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IN OTHER NEWS

Upcoming Events

American Water Resources Association Annual Conference
November 14-17, 2016 in Orlando, FL

American Wind Energy Association Fall Symposium
November 15-17, 2016 in San Antonio, TX

Farmer Veteran Coalition Stakeholder Conference
November 30 – December 2, 2016 in East Lansing, MI

A Community on Ecosystem Services and Ecosystem Markets Conference
December 5-9, 2016 in Jacksonville, FL

National Conference of State Legislatures Forum

Message from the Director

I am very proud to have this opportunity to highlight REPI partnerships that are simultaneously creating value for veterans, installations, and the environment.

Over a year ago, our newsletter highlighted several locations across the country where REPI partnerships were also creating opportunities to train, celebrate, and thank veterans. In honor of Veterans Day on November 11, we are revisiting projects in Washington, Virginia, and Pennsylvania and exploring a new effort in Texas where time, effort, and resources used to protect military mission are also supporting veterans.

The key to success for all REPI partnerships is in its stakeholders. Most REPI partnerships offer excellent opportunities to layer additional benefits on top of encroachment mitigation and land conservation projects. This means that potential stakeholders for any project can extend way beyond the “usual suspects” of the installation, local government, and conservation organizations, and become an opportunity to support and engage veterans. By including veterans in the discussion, a partnership can gain the perspective of people who understand what it is like to work on base and live outside of one. By thinking creatively about how an open space or working land protection effort could benefit veterans, a project can exponentially increase in value as it grows to provide a return to the military base, the environment, and the local veterans and their families who are key members of the surrounding community.

The successes we’ve seen in our 88 REPI partnership projects prove that a broad stakeholder base amplifies impact. Therefore, after reviewing the efforts occurring around Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Fort Pickett, Fort Indiantown Gap, and Fort Hood, I encourage you to brainstorm with your colleagues for ways – big and small – that we can engage, employ, and say thank you to the veterans that live in REPI partnership communities. Get in touch with the points of contact from the featured projects in this newsletter, as well as your local County Veterans Service Office, veterans groups, installation, and the REPI office. REPI partnership projects help protect military mission, natural resources, and working lands – but there’s no reason for any project to stop there.

December 6-9, 2016 in
Washington, DC

Happy Veterans Day, and thank you to all those who served and still
serve,

Kristin Thomasgard-Spence

Did you know?

•Veterans Day occurs on the anniversary of the end of World War I, and was originally known as Armistice Day. In 1954, Congress changed “Armistice” to “Veterans” to honor veterans of all wars.

•Know someone who should be receiving this newsletter and other communications from the REPI Program? Tell them to subscribe [here](#).



2015 Veteran Conservation Corps interns removing hybridized paintbrush at Glacial Heritage Preserve, near Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington. Courtesy: VCC.



Veterans at the spring 2016 American Heroes event gather for a day of fishing, shooting, networking, and camaraderie near Fort Pickett in Virginia. Courtesy: Ward Burton.

Spotlight: Veterans Day Edition

Supporting Veterans through Prairie Conservation: The Veterans Conservation Corps and Center for Natural Lands Management Internship Program

*Originally published jointly by the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs and Center for Natural Lands Management.
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Enacted through state legislation in 2005, the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs' (WDVA) Veterans Conservation Corps (VCC) aims to educate veterans about conservation through hands-on work experience and give program graduates a competitive advantage in the environmental job field. At the heart of the VCC program is the concept of eco-therapy, the belief that spending time in nature makes people healthier. The VCC provides statewide conservation opportunities that allow veterans to spend time outdoors as one of the means of assisting with transition from active duty while providing them with more pathways for education and employment.

