

# FORT HUACHUCA SENTINEL LANDSCAPE

Arizona | est. 2015



Located in southern Arizona’s Sonoran Desert, Fort Huachuca is one of the largest unmanned aerial vehicle training facilities in the world, supporting operations for the U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection. The arid, remote landscape surrounding the post is predominantly made up of cattle ranches and native grasslands. This type of land use supports Fort Huachuca by ensuring low levels of electromagnetic interference on the installation’s training activities. However, development pressure is increasing in the region due to urban sprawl and population growth. Land use conversion poses challenges to local communities by increasing competition for limited water resources, fragmenting important wildlife habitat, and encroaching upon Fort Huachuca’s critical airspace. As a result, a group of partners came together to form the Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape in 2015. The primary goal of this landscape is to use collaborative, community-driven strategies to tackle issues such as water conservation, agricultural viability, wildlife habitat restoration, and military mission protection.

## PARTNERS ENHANCE WATER QUANTITY FOR THE SAN PEDRO RIVER

Stretching from Mexico through Arizona, the San Pedro River supports a vibrant ecosystem, local human populations, and critical training operations at the U.S. Army’s Fort Huachuca. The Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape is home to two-thirds of the waterway, which is one of the last free-flowing rivers in the Southwest. For years, rapid development in the region has increased demand for water and climate-related droughts have left portions of the San Pedro River dry. In response, Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape partners formed the Cochise Conservation and Recharge Network, an initiative dedicated to conserving groundwater and improving the health of riparian

Figure 1: Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Map

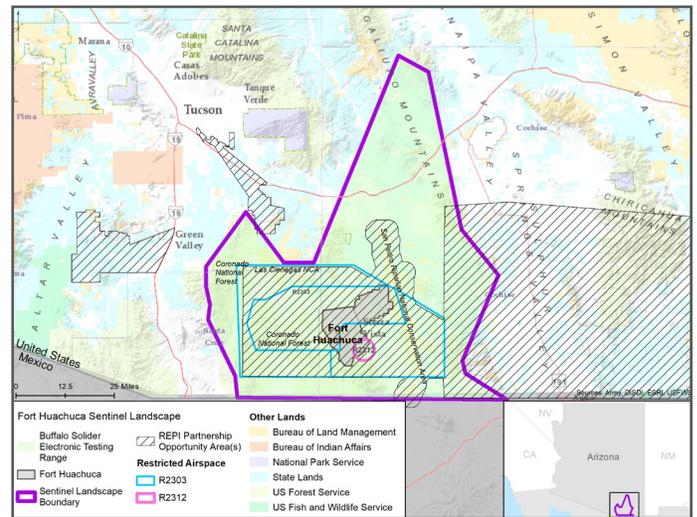


Table 1: Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Footprint Details (from year established through fiscal year 2020)

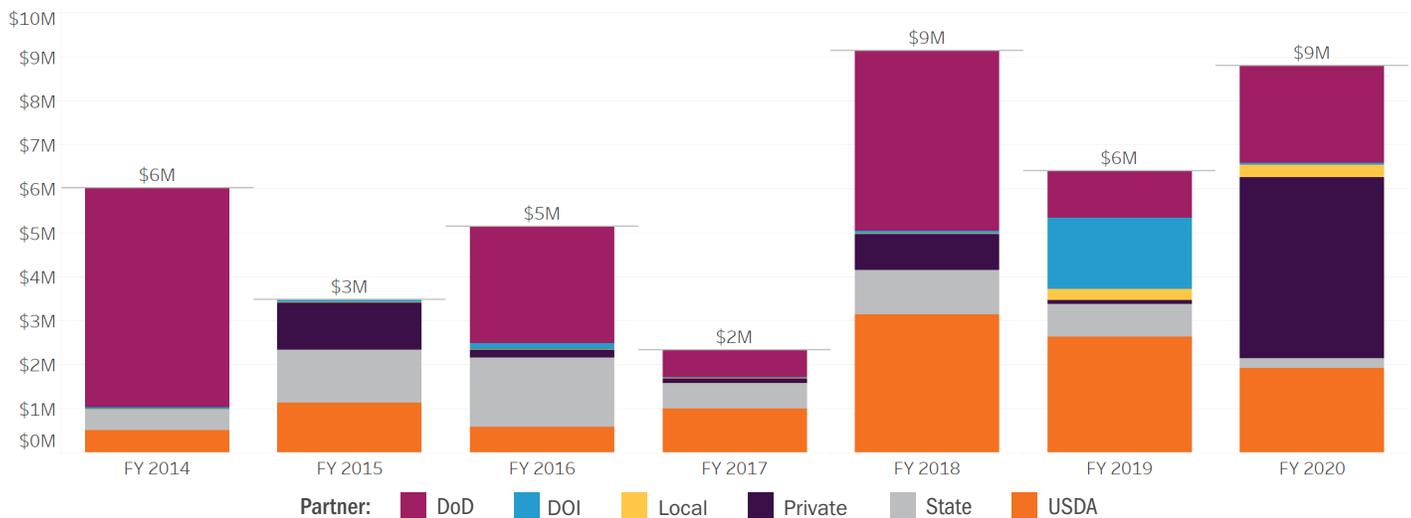
Total Protected Acres <sup>1</sup>	65,121
Total Enrolled Acres <sup>2</sup>	309,475
Active Base Area	80,912
<b>Total Sentinel Landscape Area</b>	<b>1,680,895</b>

