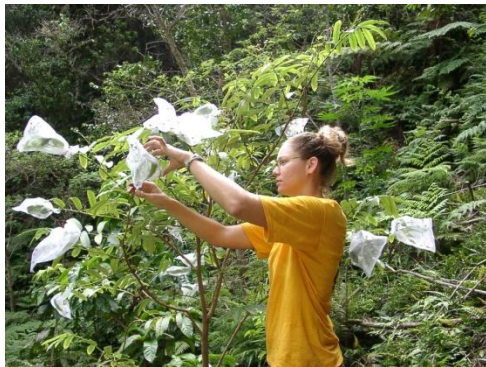
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3. Photo3.OANRPAward.LouluPalms.jpg

Staff with the Oahu Army Natural Resources Program, U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii, plants an endangered Loulu palm back into the wild, along the Ohikilolo Ridge, on the south rim of Makua Valley. For years, the Loulu population dwindled, as rats devoured its fruit and goats ate the seedlings. By the mid 1990s only 74 mature Loulu palms remained in the world, hanging on to the cliffs of Makua. The OANRP successfully fenced goats out of Makua Valley in 2004 and now provides intensified rat control to protect this rare population of palms. Today there is a carpet of Loulu seedlings along the south rim of Makua, and more than 1,000 palms are thriving.

Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii



4. Photo4.OANRPAward.Seed Collection

Lauren Weisenberger, propagule management specialist, Oahu Army Natural Resources Program, U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii, places a mesh bag over the mature fruit of the endangered akoko plant in the Waianae Mountain Range. The mature fruit capsules of the akoko are known to split open explosively when they dry, flinging the seeds a short distance. Bagging the fruit helps collect these precious seeds. To ensure the survival of the akoko and more than 50 other endangered plant species, the OANRP staff, collects and stores seeds in special climate-controlled incubators, to serve as a genetic safety net for these Hawaiian treasures.

Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii

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5. Photo5.OANRPAward.Plant Monitoring

Kapua Kawelo, federal biologist, Oahu Army Natural Resources Program, U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii, rappels down Ohikilolo Ridge, on the south rim of Makua Valley, to monitor the health of the endangered cliff-dwelling plants of Makua. When plants produce fruit, staff collects seeds to either be stored for safe keeping or propagated in the rare plant nursery, destined to be returned to the wild.

Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii



6. Photo6.Elepaio Banding

Michelle Mansker, chief, Oahu Army Natural Resources Program, U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii, bands endangered Oahu elepaio in Moanalua Valley. Army efforts to control predators around 75 elepaio nests, helped increase the elepaio population by 31 percent in two years. During the 2011-2012 breeding season, the OANRP banded 60 birds, which is 16 percent of the elepaio population on Oahu.

Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii