

How the Military Helps Protect Natural Landscapes

Posted by Jarrett Caston, State and Private Forestry Program, USDA Forest Service in [Forestry](#).
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By participating in the Sentinel Landscape program, Fort Huachuca ensures the longevity of its water supply while increasing forest health. (Photo credit: U.S. Army/Lara Poirrier)

Home to the premier restricted military airspace for unmanned aircraft system training in the western U.S., Army base [Fort Huachuca](#) supports training for personnel from the Air Force, Marine Corps, and U.S. Border Patrol. But it also serves as an example of successful mixed-use wildlands conservation, including healthy forests and grasslands, sustainable water resources, rural communities and economies, wildlife habitat, and recreation and tourism.

This mixed use is a result of [Fort Huachuca becoming part of the Sentinel Landscape Partnership](#), making it one of only six designated [Sentinel Landscapes](#) in the country.



Alpha Company, 40th Expeditionary Signal Battalion conducts a live fire exercise at Fort Huachuca. (Photo credit: US Army/Lara Poirrier)

Established in 2013 by USDA in partnership with the Departments of Defense (DOD) and Interior, the Sentinel Landscapes partnership promotes federal, private and local teamwork to support natural resource sustainability while facilitating military test and training needs. Enhancing this partnership, the [USDA Forest Service Cooperative Forestry](#) programs provide technical assistance and support for wetlands restoration and protected species.

The Forest Service contribution is significant because water scarcity has been an ongoing concern for the Fort, with operations requiring groundwater resources to support its infrastructure and employee population.

The Fort has reduced its groundwater usage by nearly two-thirds over the last 20 years by working with partners across jurisdictions to manage and restore adjacent lands. To date, 66,500 acres within Fort Huachuca have been conserved through conservation agreements.

Now, by participating in the Sentinel Landscape program, DOD is ensuring the longevity of its water supply while increasing forest health and improving habitat for threatened and endangered species. In addition to supporting military goals, this innovative partnership also advances multiple Forest Service objectives, including open space

preservation, strong rural communities, and strategic partnerships that foster water conservation and the restoration of high priority landscapes.

The [Coronado National Forest](#) is a lead partner in the Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape effort in southeastern Arizona. According to Coronado National Forest Supervisor Kerwin Dewberry, partnerships have been incredibly important to the success of this project.

“This Sentinel Landscape is made up of land stewarded by the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, DOD, and the state,” he said. “This mix of ownership has fostered great partnerships, which have been key to our success.”

The Forest Service’s Cooperative Forestry programs, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and DOD will continue to work with private landowners to support working ranches, restore habitat, and manage land and water resources at Fort Huachuca.



The Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape is used by the U.S. Air Force, Marine Corps, and Border Patrol for training. (Photo credit: U.S. Army/Lara Poirrier)

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