habitat in the Upper San Pedro Watershed. The Network accomplishes its mission in two ways. First, partners acquire conservation easements to preclude additional development in the area. The Network has permanently protected thousands of acres of land along the desert river, which one estimate suggests avoids 1 billion gallons of potential groundwater pumping per year. Second, the Network facilitates replenishment projects that capture stormwater and effluent and funnel it to an underground aquifer that feeds the San Pedro River. One such effort, the Palominas Stormwater Recharge and Flood Control

<sup>1</sup> Protected acres are recognized as land acquisitions—fee simple or easement—that have completed the due diligence and closing actions necessary to obtain a real estate interest.

<sup>2</sup> Land is considered enrolled if the property owner voluntarily participates in a federal or state land-management program that provides financial or technical assistance to promote sustainable agricultural practices, restore imperiled species and their habitat, or preserve critical natural resources; or if a landowner or an organization receives a federal or state grant to conduct a conservation project on said property.

**Figure 2:** Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Total Funding by Partner



Project, recharges 98 acre-feet per year using a large detention basin and 13 recharge cells. Through frequent monitoring, the partners gather data about the volume and rate at which the facility recharges water, which will be used to test similar innovative water conservation practices in the region.

### FEDERAL-TRIBAL PARTNERSHIP REDUCES RISK OF WILDFIRES

The Coronado National Forest blankets portions of the Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape. Having once been home to indigenous communities, the Coronado National Forest holds cultural significance for Native American Tribes in the region. As a result, the U.S. Forest Service integrates tribal perspectives into its management of the land through which the Coronado National Forest and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) identified an opportunity to build upon their existing

relationship by forming a collaborative wildfire mitigation initiative. Funded through the Reserved Treaty Rights Land Program, the project enables the Fort Apache Agency to conduct thinning projects and prescribed burns on Coronado National Forest land. Fire is an important agent of renewal for the forest that, when introduced effectively, reduces the risk of wildfire in the region and improves habitat for over 570 species. In addition to providing restoration benefits, this project allows the Fort Apache Agency to contribute to the management of the Chi'chil, an acorn from the Emory oak that is an important food source and cultural element for the Apache people. This initiative demonstrates that effective stewardship is not bound by jurisdiction. In 2019, BIA, the Coronado National Forest, and Fort Apache Agency received the prestigious Pulaski Award, which recognizes outstanding performance in areas of interagency collaboration.

#### Key Partners

- ★ U.S. Army
- ★ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency
- ★ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
- ★ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service
- ★ U.S. Department of Defense, Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration
- ★ U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management
- ★ U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service
- ★ U.S. Geological Survey
- ★ Arizona Department of Agriculture
- ★ Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs
- ★ Arizona Department of Environmental Quality
- ★ Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management
- ★ Arizona Department of Water Resources
- ★ Arizona Game and Fish Department
- ★ Arizona State Land Department
- ★ University of Arizona Cooperative Extension
- ★ Cienega Watershed Partnership
- ★ City of Sierra Vista
- ★ Cochise County
- ★ Fort Huachuca
- ★ Fry Fire District
- ★ Hereford Natural Resource Conservation District
- ★ Huachuca City
- ★ Santa Cruz County
- ★ Santa Cruz Natural Resource Conservation District
- ★ Arizona Antelope Foundation
- ★ Arizona Land and Water Trust
- ★ Borderlands Restoration
- ★ Desert Landscape Conservation Cooperative
- ★ Malpai Borderlands Group
- ★ National Audubon Society
- ★ National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- ★ Pheasants Forever
- ★ Sky Island Alliance
- ★ The Nature Conservancy
- ★ Trust for Public Land