



Case Study

THE NEEDS OF NATIONAL SECURITY TRAINING AND LARGE-SCALE HABITAT PROTECTION: SHARED GOALS NORTH AMERICA, U.S.A.

A partnership with the United States military shows that finding solutions that advance partners' goals springs from a deep understanding of each other's values and 'culture'.

The Nature Conservancy's partnership with the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) has been ongoing for the past two decades. The Conservancy works with DOD at over 20 sites – in the U.S. and internationally – protecting large-scale landscapes, streamlining endangered species protection, improving science-based conservation and land management.

Although the missions of the two organizations are very different, there is considerable overlap in objectives.

In the United States, the Department of Defense is the part of the government that is in charge of every aspect of the country's military readiness. One of the most important ways that the DOD readies soldiers for battle is by training them in real environments that can stand-in for possible conflict situations. As one military staffer has said, "As far as the military's mission goes, the environment is a stage prop for practicing the art of war, and soldiers need a swamp to be a swamp, a desert to be a desert." Soldiers also require large landscapes to learn how to use dangerous and loud explosives and machinery.

For these reasons, the DOD owns over 30 million acres of land with 425 installations used for military training encompassing every imaginable type of terrain and ecosystem. These lands harbor more threatened and endangered species than land managed by the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service or the Park Service.

Like the Conservancy, the military is concerned not only about the land they own, but also what happens outside it. Many of the areas they care about are near "urban sprawl," where rapid and often unplanned urban development can make military maneuvers and noise increasingly controversial. In some places, development has sprung up just outside the drop zone for parachutists, who have been found in backyard swimming pools.

The Department of Defense had historically been addressing threatened and endangered species and environmental regulatory issues on a piecemeal basis. The DOD needed some incentives, rather than just the threat of penalties for noncompliance. Their main incentive to protect biodiversity was to reduce or head off restrictions on training.

3.A.2. Establish Shared Goals

The DOD had engaged in partnerships with the Conservancy since the mid-1980's in site-specific ways that grew to more overarching approaches in the 1990's and beyond. These decades of partnership have a large scale "buffering" program called the Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI) to protect both neighboring land and military bases with a greater conservation focus. The REPI programs helps military installations implement compatible land use partner projects with state and local governments and non-governmental organizations to protect non-military land, which helps relieve installation encroachment pressures.

This long-term partnership work yielded the following 'best practices' for creating shared goals:

- **Honor your partners' objectives; internalize and respect their values:** "TNC focused on DOD's 'felt needs.' We kept the interest of our partner top in mind. We have also shaped those objectives. We made the overlap bigger, which requires flexibility by both parties, but doesn't mean putting their objectives above ours. We don't just give lip service to this – they'd see through that. You can apply this lesson to oil and gas, ranching. No one will want to partner or listen if they think you want to stop activities important to them."
- **Find solutions that advance both sets of values:** "Advance the partner's objectives in ways you wouldn't on your own, but without violating your core values. You have to have staff who can make good judgment calls."
- **Choose TNC staff who understand the vernacular and more:** "TNC staff need technical know-how, credibility, and the skills to build relationships and amass influence to deploy technical expertise. You need experience in their shoes. You have to understand the culture and know what grates and what does not, and how to say things that will be well received. You need linguistic facility."
- **Long term relationship and on the ground credibility:** "Invest for the long term. Leverage depends on good relationships, which don't happen overnight. We did more hands on work in the beginning to build the relationship. You can't bypass the investment of 'face time' at the local level, but you have to follow up with work at the national level if you want to replicate success."
- **Identify enabling conditions in your partner's culture or assets:** "DOD's culture is directive. When someone in DC says 'do it this way,' it tends to happen. Other agencies are more an alliance of regional powers... Usually the lowest management level is the best place for TNC to start working with an agency, but with DOD we could jump to the national level. This lesson goes beyond the U.S. context."

The Conservancy's ongoing partnership with the DOD resulted in the 2003 Congressional authorization for the Department of Defense to form partnerships with "eligible entities" – such as The Nature Conservancy – to buy land or conservation easements that surround military installations, creating natural buffer zones around military bases. The Conservancy is working with the DOD at more than two dozen bases across the country and internationally to create protected buffer zones. The ability to create new high leverage goals and opportunities continues within this powerful and flexible partnership.

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