

FORT HUACHUCA SENTINEL LANDSCAPE

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Elegant Trogon of the Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape, PC: George Andrejko, AGFD

Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Partnership Newsletter

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What is a Sentinel Landscape?

The Sentinel Landscapes Partnership is a coalition of federal agencies, state and local governments, and non-governmental organizations that work with willing landowners and managers to advance sustainable land management practices around military installations and ranges. Founded in 2013 by the U.S. Department of Defense, Department of Agriculture, and Department of the Interior, the partnership's mission is to strengthen military readiness, conserve natural resources, bolster agricultural and forestry economies, and increase climate change resilience. Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape was designated in 2015.



~ Fort Huachuca, Installation of the Year ~

Fort Huachuca was designated "Installation of the Year" for many initiatives, including Sentinel Landscapes. This award is an acknowledgement from the Department of Defense's Commander in Chief and signed by the Secretary of Defense of the hard work and success of Fort Huachuca in the Sentinel Landscape Partnership. Mr. Jennings recognizes that the Fort's success is thanks to our outstanding partners like U.S. Forest Service. A copy of the award was presented to Mr. Kerwin Dewberry, Coronado National Forest Supervisor, at a recent installation visit to recognize the Coronado National Forest's contributions to the Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape.



Pictured above, Kerwin Dewberry, Coronado National Forest Supervisor accepting a copy of the "Installation of the Year" award from Mr. Jeff Jennings, Deputy to the Commanding General at Fort Huachuca

~ Fort Huachuca's 2nd Annual Buffalo Soldier Recognition Ceremony ~



Pictured, 1st Lt. John R. Fox.

The U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence (USAICoE) and Fort Huachuca held its second annual Buffalo Soldier recognition ceremony on July 28.

The ceremony, in part, honored 1st Lt. John R. Fox, a Buffalo Soldier, and Medal of Honor Recipient, who called for fire on his own position to defend his fellow Soldiers during WWII.

1st Lt. John R. Fox who served as a Buffalo Soldier in the 92nd Infantry Division, which trained here at Fort Huachuca. Lt. Fox served as a forward observer with the 598th Artillery Battalion assigned to the 366th Infantry Regiment. On December 26, 1944, Lt. Fox heroically gave his life in service to his nation.

"This day commemorates the history and legacy of the Buffalo Soldier, African American men and women, whose service to the Nation is marked by heroism, honor, and distinction," said Maj. Gen. Anthony R. Hale, USAICoE, and Fort Huachuca commanding general.

Dr. Bryan Carter, a professor of Africana Studies at the University of Arizona, was the guest speaker.

"They (Buffalo Soldiers) believed that proving their valor, fighting for democracy with the allies, they would be treated as full and equal citizens at the end of the war," he said. "Now, history tells us that this was not always the case, but that did not prevent thousands of troops like Lieutenant Fox from making the ultimate sacrifice for our country."

To honor 1st Lt. Fox, the U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence (USAICoE) and Fort Huachuca dedicated a portion of the installation as the 1LT John R. Fox Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) Range Complex.

This non-kinetic range is the first of its type in the Army, designed to train and enhance the army's capability in the multi-domain environment with full development and representation of threat capabilities and activities across the electromagnetic spectrum. This range will support warfighting concepts and modernization required for the Army to reach its goals for 2030 and 2040.

"Today we embody the motto of the 92nd Infantry Division, 'Deeds not Words,' by dedicating a piece of the future for multi-domain operations to the remembrance of an extraordinary individual," Hale said.

Three generations of the Fox family attended the ceremony to include 1st Lt. John R. Fox's daughter, Sandra Fox. Morgan Fox Charles, grandson of 1st Lt. John R. Fox, spoke during the event.

"Although the family is small, our pride at the gallantry and bravery of Lieutenant Fox remains the spirit that continues to guide us," Morgan Fox said. "We are honored that his story has not been forgotten."

Pictured left, Major General Hale presents 1st Lt Fox's daughter, Sandra Fox, with a replica of her father's dedication sign stationed at the entrance to the range. Photo by USAICoE PAO.



~ Visitors, Birds and Bats Flock to the Sentinel Landscape During the Monsoon ~

This August saw the full resumption of major birding and nature festivals in southeast Arizona for the first time since the start of Covid-19.

Two of the region's biggest and best, the Southwest Wings Birding and Nature Festival in Sierra Vista and the Southeast Arizona Birding Festival in Tucson, guide birding tours to the Sentinel Landscape and other destinations during that month. But to newcomers to the region, the timing begs the question of why, of all months, are the festivals held in the heat of August?



Broad-billed Hummingbird. Photo courtesy of George Andrejko, AGFD.

"The number one question I get from folks when I tell them about the Southeast Arizona Birding Festival is precisely this: Why do we hold it in August; isn't it hot there in August?," said Luke Safford of the Tucson Audubon Society. "It is hot, but the combination of monsoon rains, abundant food resources, early fall migration, post-breeding dispersal by not yet migrating birds seeking food, and unique late nesting bird species just up from Sonora creates a combination of birds not found anywhere else in the United States."

