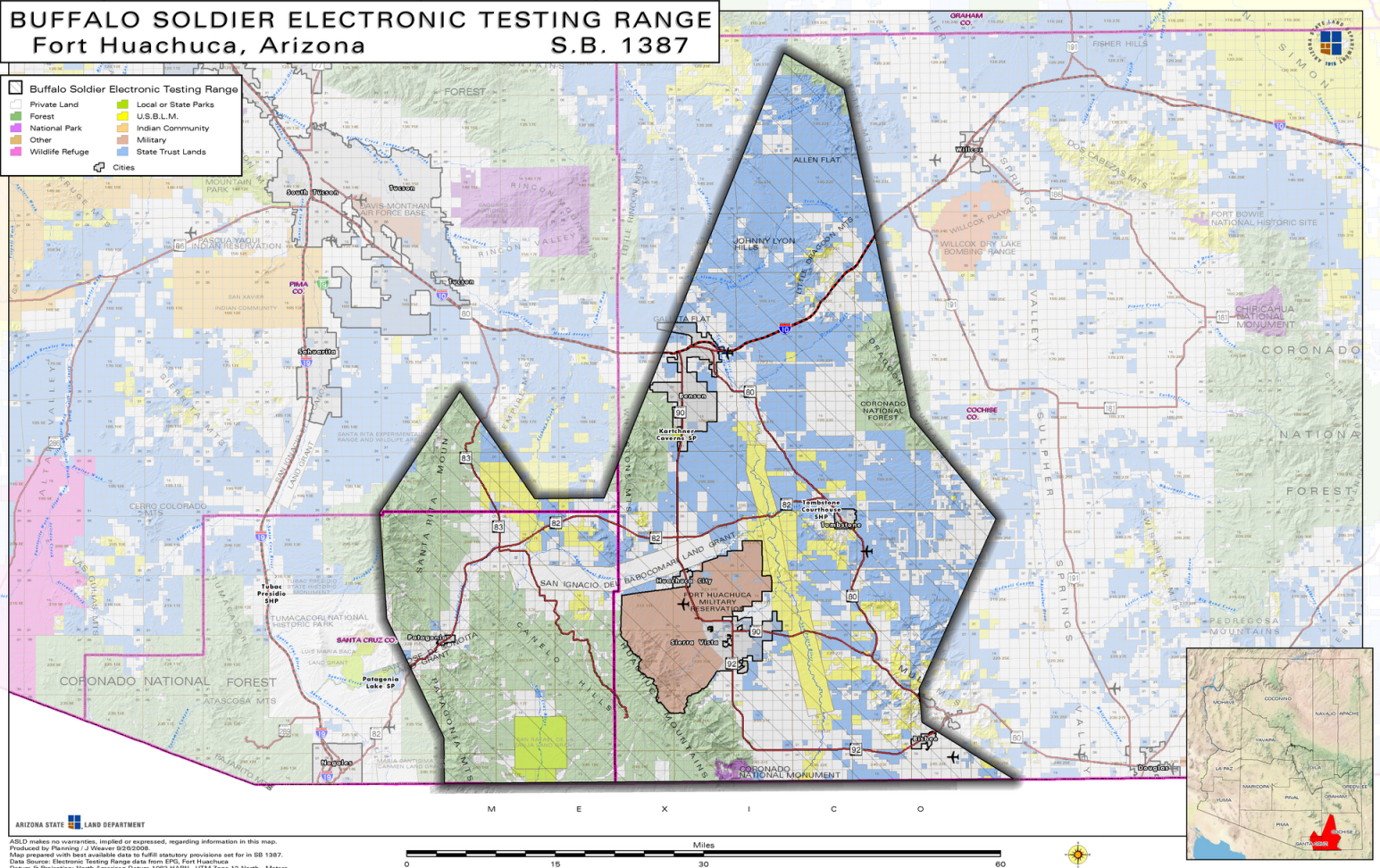


STRATEGIC PLAN 2022

BUFFALO SOLDIER ELECTRONIC TESTING RANGE Fort Huachuca, Arizona

S.B. 1387

- Buffalo Soldier Electronic Testing Range
- Private Land
- Forest
- National Park
- Other
- Wildlife Refuge
- Cities
- Local or State Parks
- U.S.B.L.M.
- Indian Community
- Military
- State Trust Lands



ARIZONA STATE LAND DEPARTMENT
ASLD makes no warranties, implied or expressed, regarding information in this map.
Produced by Planning / J Weaver 02/02/2008
Map prepared with best available data to fulfill statutory provisions set for in SB 1387.
Data Source: Electronic Testing Range data from EP2, Fort Huachuca
Datum & Projection: North American Datum 1983 NAD83, UTM Zone 12 North - Meters



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Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape (FHSL)

Introduction

Sentinel Landscapes are working or natural lands important to the Nation's defense missions-places where preserving the working and rural character of key landscapes strengthens the economies of farms, ranches, forests; conserves habitat and natural resources; and protects vital test and training missions conducted on those military installations that anchor such landscapes.

