

EXECUTIVE REPORT

“We do not own this land; we are caretakers of the land and the plant and animal species that inhabit it. The American people entrust the land to our care, and we shall fulfill their trust. We shall conserve and protect these resources for the future”¹

This Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) will guide implementation of the natural resources program on Fort Wainwright, Alaska, from 2002 through 2006. The INRMP is designed to conserve Fort Wainwright’s land and natural resources and ensure compliance with related environmental laws and regulations. The plan also ensures the maintenance of high quality training lands to accomplish U.S. Army Alaska’s critical military mission.

Scope

This plan applies to organizations internal and external to Fort Wainwright that are involved with, or interested in, the management or use of Fort Wainwright’s land and natural resources for military and nonmilitary purposes. This plan applies to active duty units, National Guard and Reserve Components, directorates, private groups, and individuals. This INRMP falls within the framework of the US Army Alaska (USARAK) Range Development Plan and is an integral part of the Fort Wainwright Installation Master Plan. This INRMP will guide the natural resources management of Fort Wainwright for the next five years (2002-2006) and will provide a solid foundation from which to build and continue the program beyond 2006.

Relationship to the Military

Fort Wainwright provides most of the combat training for U.S. Army soldiers in Alaska. These soldiers are among the most specialized military professionals in the world, and they train in some of the world’s harshest environments. Fort Wainwright hosts training for other members of the nation’s Armed Forces, from Marines stationed in Hawaii to Air Force pilots and crew members who defend our nation from the air.

This INRMP supports the military mission by protecting and enhancing training lands upon which the mission is critically dependent. It also describes recreational opportunities associated with natural resources for the Fort Wainwright community, thus supporting the USARAK commitment to both the Quality of Life and the Army Communities of Excellence programs.

Impacts of military activities upon natural resources are described in the plan and means to mitigate these impacts. However, this INRMP does not evaluate Fort Wainwright’s military mission, nor does it replace any need or requirement for environmental documentation of the military mission at Fort Wainwright.

Environmental Compliance

This INRMP is required by the Sikes Act (16 U.S.C. 670a *et seq.*), Department of Defense Instruction 4715.3 (*Environmental Conservation Program*), and Army Regulation (AR) 200-3 (*Natural Resources - Land, Forest, and Wildlife Management*). This plan describes how USARAK will implement provisions of AR 200-3 and local regulations, most notably AR 190-13 (*Enforcement of Hunting, Trapping and Fishing on Army Lands in Alaska*) (U.S. Army, Alaska. 1994) and AR 350-2 (*Range Regulation*) (U.S. Army, Alaska. 1995). This INRMP helps USARAK comply with other federal and state laws, most

¹ Robert M. Walker, Assistant Secretary of the Army, Testimony before Congress, July 11, 1995.

notably laws associated with environmental documentation, wetlands, endangered species, water quality, and wildlife management.

This INRMP has the signatory approval of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), to acknowledge its compliance with the Endangered Species Act. USFWS review of the INRMP is considered informal consultation with regard to the Endangered Species Act.

The Sikes Act, as amended in November 1997, requires that an INRMP include:

- Fish and wildlife management, land management, forest management, and fish and wildlife-oriented recreation.
- Fish and wildlife habitat enhancements or modifications.
- Wetland protection, enhancement, and restoration where necessary for support of fish, wildlife, or plants.
- Integration of, and consistency among, the various activities conducted under the plan.
- Establishment of specific natural resources management goals and objectives and time frames for proposed action.
- Sustainable use by the public of natural resources to the extent that the use is not inconsistent with the needs of fish and wildlife resources.
- Enforcement of applicable natural resources laws (including regulations).
- No net loss in the capability of military installation lands to support the military mission of the installation.
- Review of this INRMP and its effects every five years.
- Provisions for spending hunting and fishing permit fees exclusively for the protection, conservation, and management of fish and wildlife, including habitat improvement, and related activities in accordance with INRMP.
- Exemption from procurement of services under Office of Management and Budget Circular A-76 and any of its successor circulars.
- Priority for contracts involving implementation of this INRMP to state and federal agencies having responsibility for conservation of fish and wildlife.
- Public access to the military installation that is necessary or appropriate for sustainable use of natural resources by the public to the extent that such use is consistent with the military mission and the needs of fish and wildlife resources, subject to requirements necessary to ensure safety and military security.

