



Media Release

Public Affairs Office
U.S. Army Garrison, Hawaii
(808)656-3157/542-9489
“Malama na Koa”

Release number: 2009-03-08
March 20, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii’s Natural Resource Program Takes Home Award

SCHOFIELD BARRACKS, Hawaii—Army conservation efforts here and across Oahu gained national exposure, Thursday, when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) presented U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii (USAG-HI) with the 2008 Military Conservation Partner Award.

The occasion marked the second time in the award’s five-year history that the Army in Hawaii has been chosen out of all the Department of Defense’s Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps installations. U.S. Army Garrison-Pohakuloa won in 2006.

“This is a great honor and a great tribute to the many, many employees at the garrison who work extremely hard and are very passionate about preserving and protecting our natural resources,” said Col. Matthew Margotta, USAG-HI commander. “An award of this significance doesn’t happen because of the efforts of a few; it takes buy in, dedication and, most importantly, action, from a variety of sources.”

The Military Conservation Partner Award brings to the forefront work that often happens “behind the scenes,” many times in remote areas like cliff faces, mountaintops and thick forests. The award also recognizes the garrison’s significant contributions to environmental conservation, achieved in large part through cooperation and partnership.

Rowan Gould, acting director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, presented the honor to Army representatives Michelle Mansker, chief of the Natural Resources Section, and Alvin Char, Environmental Division chief, at the 74th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Arlington, Va.

“The [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service] appreciates the cooperative work of the staff at Schofield Barracks, including maintaining active partnerships with the Service, other federal and state agencies, private organizations, landowners and the University of Hawai’i,” Gould said in a USFWS release. “Through this active participation with partners, Schofield Barracks staff has developed creative tools that benefit threatened and endangered species, the military and the state of Hawai’i as they tackle tough issues to protect unique ecosystems for future generations.”

--MORE--

AWARD 2-2-2

The 53-person staff of the Oahu Army Natural Resource Program (OANRP) leads the charge in conserving 73 federally-listed endangered species on Oahu.

“The Army in Hawaii manages more endangered species than any other federal agency in the state,” Mansker said, adding that the OANRP is responsible for managing more endangered species than any other Department of Defense installation in the U.S.

The Army’s management of these species revolves around threat control. Invasive plants and animals, like goats, pigs and rats, “wreak havoc on the native forests,” according to Mansker.

“We are out counteracting those impacts on a daily basis,” she added. “Rappelling off of cliffs to collect plant species, putting in fences, getting rid of [hoofed mammals], banding birds, controlling rats ... without this kind of work ... there’s no way these species would survive long term.”

Of the 73 endangered species managed by OANRP, 63 are plant species, the majority of which are found only on Oahu. Field crews often return to base with propagules — plant parts that can be used to grow a new plant, such as seeds or cuttings — from these plants in tow.

The OANRP horticulture staff maintains three greenhouses where propagules are nurtured into new plants, which will be returned to the wild to help bolster population numbers, or will be stored to preserve genetic material.

By preserving genetic material, such as seeds, the OANRP has been able to save two endangered plants – a lobelia and a mint – from extinction. Rat and pig damage to these plants eliminated them from the wild; however, using stored seeds, both plants have been successfully re-introduced in the wild.

The OANRP has also made significant strides in bolstering the population of the endangered Loulu, Oahu’s only native palm, along Makua’s mountain ridges. In 1999, the Loulu was on the brink of extinction, with only one fruit and no seedlings found at the Army’s Makua Military Reservation. Through the OANRP’s fence construction and management, which keeps pigs and goats from destroying native plants, now more than 600 Loulu seedlings are growing on Makua’s mountain ridges.

In addition to its extreme mountain work, the OANRP collaborates conservation efforts with other agencies by providing funds to partners, researchers and graduate students. These partnerships span from local to federal levels, including the State of Hawaii Division of Forestry and Wildlife, the University of Hawaii, The Nature Conservancy, Lyon Arboretum, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Oahu Fire Council, and private landowners.

Through such cooperative efforts, the OANRP has helped fund and pioneer new techniques for endangered plant propagation; rediscovered a rare tree snail thought to be extinct for 20 years; and responded when wildfires threatened endangered plant populations.

--MORE--

AWARD 3-3-3

The OANRP's outreach — educating and involving the local community through presentations and volunteer opportunities — is the remaining critical component of the program's environmental efforts, and one of the reasons the staff is so happy about winning this year's award.

“[We] appreciate the recognition, but more importantly, we're excited to have the chance to heighten awareness about Oahu's unique endangered species,” said biologist Kapua Kawelo, summing up the sentiments of the entire OANRP staff.

-- 30 --

To learn more about OANRP's efforts, visit www.garrison.hawaii.army.mil. There you can view photos and video about the Army's conservation efforts in Hawaii.

Click [here](#) to view the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's release about the award.