

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

between

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

and

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Purpose:

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is entered into between the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). The purpose of the MOU is to:

- a. Promote cooperative conservation between NRCS and DoD, and where appropriate, partnerships with other Federal agencies, states, local governments, non-governmental organizations, and private landowners. NRCS and DoD will:
 1. Assist private landowners in retaining productive and viable working lands that help to sustain agricultural productivity and environmental quality while supporting continued economic viability and military preparedness.
 2. Encourage the establishment of buffers adjacent to military installations to preserve, enhance, or protect habitat and working lands; prevent or eliminate restrictions that inhibit military testing and training, and/or limit incompatible development in the vicinity of military installations.
 3. Support the development of various land management practices that meet state water quality objectives.
- b. Cooperate in such a manner as to raise the public understanding of the missions of both agencies.

- c. Establish a coordination process that fosters cooperation at every level of both agencies.

Background:

- a. In order to sustain military testing and training, DoD's Sustainable Ranges Initiative promotes the twin imperatives of military readiness and sound stewardship. The loss of open space near military installations threatens to limit DoD's ability to use its lands for mission-essential testing and training. The Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI), enacted by Congress, authorizes the Military Departments to enter into agreements with private conservation organizations or with state and local governments. These agreements allow the ranges and installations to cost-share the long-term protection of land from willing sellers as a way to preserve, enhance, or protect high-value habitat and limit incompatible development around ranges and installations.
- b. The Southeast Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS) is a pilot effort to develop an effective working regional partnership between DoD, the Southeast states (Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Alabama), and other stakeholders. SERPPAS has agreed to focus on developing tools for more effective regional planning to sustain natural environments and resources critical to military test and training and, specifically, to explore regional opportunities that help to sustain important habitat and access to critical test and training areas. Opportunities exist for NRCS and DoD to cooperate in support of these SERPPAS objectives by identifying relevant complementary programs in each agency that provide appropriate financial and technical assistance for the protection and conservation of high value lands and water resources within mutually agreed-to project boundaries, in a manner complementary to the military's test and training requirements.
- c. NRCS has a history of working with private landowners, on a voluntary basis, to promote sound stewardship on private lands. NRCS has established sound stewardship programs by working with other Federal, state and local agencies, private organizations groups,

and individuals at the grass-roots level. NRCS grass-roots working relationships and conservation programs can be complementary to the successful implementation of REPI.

- d. Under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act, states are required to establish maximum point source and non-point source pollutant loadings to impaired waters within their state. Many DoD installations are required to comply with these limits. Opportunities exist with NRCS to establish conservation practices and systems that meet various state water quality objectives.

Scope:

The provisions of this MOU extend to those programs and activities of NRCS and DoD that have the potential to complement mission-specific requirements of both agencies. This MOU is intended to better institutionalize collaboration between both agencies and to identify specific projects or actions that may be implemented consistent with the identified purposes under Section 1. In addition, it is expected that both agencies will continually evaluate current and future actions for possible inclusion under the scope and content of this MOU. Specific projects to be initiated and/or expanded under this MOU include (but are not limited to):

- a. Identification and implementation of joint REPI and NRCS conservation programs.
- b. NRCS involvement in project specific efforts under SERPPAS.
- c. Collaboration between NRCS and DoD on the Texas Conservation Credit Initiative in support of Fort Hood, recovery issues associated with the Golden-cheeked Warbler, and associated habitat and watershed improvements in Central Texas.
- d. Development of partnerships, through the Army Compatible Use Buffer program and other Military Department regional conservation efforts, for securing buffer lands that meet the goals and objectives of both NRCS and DoD near and/or adjacent to specific installations, including:
 - 1. Fort Riley
 - 2. Fort Sill
 - 3. Fort Campbell
 - 4. U.S. Army Garrison Hawaii
 - 5. Fort Stewart

- e. Development of implementation plan for joint collaboration under the Peaks to Prairie initiative in Colorado.
- f. Identification of appropriate collaboration with NRCS and DOD conservation partners and the identification of appropriate mechanisms to highlight the mutual benefits of collaborative endeavors.
- g. Explore and implement market-based strategies to assist in implementing REPI and NRCS conservation programs, and state water quality trading programs.

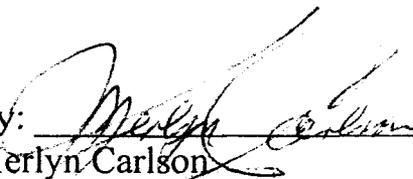
Responsibilities:

- a. NRCS agrees to:
 - 1) Advise NRCS state and field offices of the existence of this MOU, and of the opportunity for assisting DoD military installations in the coordination and implementation of REPI.
 - 2) Provide DoD with technical and program information as it relates to the implementation of REPI and the preservation, protection, restoration, and enhancement of significant land and water resource values in a manner that preserves habitat and land use that will assist to relieve, prevent or eliminate restrictions that inhibit military testing and training, or limits incompatible development in the vicinity of military installations.
- b. DoD agrees to:
 - 1) Advise DoD Components of this MOU and the opportunities for cooperative conservation with NRCS.
 - 2) Request DoD Components to identify, based on mission needs, appropriate priority areas for cooperative conservation.
 - 3) Coordinate appropriate budget levels with DoD Components to provide appropriate funding to NRCS on a reimbursable basis.
- c. It is mutually agreed that NRCS and DoD will pursue the identification of other partnership and collaboration opportunities that will include:

- 1) Market-based approaches for the protection, restoration and enhancement of water quality natural resources.
- 2) Sharing of non-sensitive information such as aerial photography, soil surveys, and other appropriate data.

This MOU is neither a fiscal nor funds obligating document. Any endeavor by either party that involves the reimbursement or contribution of funds, or transfer of anything of value between the parties, will be handled in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and procedures. Such endeavors shall be outlined in separate agreements, made in writing by representatives of both parties, and shall be independently authorized by appropriate statutory authority. This MOU does not provide such authority.

This MOU shall become effective the date of the last signature and continue in effect for a period of five years or until modified or terminated. This MOU may be modified or amended upon written consent of both parties. This MOU may be terminated with a 30-day written notice from either party.

By: 
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Deputy Under Secretary for
Natural Resources and Environment
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Date: 11/02/2006

By: 
Alex A. Beehler
Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense
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U.S. Department of Defense

Date: 11/02/2006