Through a collaborative partnership with the Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM), the VCC-CNLM internship program was created in 2014 for veterans to learn land management and conservation skills while working on lands on and around Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM). JBLM is the third-largest Army installation in the United States and the first designated Sentinel Landscape, where military mission, working lands, and conservation are recognized to mutually support each other. JBLM contains some of the last remaining prairie habitat in the Pacific Northwest, which supports three federally threatened and

endangered species: Taylor's checkerspot butterfly, streaked horned lark, and the Mazama pocket gopher. JBLM is also home to Stryker Brigade Combat Team training, which involves combined artillery, maneuver, live-fire, and airlift training missions. To protect the sustainable prairie lands that support both military training and rare wildlife, CNLM's South Sound Prairies Program has worked in partnership with the Department of Defense's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program, JBLM, and Sentinel Landscape partners to preserve over 2,000 acres to date. While protecting the prairie acres successfully alleviates some restrictions on JBLM's capacity to test, train and operate, prairie lands require active and continuing management to remain suitable for the species that rely on them. Therefore, CNLM's work with JBLM to manage, restore, and sustain these prairie lands and associated imperiled species made collaborating with the VCC a natural extension of CNLM's prairie land stewardship goals.

The VCC-CNLM internship focuses on providing specialized learning opportunities, hands-on training, and developing skills that will support veterans after the internship has been completed. Together with WDVA, CNLM developed a training curriculum for VCC participants tailored to the unique prairie habitat of the area. The internship offers three certifications: an Incident Qualification Card (known as a Red Card, necessary to conduct prescribed fires), a commercial operator's license for herbicide, and a first aid/CPR card. Veterans attend workshops on plant identification, scientific methods, plant propagation, resume building, networking, and interviewing. WDVA staff also coordinate training for interns regarding post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, and suicide prevention as well as a general veterans' cultural competency training for CNLM staff. Taken together, CNLM staff and VCC leaders are able to deliver a professionally and personally impactful program to veteran interns. Danny Miller, a 2015 VCC intern and US Army veteran stated, "I'm a 28 year old combat Veteran...Once out of the Army I had few skill sets that translated to the civilian world... Violet Prairie (Seed Farm) with the VCC and CNLM is a truly special place and eco-therapy truly works... I have far fewer sleepless nights. I hope any Vets that would like to go through this internship will be able to."

The internship gives veterans the opportunity to customize their learning experience according to their interests and career goals. "I learned a great deal about working under protocols with care and precision," said Jason Keyes, 2016 VCC intern and US Army veteran. "I have confirmed my own passion for the natural world. On paper, I have learned whole skill sets that I have placed on my resume for future employment." Interns with VCC have the opportunity to participate in optional trainings and in volunteer events with other conservation organizations in order to pick up additional skill sets. Optional trainings include bird banding, introduction to GIS, environmental communications, wildlife surveying and territory mapping, riparian restoration and others. As former VCC intern and

current VCC Intern Coordinator Kim Pham states, “this is an unprecedented internship that provides veterans the freedom to pursue training opportunities that focus on individual achievement. The program meets the veterans where they are at and empowers them to take the direction that they choose is right for them, all the while being supported by the comprehensive resources of the VCC network of partners and providers.”

Twenty-five veterans have taken advantage of the VCC-CNLM program since its inception in 2014, and the program has continued to increase opportunities and experiences available to interns. As word of the opportunity continues to spread to veterans across Puget Sound, CNLM looks forward to working with many more veterans in the future. Through the VCC, veterans not only receive job training that utilizes skillsets gained as active duty Service Members, but the collaboration with CNLM provides a new opportunity for veterans to support national defense. In this new capacity, veterans help to restore and strengthen the prairie habitat outside of JBLM, thereby increasing the base’s flexibility to use its land for required training and helping to sustain JBLM’s military mission.

Deston Dennison, a 2014 VCC intern, summed up his experience in this way: “Working with CNLM has given me opportunities to expand my knowledge of ecosystems management and prairie ecology through applications that aren’t explored in a classroom. Hands on training in prescribed burning and botany, ecological surveys, and field work all inform the credential set and networks I will need to develop my career path. The flexibility and support of CNLM staff in regards to my own personal inquiries makes this an ideal hub from which to expand my practice and understanding of ecological design and management. I’m very fortunate and grateful to have had this opportunity.”

For more information please contact:

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At the Intersection of Community, Conservation, and National Defense: The Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation’s Annual American Heroes Veterans Event Gives Thanks and Celebrates the Outdoors

Originally published by the Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation.