FHSL Partnership Strategic Plan

2021-2026

Vision

A flexible testing and training community that conducts successful missions at Fort Huachuca while, in partnership with a vibrant rural economy, preserving protected ecosystems, conserving natural resources, and building resilience across the landscape.

Mission

To leverage collective resources and support to accomplish common partner missions.

Goals

1. Strengthen military readiness at Fort Huachuca by protecting current and future missions.
2. Conserve open space while preserving working landscapes with willing stakeholders.
3. Improve and protect natural resources through compatible use & sustainability.
4. Bolster agriculture and forestry economies by empowering private landowners.
5. Increase climate change resilience for Fort Huachuca, the Sentinel Landscape environment, and our local economies.





FORT HUACHUCA SENTINEL LANDSCAPE

WHY? Fort Huachuca is Cochise County's top employer and annually generates nearly \$1 billion in wages and \$2.9 billion in economic impact. Development with increased population growth, inadequate planning, increased electromagnetic interference, and other incompatible land uses threaten the ability of Fort Huachuca to continue to carry out its unique missions.

In response to these growing challenges, the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Defense, and Interior established the

Sentinel Landscapes Partnership as a nationwide collaboration dedicated to promoting conservation, working lands, and national defense readiness in areas surrounding military installations. Using a multi-disciplinary approach federal, state, local agencies and private landowners are working together as the FHSL Partnership. Collaboratively, the FHSL Partnership can protect the needs of the military missions, sustain rural ranching economies, and protect critical natural resources.

BENEFIT? The FHSL Partnership promotes compatible land uses that enhance the training and activities of the Fort, works to strengthen the local economies of farms, and restore and preserve ranches and natural resources surrounding the Fort. The FHSL Partnership effectively brings together military, federal and state agencies, local governments, key organizations, and local landowners improving coordination and efforts to support the Fort and surrounding communities.

PARTNERSHIP FOCUS AREAS

1. Open-Space and Working Lands (OWLs): Strengthen private ranching and farming interests by encouraging participation in efforts to conserve working lands. Refer to page 6.

2. Sentinel Landscape Restoration Partnership (SLRP): Collaboratively develop and prioritize cooperative restoration opportunities to improve water quantity and quality, range conditions, forest conditions and fire management, wildlife

habitat, threatened and endangered species habitat, and other measures to improve the working and natural lands within the Sentinel Landscape ecologically connected areas. Refer to page 7.

3. Communications: Publicize and promote the value, purpose, and accomplishments of the FHSL Partnership. Share this information with the public, businesses, local, state, federal, and Tribal governments and increase funding within the landscape. Refer to page 12.





Open-Space Working Lands

WHY? The Sentinel Landscape surrounding Fort Huachuca includes the R-2303 Restricted Airspace and Buffalo Soldier Electronic Testing Range (BSETR). The R-2303 air space is restricted up to 30,000 feet and provides an ideal environment to train the Army's Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) pilots. The sky island geography surrounding the Fort forms the 1.65 million-acre BSETR. The unique rural, electronically quiet, and relatively uninhabited area allows the Army to conduct full frequency, full power jamming as part of the Department of Defense's cyber warfare testing. These attributes are not available anywhere else in the country. If these features are not protected, the military value of Fort Huachuca could decrease, leading to

reduced operations or closure. In such case, the adverse economic effect would be catastrophic. Primary threats to this unique environment include loss of open space due to incompatible development and increased population growth, that results in increased electronic interference and conflicts with aerial operations.

BENEFIT? Coordination by the Partners in maintaining the electronically quiet rural nature of the FHSL will effectively enhance the capabilities and high military value of Fort Huachuca, providing economic stability to the community. Providing ranchers and farmers with tools to enhance the sustainability of their

operations will help them maintain their historic rural lifestyle and critical role in local economies while sustainably managing natural resources and maintaining open space that supports our local wildlife.

