

# News Release



## Hawaiian Army Base Honored With 2006 Military Conservation Partner Award

March 26, 2007

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H. Dale Hall, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has named the U. S. Army Garrison-Pohakuloa in Hawaii as the recipient of the 2006 Military Conservation Partner Award.

Pohakuloa was recognized for developing creative and effective solutions to protect Hawaii's unique ecosystems and listed species. "The U. S. Army Garrison-Pohakuloa in Hawaii is an outstanding example of how today's military is going green – and I'm not referring to olive drab," said Hall. "Pohakuloa demonstrates how a military installation can make a major contribution to conservation efforts. The Service applauds Pohakuloa's cooperative conservation achievements, especially their proactive habitat restoration and endangered species monitoring program, which exemplifies positive cooperation between government and private-sector partners."

The award, presented March 22, at the 72<sup>nd</sup> North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Portland, Oregon, was created by the Service to recognize military installations that have made significant natural resource conservation achievements through cooperative work with the Service, state and local government, and other organizations. Such achievements may include the conservation, protection, and restoration of important habitat for a variety of species – including endangered and native species – on military lands.

"This is an unexpected, but very welcome honor," said Col. Howard J. Killian, commander, U.S. Army Garrison, Hawaii. "So many times when people see Army green they only see the military operations side, and that's something we need to change. Army-wide, there is a growing emphasis on building a sustainability ethos."

The 131,000-acre Pohakuloa Training Area – located on the island of Hawaii between Mauna Loa, Mauna Kea, and the Hualalai Mountains – is the largest Department of Defense installation in Hawaii. The area extends as high as 9,000 feet on Mauna Loa and is a mosaic of unique ecosystems. Pohakuloa's natural resource staff helps protect 19 federally listed species – 15 threatened or endangered plant species, 3 bird species, and one mammal. Several of these endangered plant species exist only at Pohakuloa and their numbers are critically low due to threats that include over-grazing, competition from invasive plants, and wildfires.

Pohakuloa's natural resource staff has developed an impressive array of community partnerships through groups such as the Hawaii Community College and the Junior Sierra Club. These partnerships seek to educate the public about resource protection and land stewardship through Earth Day Activities and other community events. Pohakuloa also works with organizations to

decrease over-grazing by allowing controlled hunting of feral sheep, goats, and pigs. In addition, the natural resource staff has also exceeded expectations concerning the protection of listed plant species on rare Hawaiian sub alpine tropical dry land forest habitat by restricting grazing by these animals. To prevent grazing damage, Pohakuloa has gone to great effort and expense to erect over 7,000 acres of exclusionary fencing and plans to fence a total of 33,000 acres. This exclusionary fencing also benefits the Hawaiian hoary bat by allowing mature shelter trees used for roosting and breeding to regenerate.

For over 40 years, since the passing of the Sikes Act, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has worked in cooperation with the military to conserve fish and wildlife resources found on the 30 million acres of land owned and managed by the Department of Defense. These lands are valuable for maintaining survival and diversity of many important species. In recent years natural resource management on installations has attained a greater significance with the Department of Defense, Congress, and the public leading to the creation of integrated natural resource management plans under the Sikes Act. In response, many military installations have accomplished exceptional conservation work using partnerships with agencies, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million- acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices, and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American Tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to State fish and wildlife agencies.