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Ward Burton, former NASCAR driver and founder of the Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation (WBWF), is used to seeing opportunities where others see roadblocks. So when he began partnering with Fort Pickett in Virginia to conserve land around the installation, he knew that

WBWF had an additional chance to make a difference in the community. By bringing together veterans, their families, and local employers on natural lands protected by the Foundation at its annual American Heroes event, WBWF is simultaneously conserving land for future generations, protecting military mission capacity, and giving back to the community by supporting America's veterans.

Since 2008, WBWF has worked with the Department of Defense's (DoD) Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program and the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) Program to conserve and manage natural and working lands that, if developed, would inhibit an installation's ability to test, train, and operate. Working with Fort Pickett in a partnership that has helped to protect over 7,800 acres through fiscal year 2015 in the installation's high priority area, WBWF has effectively enabled the installation to continue to use its heavily trafficked ranges and firing points far into the future, even as the surrounding suburban community continues to grow closer to the installation's fence lines. With the intent of maximizing benefits to the installation and local community, WBWF has also established a tradition of donating hunting and fishing rights on its protected lands to Fort Pickett staff, who in turn work with WBWF to ensure that local veterans and active duty personnel receive access. As a result of the strong relationships WBWF built with Fort Pickett, a second partnership began recently at Fort Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania to buffer aviation training areas used to prepare soldiers for full-spectrum operations, including aerial gunnery, artillery, and demolition. Through the end of fiscal year 2015, almost 100 acres of mixed agricultural, forested, and wetlands areas around Fort Indiantown Gap have been preserved.

For the Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation, conservation and community go hand-in-hand. The one-day American Heroes event is a natural extension of WBWF's practice of conserving and protecting rural lands for future generations while also giving thanks to those who have fought for their country. Held in collaboration with multiple partners, including the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, Freedom Alliance, VFW, and a number of corporate sponsors, veterans and their families are invited to WBWF's 2,000-acre property in Halifax, VA for a day of community, gratitude, and enjoyment of the land. At the last event held in spring 2016, over 65 veterans and active duty military personnel from Fort Pickett and their families were in attendance.

Over the course of the day, participants compete in archery and other shooting sports contests, fish from a wheelchair-accessible dock, and attend a job fair with local employers. The event culminates in a fully-catered dinner and awards ceremony for prizes won earlier in the day. Local employers attending the spring 2016 American Heroes event included environmental organizations, timber companies, manufacturing firms, and representatives from the tech industry. As a result of the event, multiple veterans received interviews and subsequent job offers. Alisa Dickson, Army National Guard Directorate

Team Leader for Natural and Cultural Resources, attended the spring 2016 event and remarked, “Seeing the camaraderie and competitiveness of veterans at all phases – now working as civilians on post, just coming off of a deployment, or retired – was wonderful. By creating the American Heroes event as a space for veterans and their families to come together, Ward Burton and his foundation honor their service and make a difference.”

WBWF is already planning the next American Heroes event, which will be held closer to Fort Pickett in conjunction with a relatively new local organization that partners with WBWF on DoD-related conservation efforts, Evergreen Land Trust. As WBWF’s relationship with Fort Indiantown Gap and the installation’s partners grows, WBWF also fully anticipates expanding the American Heroes event to Pennsylvania.

“I set up this foundation 20 years ago to protect our natural resources,” Ward Burton says. “It’s an honor to be able to conserve land and make a difference for the men and women who train on these bases and serve our country. Protecting land takes time, but it’s our responsibility to do it and we take that responsibility very seriously.”

For more information about the Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation’s American Heroes event and land protection efforts, visit the [WBWF website](#) or contact Ward Burton at wardburton1961@gmail.com.

Compatible Lands Foundation and Farmer Veteran Coalition Team Up to Create the Veterans’ Farming Education and Training Center

Within sight of Fort Hood’s fence line, the Compatible Lands Foundation (CLF) and Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC) are working together to establish the Veterans’ Farming Education and Training Center in central Texas.