Additionally, land protection is an important means of building climate resilience across a landscape. Permanent protection affords ecosystems the space and time to adapt to climate impacts such as extreme heat, drought, flood, and wildfire. Further, managers of protected lands, such as owners of conservation easements, are inclined to think about the long-term health of their land and undertake climate adaptation practices that may have long-term returns.

STRATEGIES

1. Keep open space and working lands sustainable by encouraging the voluntary use of conservation easements with willing landowners to increase rural economic viability and reduce development pressure.
2. Work with Municipal, County, and State officials to encourage and coordinate compatible growth and resource management in a manner that protects the missions of the Fort.
3. Pursue conservation easements to mitigate future water use, support wildlife habitat, decrease the density of development in the wildland-urban interface to reduce the wildfire risk to local communities, and increase climate resilience across the landscape.
4. Conduct landowner outreach, engagement, and training events focused on listening to ranchers and their concerns, building trust, studying ranch planning techniques, sharing FHSL Partnership efforts, and available resources.
5. Align the Open-Space and Work Lands implementation plan actions with existing state and federal programs, including resilience initiatives.

Sentinel Landscape Restoration Partnership



GRASSLANDS AND RANGE

WHY? Grasslands and rangelands make up approximately 1.1 million acres or 69% of the Sentinel Landscape footprint. This open space is primarily used for livestock grazing and can support wildlife habitat and healthy watersheds. Open space is helpful in maintaining the electronically silent environment necessary for Fort Huachuca's electromagnetic testing missions. Degradation of these lands by the invasion of non-native grasses or severe erosion diminishes the landscape's value as a rangeland and wildlife habitat, or its ability to support healthy watersheds. Degraded rangelands are also less able to support economically viable agricultural operations and may lead to the conversion of these landscapes by development.

BENEFIT? The sustainment of healthy and productive grasslands and rangelands has holistic benefits in the ecosystem. Healthy watersheds help infiltrate clean, abundant water. Native-grass habitats support innumerable wildlife species and form the foundation of a working agricultural landscape. Healthy, native grasslands serve to sequester carbon over time and are able to adapt to climate change impacts such as wildfire, flood, drought, and extreme heat.

STRATEGIES

1. Promote the economic success of agricultural grassland users.
2. Remove invasive and encroaching grassland species.
3. Reduce erosion.
4. Improve grassland-obligate wildlife habitat.
5. Increase herbaceous ground cover.
6. Increase grassland ecosystem resilience to climate change.

• THREATENED, ENDANGERED AND AT-RISK SPECIES

WHY? The FHSL Partnership works collectively to improve habitat and population numbers for federally-listed threatened and endangered species and several state-listed at-risk species. On the Fort, measures identified through Endangered Species Act consultation direct the Fort to implement reasonable and prudent measures to minimize the impacts on listed species. These measures help protect habitats and landscape connectivity to maintain or enhance the population numbers of these species. However, within the identified habitats, these measures also limit military activities and timing. Some affected military activities include low-level flights, aerial operations, and ground testing and training activities critical to the missions of the Fort.

BENEFIT? Coordination by the FHSLP across all ownerships in developing or enhancing additional off Fort habitats, landscapes, and ecotypes may improve the population numbers. Improving habitat quality will reduce impacts to the species and potentially reduce related restrictions on Fort operations.

Sentinel Landscape Restoration Partnership



STRATEGIES

1. Work with willing public and private landowners to preserve and enhance appropriate habitat areas for listed species and their life history needs, including roosting, foraging, fledging, etc.
2. Work with Federal, State, and Tribal land managers, private landowners, and NGOs to implement USFWS recovery plans to help recover listed species.
3. Enhance additional off-Fort habitats for the listed species to reduce on-Fort restrictions.
4. Work with Federal, state, local partners, and willing landowners to protect and improve wildlife habitat to prevent additional species listings.

WATER RESOURCES AND RIPARIAN ECOTYPES

WHY? The FHSL Partnership exists in an arid environment, where water is the key to all life. The San Pedro River is the last free-flowing river in the American southwest and its riparian ecosystem has been negatively affected by past groundwater use. Its habitat is critical to thousands of riparian obligate species, plants, and animals, both resident and migratory. The hydrologic function of the river is dependent on the watersheds that feed it, and the existing aquifer beneath. Maintenance of critical base-flow is necessary for the survival of the river and all that depends on it. Declines in water quality and quantity, and the degradation of riparian ecosystems threaten the way of life of both humans and wildlife for future generations.