The *Fort Wainwright Yukon Maneuver Area Proposed Resource Management Plan* (RMP) (BLM and U.S. Army. 1994) requires that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) participate with the Army, USFWS, and Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) in developing a habitat management plan. The BLM will also be a signatory agency in any revision of the Cooperative Agreement (as required by the Sikes Act). It also requires the Army to develop a forest management plan and recreation activity management plan for the lands withdrawn by PL 106-65. This INRMP and corresponding activity plans satisfy the above BLM requirements.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to consider the environmental consequences of proposed major federal actions. Installations are directed by AR 200-2 (*Environmental Effects of Army Actions*) and NEPA to integrate environmental analysis as much as practicable with other environmental reviews, laws, directives, and executive orders. USARAK has met this requirement by preparing a single environmental document; an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been integrated into this INRMP to provide a comprehensive description, analysis, and evaluation of all environmental components proposed in the Fort Wainwright INRMP.

Ecosystem Status

Fort Wainwright has four vegetative types: moist tundra; treeless bogs; open, low-growing spruce forests; and closed spruce-hardwood forests (Viereck and Little. 1972). The installation has a wide variety of flora and fauna, none of which are classified as threatened or endangered. Although the natural resources program affects many species, moose (*Alces alces*), ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*), and black bear (*Ursus americanus*) are the most intensively managed by ADF&G.

The quality of both surface and groundwater is assumed to be good, with the exception of localized pollution associated with past activities, mostly within the Main Post area. Due to this contamination, Fort Wainwright has been declared a “Superfund” site under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). There have been no indications of changes in the quality of surface water since Army occupation of the land. Trends in biological diversity are not documented, but there is no reason to suggest that Army activity on the land has adversely affected biological diversity. Effects of military use on soils are primarily evident in the Main Post area.

The installation's capability to support its current military mission is stable. The capability of the land to produce forest products has steadily improved since large-scale timber removal has not occurred and the forest is maturing, especially in areas where fires have been minimized. The post can clearly continue to support its small fuel wood and Christmas tree program.

The capability of the ecosystem to support hunting, fishing, and trapping continues to be good. Fishing opportunities have increased in some areas due to stocking. Agriculture is not a viable option on Fort Wainwright.

Partnerships

This INRMP cannot be implemented by USARAK alone. In accordance with land withdrawal legislation and the ecosystem management philosophy, USARAK is forging partnerships with various agencies to manage its natural resources. Major partners in the implementation of this plan are the BLM, USFWS, and ADF&G. Other partners in this effort include universities, other federal and state agencies, native groups, contractors, and private citizens.

Plan Components

This document guides the natural resources management program at Fort Wainwright. Chapter 1 of this INRMP outlines goals and objectives in five general areas: military readiness, stewardship, quality of life, compliance, and program integration. It also contains a general description of Fort Wainwright's military mission. The integration of NEPA compliance within this INRMP is also discussed. Chapter 2 describes Fort Wainwright's climate, land base, facilities, and natural resources, including a brief history of their management. The plan identifies internal and external parties involved in implementation of this INRMP.

Ecosystem management is the underlying philosophy of the plan, a departure from USARAK's traditional multiple-use approach. This new approach is consistent with recent changes in laws and Department of Army policies. Ultimately, the INRMP will serve as a tool to help natural resources personnel implement ecosystem management philosophies at Fort Wainwright. Ecosystem management will continue to allow for the use of natural resources on Fort Wainwright for both military and other human-related values and purposes. Ecosystem management protects properties and functions of natural ecosystems. Since these ecosystems often go beyond installation boundaries, management of Fort Wainwright's natural resources will include more emphasis on partnerships with its neighbors.

This INRMP is organized to promote the management of lands and natural resources in an integrated manner. The Ecosystem Management chapter (chapter 3) deals with aspects of overall natural resources management: inventory and monitoring, protection and damage prevention, natural resources management, awareness, and enforcement. Within the remaining resources management chapters (chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7) program descriptions for Integrated Training Area Management (ITAM), fish and wildlife management, soil erosion control, water quality management, integrated pest control, natural resources law enforcement, research programs, and conservation education. Additional chapters describe outdoor recreation associated with natural resources, protection of cultural resources during natural resources management activities, and the use of NEPA to conserve natural resources. Chapter 8 discusses specific measures to implement this plan. The environmental consequences of implementing each resources management alternative are discussed in Chapter 9.

