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**U.S. Air Force Academy Receives 2012 Conservation Partner Award
From the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

The U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo. received the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) 2012 Military Conservation Partner Award in recognition of the Academy's significant contribution to natural resource conservation. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service presented the award during the 77th annual North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Atlanta, Georgia.

Between 2006 and 2011, the Academy was consistently ranked within the top five qualifying Military Installations Partner Award nominations by the Service Partner Award Review Committee. No other military installation had received such consistently high rankings over the past five years.

"The Academy has an outstanding record of providing effective conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats on its campus, while also providing high quality hunting and fishing opportunities within the installation," said Service Director Dan Ashe. "Military installations provide millions of acres of high-quality fish and wildlife habitat across the nation. Our goal is to work with installations large and small to integrate conservation with their primary defense and national security roles."

Throughout the past five years the Academy has partnered with the Service, Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and other organizations to

address their unique natural resource management issues. The 20,000 acre landscape of the Air Force Academy provides high-quality riparian areas and relatively contiguous mature forests which provide critical fish and wildlife habitat connectivity for a variety of species.

The Academy has continued a cooperative agreement with the Service and CDOW to provide funding and mutual aid for natural resource management, and developed a Conservation Agreement which funded important population and habitat research on behalf of the threatened Preble's meadow jumping mouse. The Academy has also developed a close partnership with the Service to significantly reduce wildland fuel hazards, and implemented stream restoration efforts to improve habitat and water quality. Additionally, the Academy received the Tree City USA Growth Award in 2009 for exceptional progress in urban tree inventory, and hosting of an educational tree care workshop.

"The Military Partnership Award is a tremendous achievement and reflects the outstanding teamwork of Natural Resources Manager Brian S. Mihlbachler, PhD, and the Natural Resources team, " said Lt. Col. USAF Commander, 10th Civil Engineer Squadron, U.S. Air Force Academy. "This accomplishment is the work of partnerships committed to preserving and improving the Air Force Academy's natural resources each and every day. We are very happy they received this recognition."

For more than 40 years, since the passing of the Sikes Act, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has worked in corporation with the military to conserve fish and wildlife resources found on the 30 million acres of land owned and managed by the Department of the Defense. These lands are invaluable to the survival of many important species.

In recent years, natural resource management on installation has attained a greater significance with the Department of Defense, Congress, and the public, leading to the creation of

integrated natural resource management plans (NRMPs) 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 mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>

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