Fort Hood, one of the largest military installations in the world, sits in the middle of Texas ranching and farming country. Founded in the 1940’s, the installation is home to nearly 41,000 soldiers and supports a full spectrum of training missions, ranging from individual weapons qualification to battalion task force and joint operations. It is largely due to the surrounding area’s rural and agricultural character, which is intrinsically compatible with Fort Hood’s mission, that the installation is able to host so many critical training activities. However, as historic ranch and farmlands are lost to development, the long-term viability of Fort Hood’s training mission is increasingly being put at risk. To address the threat of incompatible development around the installation, Fort Hood is partnering with CLF and other partners to protect undeveloped and compatibly used lands in the vicinity of critical training ranges and maneuver lands. While working to mitigate the threat of incompatible development in Fort Hood’s priority area, CLF saw an additional opportunity to benefit the local community while also supporting Fort Hood’s mission.

Led by FVC, there is a growing national movement to support veterans in developing the skills, knowledge, and capital they need to enter into agriculture after leaving military service. In fact, the 2014 Farm Bill created a new position within the U.S. Department of Agriculture to specifically aid this effort: the Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison. Multiple factors are driving this nationwide movement, including the aging of farmers and ranchers, the influx of veterans moving into the civilian workforce, and the notable overlap between the character and commitment demanded by these two professions. Although the number of local and regional veteran-to-farmer programs is increasing across the country, most efforts face a significant hurdle: the acquisition of land needed to support these programs. At Fort Hood, CLF saw that their expertise in land conservation, restoration, and preservation could help the veteran-to-farmer community overcome this barrier.

Now, both CLF and FVC are working together to establish the Veterans' Farming Education and Training Center on a parcel of prime agricultural land adjacent to Fort Hood. While FVC collaborates with its members to develop a curriculum, identify instructors, and outline an operating process for the Center, CLF is finalizing the fee simple acquisition cropland containing a stable and small outbuildings by leveraging REPI Program funds. Because land protected through REPI buffer partnerships is typically restricted from additional construction, CLF and FVC plan to retrofit these existing structures to make classroom space. This will keep the land compatible with Fort Hood's military mission and ensure that the Center has adequate training facilities. As the Veterans' Farming Education and Training Center gets up and running, CLF and FVC intend to sell the crops produced by participants locally to both create a small revenue stream that will support the Center's operations in the long term and provide a source of healthy produce to the community.

Both organizations aim to draw veterans to the Center from local communities and around the country. After transitioning out of service, many veterans stationed at Fort Hood choose to stay in the surrounding communities of Killeen, Copperas Cove, and Gatesville. Consequently, CLF has begun preliminary discussions with Fort Hood, the Texas Department of Labor, and a local organization, Center Point Veterans Services, about identifying and recruiting interested local veterans.

CLF and FVC hope to open the doors of the Veterans' Farming Education and Training Center in 2017. In time, they aim to perfect a model for establishing and operating an agricultural training program for veterans that can be easily shared and replicated across the country; however, both organizations have faith that sharing their experience in the early stages of this project will help others begin similar efforts today. Joe Knott, Director of Military Partnerships at CLF and 33-year veteran of the U.S. Army, encourages REPI partners in particular to leverage their expertise in land preservation to jumpstart

these efforts. “For veteran-to-farmer efforts, it all starts with having the farmland. We, as REPI partners, can help organizations overcome that first critical hurdle and provide that land. By doing so, we not only ensure that private lands remain compatible with the mission of the installation, but we facilitate an opportunity for the land to have a positive and very meaningful impact on veterans and the community.”

For more information about the Veterans’ Farming Education and Training Center, please email Joe Knott at jknot@compatiblelands.net, or visit the **Compatible Land Foundation website** and the **Farmer Veteran Coalition website**.



Deston Dennison, a 2014 Veterans Conservation Corps intern working at Violet Prairie Seed Farm near Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington. Courtesy: VCC.



A veteran competes in the fishing contest at the spring 2016 American Heroes event near Fort Pickett in Virginia. Courtesy: Ward Burton.

Natural Resources Conservation Service Seeks Applications for \$25 Million in Conservation Innovation Grants

On November 3, 2016, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is seeking proposals for projects that will provide new conservation opportunities through its competitive Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program. NRCS intends to provide up to \$25 million for projects that foster innovation in conservation and allow for the transfer and adoption of promising technologies that benefit natural resources, agricultural production, and forest management. For more information on the CIG program and application process, please [click here](#).

