



Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape

Strategic Plan
December 2018

FORT HUACHUCA SENTINEL LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP (FHSLP) STRATEGIC PLAN

This Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Partnership (FHSLP) Strategic Plan for 2019 – 2024 outlines objectives to help the Partnership preserve the working and rural character of the landscape, strengthen the economies of farms, ranches, and forests, conserve habitats and natural resources, and protect vital test and training missions conducted on Fort Huachuca.

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.

HOW? 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 Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Partnership (FHSLP). Collaboratively the FHSLP can protect the needs of the military missions, sustain rural ranching economies, and protect critical natural resources.

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

OBJECTIVES

1. Strengthen private ranching and farming interests by encouraging participation in efforts to conserve working lands.
2. Leverage the collective resources of the FHSLP to attract financial and non-financial support to increase capacity for the implementation of Sentinel Landscape objectives.
3. Develop and implement conservation and restoration opportunities that support working lands, natural resources, and military missions.
4. Publicize and promote the value, purpose, and accomplishments of the FHSLP. Share this information with the public, businesses, local, state, federal and Tribal governments and use it to increase funding within this landscape.
5. By end of 2019, develop implementation plan(s) with specific measurable goals and objectives.





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 has de-conflicted airspace 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 uncontrolled development and increased population growth, that results in increased electronic interference and conflicts with aerial operations.

HOW? Utilize available programs and tools to preserve open space and maintain the electronically quiet rural nature of the FHSL area. Public/Private sectors can work together to allow appropriate development in

a place and manner which does not diminish the attributes of the R-2303 Airspace or the BSETR.

BENEFIT? Coordination by the Partners in maintaining the electronically quiet rural nature of the FHSL will effectively enhance military capabilities of the Fort, provide economic stability to the community, and allow the Fort to maintain its high military value. Providing ranchers and farmers with tools to enhance the sustainability of their operations will help them maintain their treasured rural lifestyle and critical role in local economies, while maintaining open space.

OBJECTIVES

1. Keep open space and rural working lands viable by encouraging the use of conservation easements with willing landowners. Prioritize proposed easements within the R-2303 Restricted Air Space considering: proximity to the Fort and existing developed areas, connection to other conservation easements, support of economically viable working lands, and support of migratory corridors for Threatened and Endangered (T&E) species and other important wildlife.
2. Work with Municipal, County, and State officials to allow appropriate growth in a manner that protects the missions of the Fort.
3. Keep open space and rural working lands sustainable by helping improve the economic viability of local ranches to reduce development pressure.
4. Include targeted outreach to engage landowners within the R-2303 Restricted Air Space and the BSETR.
5. Conduct landowner outreach, engagement, and training events, focused on listening to ranchers and their concerns, building trust, ranch planning techniques, sharing FHSLP efforts, and available resources.
6. Conduct public and government outreach, engagement, and training events, focused on how easement programs, military readiness, and BSETR are important to Military and FHSLP's missions.
7. Align the management plan actions with existing federal and state programs.





THREATENED, ENDANGERED AND AT-RISK SPECIES

WHY? The FHSLP is working collectively to improve habitat and population numbers for 14 federally-listed T&E species, as well as several state listed at-risk species. On the Fort, protection measures identified in the 2014 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Final Biological Opinion (BO) direct the Fort to implement reasonable and prudent measures to minimize the impacts on listed species. These measures help protect habitats, landscape connectivity, roosting sites, and foraging areas to maintain or enhance population numbers of these species. However, within the identified habitats, these measures also limit military activities and timing, such as in the Agave Management Areas (AMAs)

and near springs, seeps, and creeks. The limited activities impact low level flights, pyrotechnics, aerial operations, and other training and activities critical to the missions of the Fort.

HOW? On a landscape scale, the FHSLP can use science to develop or enhance additional off Fort habitats for the listed species. They can work with the Cochise Conservation and Recharge Network and other local efforts, to explore other water saving measures to further reduce local water use, and find additional opportunities to recharge the base flow into the San Pedro River. The FHSLP can collaboratively implement the recovery plans for the listed species across multiple ownerships.

BENEFIT? Coordination by the FHSLP across all ownerships in developing or enhancing additional off Fort habitats may improve the population numbers and may produce a trend toward delisting of these species. Additionally, more or enhanced off Fort habitats may allow more activities on Fort including night operations, increased use of pyrotechnics, off-road maneuvers, and less timing restriction. Identifying more ways to preserve the riparian habitats and maintain the base flow in the San Pedro River is important. Relieving restrictions of use and timing on the Fort will enhance the military value of the Fort and maintain its economic importance in Arizona.

OBJECTIVES

1. Work with willing public and private landowners to preserve and enhance appropriate habitat areas for listed species, including roosting, foraging, fledging, etc.
2. Work with Federal land managers, State Trust land managers and private landowners to implement the USFWS's Lesser Long-Nosed Bat Action Plan and the bat's post delisting monitoring.
3. Identify and implement additional water conservation efforts within the FHSL to maintain water flow in springs, seeps, streams, and rivers.
4. Seek additional conservation easements to lower future demand for water withdrawals.
5. Work with Arizona Game and Fish Department, the USFWS, and others to implement recovery plans for the listed species.
6. In the implementation plan, consider priority areas and actions for the listed species identified in the USFWS Recovery Plans.



WILDFIRE AND HAZARDOUS FUELS

WHY? The threat of wildfire is one of the major risks to the Fort and all other land managers and owners within the Sentinel Landscape. Wildfire adversely affects training, missions, aerial operations, UAS 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 areas throughout the landscape. Further, high severity wildfire can damage sensitive areas for water, wildlife and other forest resources.

HOW? The various agencies, counties, and communities within the FHSL have developed specific plans that address actions to suppress, manage, prevent catastrophic wildfires, and reduce the amount of hazardous fuels. In implementation, it is urged that the partners utilize this strategic plan to coordinate cross-boundary landscape scale hazardous fuel reduction projects.

BENEFIT? With increased reduction of hazardous fuel completed 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. In addition, lower fire risk will result in less disruption of training and operations conducted by the Fort, and allow more use of pyrotechnics and other restricted activities, thus enhancing the Fort's military capabilities. Increased coordination and cooperation from adjacent land owners may allow larger, more effective, and more efficient use of prescribed fires to reduce hazardous fuels.

OBJECTIVES

1. Continue to develop new agreements for sharing resources cross boundaries.
2. Develop 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 and Community Wildfire Protection Plans that leverages work on adjacent lands and encourages collaborative large-scale cross-boundary efforts.
4. When and where appropriate, utilize cross boundary treatments to reduce hazardous fuels, accomplish ecological goals, and provide for public safety.
5. The implementation plan should consider all existing tools across the FHSL.
6. Encourage reduction of hazardous fuels by considering other techniques such as hand thinning, mastication, and herbicide treatments.



Cover Photo: Katja Schulz

For more information about the Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape, please call the Fort Huachuca Public Affairs Office at 520.533.1850.

