

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
between the  
DEPARTMENT OF WAR  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
and  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
establishing  
GOVERNING PRINCIPLES FOR THE  
SENTINEL LANDSCAPES PARTNERSHIP

**Preamble**

The enduring mission of the Department of War (DoW) is to provide the combat-credible military forces needed to deter war and protect the security of our Nation. In order to do so, DoW must be able to use its lands to test, train, and operate and must work with others to protect those lands and military airspace from incompatible development (including encroachment that involves or may involve foreign investment), regulatory restrictions, threats to military installation resilience, and other forms of encroachment.

The mission of the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) is to protect and manage the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provide scientific and other information about those resources; and honor its trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and affiliated island communities. DOI strives to work cooperatively with others in all levels of government and private landowners to improve management of species and their habitats and enhance conservation stewardship in order to achieve shared natural resource management goals across landscapes.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues and works to provide economic opportunity through innovation, promote agriculture production, and to preserve our Nation's natural resources through conservation, restored forests, improved watersheds, and healthy private working lands.

The Sentinel Landscapes Partnership was established to enhance collaboration among DoW, DOI, USDA, and others in government and in the private sector on measures and actions that will protect military lands and airspace from incompatible development, regulatory restrictions, threats to military installation resilience, and other forms of encroachment, while also promoting conservation, agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation, and the health of both our natural resources and of the rural economy.

To that end, the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership works to achieve landscape-level outcomes that are consistent with and supportive of land uses that are compatible with the military mission and concurrently advance the missions and goals of the DOI, USDA, and others in the public and private sectors who engage in actions under the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership.

DoW, DOI, and USDA, therefore, enter into this memorandum of understanding (MOU) to advance the purposes of the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership.

## **Authorities**

Congress initially established statutory authority for the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership, comprised of the Secretaries of War, Agriculture, and Interior and the heads of other Federal departments and agencies that elect to become full partners in the program (hereinafter referred to as the Partners) by enacting section 317 of the “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018” (Pub. L. 115-91, 10 U.S.C. § 2684a note). Congress amended that authority by enacting section 317 of the “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022” (Pub. L. 117-81, 10 U.S.C. § 2684a note). In section 311 of the “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 (Pub. L. 118-31), Congress further amended and codified the Sentinel Landscape Partnership authority, transferring it to 10 U.S.C. § 2693. Section 2693(c) of title 10 confirms the authority of the Partners to coordinate their sentinel landscape efforts for the mutual benefit of conservation, resilience, working lands, and national defense. Section 2693(d) of title 10 authorizes the Partners and the other heads of Federal departments and agencies to give any eligible landowner or land manager within a designated sentinel landscape priority consideration for participation in any easement, grant, or assistance programs administered by that Secretary or head’s department. Furthermore, section 2693(g)(3) of title 10 defines a sentinel landscape as a landscape-scale area that includes one or more military installations or state-owned National Guard installations and associated airspace, along with the publicly and privately owned lands that serve to protect and support the rural economy, the natural environment, outdoor recreation, and the national defense missions of the military or State-owned National Guard installation.

## **Purposes**

Sentinel landscapes are places where preserving the working and rural character of our private lands is important for both national defense and conservation priorities. Natural lands as well as working forestry and agricultural lands provide many important public benefits: watershed protection; habitat for species of conservation concern; opportunities for outdoor recreation; open space and wildland preservation; biodiversity protection; commodity production; and the maintenance of a rural way of life. In addition to those benefits, certain working and natural lands are also situated geographically to protect the military mission from incompatible development. Through the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership, the Partners will work together where priorities overlap near military installations to help landowners and land managers make improvements to the land that benefit their operations, enhance wildlife habitat, preserve natural resources, and enable the DoW’s training missions to continue.

The Partners enter into this MOU and agree to:

A. Coordinate the delivery of Federal programs within designated sentinel landscapes to optimize the benefits of Federal assistance to private, tribal, state, and municipal landowners and land managers therein whose working and natural lands also serve to protect the military mission.

B. Advance the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership, which was established to recognize and promote sound conservation, natural resource management, forestry and agricultural economies, and nature-based resilience practices on lands and waters that also serve to enable and protect the military mission.

C. Identify, coordinate, and carry out sentinel landscape efforts as envisioned and authorized under 10 U.S.C. §2693, including, as appropriate, the collective designation of sentinel landscapes and the support of existing sentinel landscapes.

### **It is mutually agreed**

A. The collective leadership of the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership consists of principal-level members representing each of the Partners. Said principals agree to meet at least annually to provide input to and approve a Sentinel Landscapes Partnership work plan outlining projected 12-month actions.