Planned Major New Initiatives

Fort Wainwright's INRMP includes a description of ongoing natural resources programs and projects. It is anticipated all of these will be continued or completed. There are important new initiatives proposed within this INRMP, including the following programs:

- Implementing ecosystem management philosophy
- Implementing revised Outdoor Recreational Vehicle (ORV) policy (Section 6.2.4 and Figure 6-1a and b)
- Implementing a new recreational use impact study (Section 6.2.4 and Figure 6-1d)
- Implementing a new training area rotation rest and rehabilitation program (Section 4.1.4.1 and Section 4.2.4.2)
- Implementing conservation law enforcement (Section 6.3)
- Implementing a water quality monitoring protocol (Section 4.2.3)

Revisions From Previous Draft Version

- Section 4.1.4.1 Land Rehabilitation and Maintenance has been revised
- Section 4.2.4.2 Erosion Control has been revised.
- Figure 6-1a. Outdoor Recreation Management Areas map has been revised.
- Figure 6-1d. Recreational Use Impact Study Areas has been added.
- Section 6.2.4 Outdoor Recreation Management Areas has been revised.
- Section 6.4.4 Cultural Resources Management has been revised.
- The Finding of No Significant Impact statement has been removed from Appendix A and added as a stand alone document directly preceding the appendices.
- Specific items of cooperation between US Army Alaska, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and Bureau of Land Management has been revised and is now included in Appendix A.
- A draft Memorandum of Understanding between US Army Alaska and Bureau of Land Management for management of all Army lands in Alaska has been added in Appendix B.
- Appendix H. Response to Public Comments on Draft FWA INRMP has been added.

Ongoing Planning Activities

USARAK recognizes that this INRMP is not all encompassing. USARAK will, in coordination with other agencies, develop specific management action plans to be incorporated into this INRMP as they are

completed. Descriptions of these plans (listed below), their compliance authorities, and budget priorities can be found in appendix D.

- Ecosystem Management Action Plan
- Habitat Management Action Plan
- Wetland Management Action Plan
- Forest Management Action Plan
- Special Interest Areas Conservation Action Plan
- Outdoor Recreation Management Action Plan
- Integrated Training Area Management (ITAM) Action Plan
- Landscaping Action Plan
- Fire Management Action Plan
- Soil Resources Management Action Plan
- Aerial Monitoring Action Plan

While work on specific action plans remains to be completed, this INRMP uses existing information as a basis to continue and improve natural resources management concurrent with planning activities. Preparation and implementation of an INRMP, including updates to occur every five years, is required by law regardless of the stage of program development. The INRMP is not a static product. Rather, it is a dynamic mechanism to guide program operation for the next five years (2002-2006).

Benefits and Costs

Military Mission Benefits: Implementation of this plan will improve the quality of Fort Wainwright's training lands and will improve long-range planning at Fort Wainwright. The INRMP will enhance mission realism by increasing training actions, as well as providing for more intensive planning of missions.

Environmental Benefits: The plan provides the basis for the conservation and protection of natural resources. It will reduce vegetation loss and soil erosion due to military activities, reduce the potential for environmental pollution and provide for biodiversity conservation. Plan implementation will increase overall knowledge of Fort Wainwright ecosystems through surveys and research.

Other Benefits: Troop environmental awareness will be enhanced for military training at Fort Wainwright. Both community relations and Fort Wainwright's environmental image will be enhanced. Quality of life for the Fort Wainwright community and its neighbors will be improved. Plan implementation will decrease long-term environmental costs and reduce potential liabilities from environmental noncompliance.

Costs: It will cost about \$3,057,250 annually during 2002-2006 to implement this INRMP. Funding will be provided primarily either from environmental or training funds designated for implementation of the ITAM program. Plan implementation will require staffing at the same level as in recent years, with the exception of additional contract personnel to implement ITAM and other new programs.

Summary

The actions within this INRMP will comply with environmental laws, conserve and protect Fort Wainwright's natural resources, improve Fort Wainwright's relationship with the public, and enhance the military mission. This plan will not resolve all existing and/or future environmental issues. It does provide the guiding philosophy, personnel, and means to work toward resolution of such issues.