

News Release



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White Sands Missile Range Receives Prestigious Award from Fish and Wildlife Service

The Department of the Army's White Sands Missile Range in southern New Mexico has been named by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director H. Dale Hall as the recipient of the agency's 2007 Military Conservation Partner Award. The 2.2 million acre missile range has been a key partner in protecting the rare and endangered wildlife that lives in the Chihuahuan desert habitat.

The award, presented March 27 at the 73rd North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Phoenix, Ariz., was created by the Service to recognize military installations that have made significant natural resource conservation achievements through cooperative work with the Service, state and local governments, and other organizations. Such achievements may include the conservation, protection, and restoration of important habitat for a variety of species - including endangered and native species - on military lands.

"The Service has a long standing cooperative relationship with the White Sands Missile Range," said Hall. "As the Fish and Wildlife Service's former Regional Director in the Southwest, I learned first hand the depth and breadth of the installation's commitment to native species. Their dedicated people have always been willing to work with partners, and their ability to deliver conservation on the ground and their enthusiasm in sharing what they have learned with others has truly benefited the wildlife resources they manage."

"We are very satisfied with the positive working relationship with the Service and our other conservation partners" said Junior Kerns, Chief of the Environmental Stewardship Branch of Public Works, U.S. Army Garrison White Sands.

White Sand Missile Range's huge size and variety of habitats offers plenty of opportunity to collaborate in preserving Chihuahuan desert grasslands, dune ecosystems, riparian areas, woodlands, and streams and springs of the unique Southwestern landscape.

The following are examples demonstrating how the White Sands Missile Range continues to make a difference for wildlife conservation:

- In the summer of 2007, WSMR reintroduced 23 captive-bred northern aplomado falcons to the missile range. The endangered northern aplomado falcon is designated as an experimental population in New Mexico and Arizona. The chicks used the hack site for several months while they practiced flying and became proficient enough as flyers and hunters to survive on their own. The release was done in cooperation with the Service, The Peregrine Fund, Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, New Mexico State Lands Office, and the Turner Endangered Species Fund. WSMR is entering into a cooperative agreement with The Peregrine Fund with the intent to continue this project until this species is recovered and delisted.
- WSMR and the Service led the creation and implementation of the new Army/Service/New Mexico Department of Game and Fish Conservation Partnership Team in 2007. The team will focus on conservation and management of species at risk (such as the gray vireo, oscura mountain Colorado chipmunk and pinyon jay), as well as ongoing conservation and management efforts of endangered species such as the Todsens' pennyroyal.
- WSMR manages over 95% of the world's population of the White Sands pupfish in its remote springs and creeks. A cooperative agreement with the Service, Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and White Sands National Monument ensures conservation of the pupfish in lieu of listing the species.
- WSMR actively manages the restoration and conservation of the state threatened desert bighorn sheep with the adjacent San Andres National Wildlife Refuge.
- WSMR works proactively with the Service's Division of Migratory Bird Management towards the conservation of migratory birds and to ensure compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
- WSMR worked with Bat Conservation International to secure a signed Memorandum of Understanding for the conservation of bats at military installations.
- WSMR plays an active role in educating its workforce and residents on local wildlife through a series of educational posters and guidebooks on amphibians and reptiles. They also write articles for the WSMR newspaper – The Missile Ranger – to address wildlife issues of interest to the public.
- WSMR is a signatory to the Memorandum of Understanding among state and federal Agencies in New Mexico for the conservation and management of the black-tailed prairie dog.

Since the passage of the Sikes Act more than four decades ago, the Service has worked in cooperation with the military to conserve fish and wildlife resources found on the 25 million acres of land owned and managed by the Department of Defense. These lands are vital to maintaining survival and diversity of many important species. In recent years natural resource management on installations has attained a greater significance within the Department of Defense and among Congress and the public, leading to the creation of integrated natural resource management plans under the Sikes Act. In response, many military installations have accomplished exceptional conservation work using a partnership approach with federal and state agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as private conservation organizations.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

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For more information about fish and wildlife conservation in the Southwest, visit <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/>.