B. There is an established Sentinel Landscape Federal Coordinating Committee (SL-FCC) to facilitate interaction between the Partners. The committee shall be comprised of one or more designated senior-level officials representing each of the Partners and will be responsible for preparing and presenting the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership work plan to principals annually.

C. The Partners agree that the SL-FCC may establish technical working groups as needed.

D. Additional Federal agencies with programs addressing conservation or resilience and missions consistent with achieving the purposes of the Sentinel Landscape Partnership may participate in the activities of the Sentinel Landscape Partnership and may, with the concurrence of the existing Partners, be added as full Partners to the Sentinel Landscape Partnership. Membership in the Sentinel Landscape Partnership shall be evidenced by each new Partner's execution of a joinder to this MOU. Upon execution, such Partner shall be considered a Party to this MOU. The countersignature of the existing Partners shall not be required for such joinder.

E. The Partners agree, in consultation with one another, to use their authorities and programs to preserve, enhance, and protect habitat, working lands, and associated agricultural and forest production in the vicinity of military installations in designated sentinel landscapes in order to reduce, prevent, or eliminate current or future restrictions on military training and testing activities and forestall incompatible development in the vicinity of installations, while also advancing the missions of one or more of the other Partners. More specifically, the Partners agree to work together to advance the following objectives:

- Determine needs and identify opportunities for both public and private sector programs, services, incentives, and other measures that would encourage private landowners to engage in forest and land management activities that effectively contribute to the sustainment of military installations, ranges, and airspace, particularly through the voluntary perpetuation and expansion of private working lands.
- Coordinate and improve the delivery of Federal assistance programs to landowners and land managers within designated sentinel landscapes via a coordinated work plan.
- Determine whether sufficient administrative discretion exists within the framework of existing program authorities to support the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership, and identify any additional authorities recommended to facilitate the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership.
- Collectively designate sentinel landscapes and seek to facilitate actions that demonstrate the advantages of the Partners working together for the mutual benefit of conservation, working lands, and national defense.
- Coordinate with local sentinel landscapes to develop and promote the use of a compendium of potential tools and approaches to benefit designated sentinel landscapes.

F. To facilitate coordination between the Partners and appropriate State agencies in developing, revising, and implementing State action plans (e.g., State forest action plans, State wildlife action plans) for consistency with designated sentinel landscapes.

To support the enhancement of collaboration among the existing Partners and other stakeholder and encourage additional Federal agencies and elements to join the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership as full Partners.

G. No later than one year following the execution of this MOU and annually thereafter, the SL-FCC agree to prepare a joint report that includes an assessment of the actions undertaken within the various designated sentinel landscapes to advance the objectives of the Sentinel Landscape Partnership as articulated in this MOU.

H. This MOU is a voluntary agreement that expresses the good-faith intentions of the Partners; is not intended to be legally binding, does not create any contractual or fiscal obligations, and is not enforceable by any party. It does not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable by law or equity, by any Partner, against the Partners included in this MOU, their officers or employees, or any other person. This MOU does not direct or apply to any person outside of the Partners included in this MOU. All commitments made by the Partners included in this MOU are subject to the availability of appropriated funds and budget priorities within each Partners included in this MOU. Nothing in this MOU obligates the Partners to expend appropriations or to enter into any contract, assistance agreement, interagency agreement, or to incur other financial obligations. Any transaction involving transfers of funds between the Partners included in this MOU will be handled in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and procedures under separate written agreements.

## Signatures

This MOU shall take effect beginning on the day after the last party signs. This MOU shall remain in effect until superseded or terminated by mutual agreement of the parties. Any party may withdraw from this MOU at will upon written notice to the other parties.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the parties hereto through their duly authorized representatives have executed this MOU as of the written date of the last signature below.

### United States Department of War, Office of the Assistant Secretary of War

THOMPSON.ROBE  
RT.E.1044046578

Digitally signed by  
THOMPSON.ROBERT.E.1044046578  
Date: 2025.10.24 07:07:28 -04'00'

Robert Thompson  
Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of War for Energy, Installations, and Environment (PTDO ASW(EI&E))

### Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service

BRIAN  
NESVIK

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NESVIK  
Date: 2026.01.08  
13:11:28 -05'00'

Brian Nesvik  
Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

### Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service

 9.24.2025  
Aubrey J.D. Bettencourt  
Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service

### Department of Agriculture, Forest Service

 11/20/2025  
Tom Schultz  
Chief of the U.S. Forest Service