Webinars

Join us for this online series on best practices, tutorials, and knowledge sharing on REPI partnerships that support the military mission and accelerate the pace and rate of land conservation. Our 2016 REPI Webinar Schedule is on the website and can be [downloaded here](#).

Upcoming Webinar

How to Submit Applications to Become a Sentinel Landscape

Summary: Is your partnership ready for the next level? Are you working with a diverse set of Federal, state, and local partners to protect areas important to rural economies, wildlife, and national defense? The U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Defense, and the Interior are set to release guidance on the 2017 Sentinel Landscape application process in early December. Join us for a webinar to learn about the requirements, evaluation criteria, and timeline for 2017 designations as well as the benefits that come along with becoming a Sentinel Landscape.

When: Wednesday, December 7, 2016 at 1:00PM ET.

For instructions to join the webinar, [please click here](#).

Past Webinar

If you missed the most recent REPI webinar, "State Policies and Encroachment Protection Efforts," please [visit the REPI website](#) to view the webinar recordings or [contact us](#) for more information. Below is a sampling of some key points and lessons learned from the recent webinar.

State Policies and Encroachment Protection Efforts

- Matt Walsh, U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence, Fort Huachuca, shared information on the Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape, established in 2015 in southeastern Arizona, and its efforts to preserve working and natural lands important to Fort Huachuca's defense mission. The Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape is in the process of identifying all programs and grants—in particular, at the state and local level—that could be applied in the Landscape. The Steering Community is being used as a forum to work across Federal, state, and local boundaries to more effectively identify opportunities to preserve the rural and natural character of the area, thereby protecting the testing and training mission of Fort Huachuca.
- Tim Ford, Chief Executive Officer of the Association of Defense Communities (ADC) discussed the various ways that states support their defense sector, including taking an active role in growing military activity, investing state funds to ensure mission success, targeting areas for growth in their defense supply chains, embracing community-military partnerships, and focusing on encroachment. Mr. Ford referenced innovative examples from Texas, Massachusetts, and

Oklahoma. ADC recently launched the Great American Defense Communities program to acknowledge the actions of cities, counties, and regions that support their installations.

•Scott Morgan, Deputy Director of the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research presented on the 2016 Update to the Military and Community Compatibility Planning Advisory Handbook, which is intended to explain to local officials, planners, and builders how to reduce land use conflicts between the effects of civilian development and military readiness activities. This update is intended to provide a more accessible, relevant, interactive, and user-friendly tool for local decision-makers, since local community/regional planning is the first line of defense in addressing encroachment concerns.

Watch recordings of past webinars on the [REPI website](#).

We're starting to think about the 2017 REPI Webinar Series! If there are webinars you love, webinars you'd like to see, or webinars you'd like to host, please contact berger_lauren@bah.com.

REPI in the News

New York Awards Money to Projects around Fort Drum. The Watertown Daily Times (Watertown, NY) reports that the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust received \$246,250 from the State of New York to expand conservation easements on two working farms in Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties near Fort Drum. The land trust has partnered with Ducks Unlimited and the Army Compatible Use Buffer Program to purchase permanent easements on properties around Fort Drum to protect the installation's military mission from incompatible development.

Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund Awards More than \$3.8 Million for Projects. The Caldwell Journal (Caldwell County, NC) reports that the North Carolina Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund recently awarded more than \$2 million to obtain conservation easements on lands that border military bases in Hyde and Bertie counties, both of which are a part of the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape. These funds were specifically set aside by the state's General Assembly to maintain working lands as buffer zones around military bases. Two other counties within the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape, Johnston and Scotland counties also received funding from the state to protect farmland and promote agricultural enterprises.

Military Bases Serve as Safe Haven for Endangered Species. National Public Radio (Washington, DC) reports that the DoD Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program has built a large national conservation network over the past two decades through formal partnerships with environmental groups, universities, local governments, and even zoos. Using an approach

first pioneered through efforts around Fort Bragg, REPI has funded 88 partnerships in 30 states to date, all aimed at helping species and habitat both on and around bases. Recently, this collaborative model expanded through the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership, an initiative between DoD, USDA, and DOI aimed at reducing incompatible development near bases through the preservation of working and natural lands. This story originally appeared on **WUNC, North Carolina Public Radio** on August 22, 2016.

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