BENEFIT? FHSL Partnership combined efforts result in more and cleaner water available for wildlife, human communities, and overall ecosystem function. Successful water conservation projects can reduce restrictions on-Fort, allowing for greater mission flexibility.

Water security in the aquifer, water permanence in the river, and water retention and availability in the mountains and rangelands mean better resilience to severe droughts for both the community and the ecosystem.

STRATEGIES

1. Reduce per capita water use/consumption on-Fort, in households, and in commercial and agricultural operations (domestic and commercial water use).
2. Restore degraded riparian ecosystems and protect riparian ecosystems from degradation.
3. Improve water availability, quality, and quantity in watersheds and riparian zones.
4. Facilitate mitigation credit-earning to enable Fort mission flexibility.





Sentinel Landscape Restoration Partnership

WILDFIRE & HAZARDOUS FUELS

WHY? Wildfire adversely affects training, missions, aerial operations, unmanned aircraft systems training, and many other activities within Fort Huachuca. Wildfires also threaten lives, property, and livelihood of residents of Fort Huachuca and neighboring cities, towns, and rural and forested areas throughout the landscape. High severity wildfire can damage sensitive areas for water, wildlife, and other forest resources.

The threat of wildfire is one of the major risks to the Fort and all other land managers and owners within the Sentinel Landscape. Climate change is expected to increase the intensity and frequency of wildfire.

BENEFIT? With hazardous fuels reduced on and off the Fort, the risk, frequency, and severity of wildfires can be reduced. This will protect the lives and property of all residents in the area.

Lower fire risk will also result in less disruption of training and operations conducted by the Fort, enhancing the Fort's military capabilities.

Increased coordination and cooperation among adjacent landowners will improve the ability to plan and implement hazardous fuels reduction projects at a scale which has the ability to effectively reduce fire risk and improve habitat.

STRATEGIES

1. Continue to develop new agreements for sharing resources across boundaries.
2. Obtain funding for USFWS Firescape Biological Opinions on critically important areas in FHSL to address the use of prescribed fire. (*Obtain funding for the development of a region-wide Biological Opinion with USFWS to address the use of prescribed fire within the FHSL.*)
3. Conduct parallel planning to implement existing Wildfire Management Plans, Community Wildfire Protection Plans, Firewise Communities, and Healthy Forests Initiatives to leverage work on adjacent land and encourage collaborative large-scale cross-boundary efforts.
4. When and where appropriate, utilize cross-boundary treatments to reduce hazardous fuels and provide for public safety.
5. Encourage the reduction of hazardous fuels by considering other techniques such as hand thinning, mastication, and herbicide treatments.
6. Improve forest and upland ecosystem resilience to climate variability-induced fire behavior.





Communications

WHY? The Communications Working Group seeks to share information and celebrate success stories to foster a community of learning and trust and unify those who live in and care about these special landscapes.

The FHSL covers 1.65 million acres and celebrated its 5-year anniversary as a Sentinel Landscape in 2020. Since its designation, the FHSL Partnership has completed numerous conservation easements, accomplished many wildfire fuels reduction and water recharge

projects, and invested millions of dollars in the landscape footprint.

The FHSL Partnership's Communications Working Group supports the activities of the Partnership's internal communication strategies and external education and marketing.

BENEFIT? Timely, accurate, educational, and inclusive communications are vital to the success of the working groups and the

Partnership's ability to nurture old and cultivate new collaborations. The Communications group endeavors to share grant opportunities, bring partners together for common goals to protect the mission and training that takes place on and near the installation, ensure open space, conserve threatened and endangered species, sustain and improve water levels within the San Pedro River and ground water levels in surrounding areas, and bolster the local and agricultural economies within the FHSL.

STRATEGIES

1. Communicate the value of the Fort Huachuca military mission and how a strong, resilient environment directly supports national defense.
2. Increase the understanding of key stakeholders, partners, and the general public regarding opportunities and accomplishments of Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape partners and working groups.
3. Promote activities such as education and outreach internally (Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscapes individuals and working groups) and externally (partners, legislative representatives, stakeholders),

and the general public through traditional and social media, postings in community locations, and other methods as appropriate).

4. Share accomplishments within the Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape.
5. Provide proactive communications as process and project updates become available and milestones are reached.



For more information about the Fort Huachuca
Sentinel Landscape, go to:
sentinellandscapes.org