Attendance figures tell the tale. Nearly 700 birders took tours in the region through the SE AZ Birding Festival, with nearly 2,000 walking in to see its Nature Expo. Another 100 toured with SW Wings, which had approximately 500 visitors to its Nature Fair. Tour destinations included the Huachuca Mountains in the Coronado National Forest and the Bureau of Land San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area.



Volunteers from this summer's SW Wings at Cochise College-Sierra Vista

"Birding brings in billions," noted Regional Supervisor Raul Vega of the Arizona Game and Fish in Tucson. "That's why we partner with the Wildlife Restoration Fund to sponsor birding and nature festivals here." The department estimates birding has a positive economic impact to southeast Arizona of \$600 million annually in lodging, food and equipment.

Meantime, while birds are flocking to the Sentinel Landscape, migratory bats from Mexico are also here, from late summer to early fall. They come here to eat pollen from plants such as agave and saguaros, and even may be seen drinking nectar from hummingbird feeders.

While most 28 bat species eat insects, the pollen and nectar-eating lesser long-nosed bat, which is listed as federally endangered; and the Mexican long-tongued bat, an Arizona species of concern; live in the region's caves and abandoned mines until they return to Mexico later in the fall.



Mexican free-tailed bat colony. Photo courtesy of George Andrejko, AGFD.



The Arizona Game and Fish Department has trust responsibility for managing more than 800 native wildlife species – the most of any inland state – for current and future generations of Arizona citizens.

~ Grassland Restoration benefits Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape ~

Since 2007, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has been implementing grassland restoration treatments on the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. This important work supports the DOI/BLM priorities of conserving lands and waters to promote climate resilience, restoring the natural role of fire on the landscape and improving and protecting wildlife habitat. This grassland restoration also supports the Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape (FHSL) 2022 Strategic Plan as the removal of excess mesquite trees has restored a large amount of native grassland in the NCA; this significantly improves habit for pronghorn antelope and several deer species and provides healthy forage for cattle belonging to the BLM grazing lessee.

This decades-long effort has resulted in 1,615 acres of herbicide treatments, 9,827 acres of prescribed fire treatments, 7,959 acres of mechanical treatments, and 15,675 acres of class III cultural survey, a professionally conducted, continuous,



Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. grassland restoration, mesquite grubbing.

intensive pedestrian survey of an entire project area aimed at locating and recording all cultural properties.

Upcoming in fiscal year 2023 (FY23), the BLM has 696 acres of mechanical treatments and 758 acres of prescribed fire treatments planned. Funding for the prescribed fire treatments came from FY 2022 Continuing Resolution Legislation, [H.R. 5304](#), and funding for the mechanical treatments was obtained through the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill](#) (BIL).



San Pedro River National Conservation Area

The BLM is also taking the next steps to work with other agency partners and private landowners more easily on landscape scale restoration with the FHSL landscape. The BLM, in coordination with multiple partners, has developed a landscape scale restoration Environmental Assessment (EA) in the Cienega Watershed. This has resulted in a planning area that is in the northwest portion of the FHSL and encompasses 216,732 acres of BLM, state, county, and private land.

The EA includes vegetation management using prescribed fire, mechanical, chemical, manual thinning, erosion control projects such as rock structures and [zuni bowls](#), and stream restoration methods using rock structures and [media lunas](#). The BLM is in the process of Section 7 Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The BLM has also received funding through the BIL to develop a landscape-scale restoration EA for the San Pedro Watershed. The planning area for the EA will be in the southeastern portion of the FHSL, and the BLM anticipates that the public and partner scoping for the EA will take place in the spring and summer of 2023. The BLM will be coordinating with area partners during the scoping and development of the EA, and the EA will be similar to the Las Cienegas Restoration EA and will be focused on vegetation management and erosion control across the planning area and encompass BLM, state, Cochise County, and private land.

The BLM looks forward to working with our partners on the FHSL into the future to create climate-resilient landscapes that support the conservation of various threatened and endangered species and BLM-sensitive species, restore the natural role of fire on the landscape and further the mission of Fort Huachuca.



~ FHSL Forest Health Through the Years ~

In the fall of 2019, the U.S. Forest Service Sierra Vista Ranger District and the USDA-NRCS Douglas Field Office submitted a proposal to the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership titled Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Restoration Project. The overall project area encompassed the Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape (FHSL) which covers 1.65 million acres in southeastern Arizona. At the time of the application submission, the Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Partnership was operating off from its Strategic Plan for 2019-2024 that outlined objectives to aid partners in prioritization of restoration and conservation efforts that align with the over-arching goals of the FHSL. Projects included in the proposal served to meet those strategic objectives, which included:

Fuel treatments

- Utilize cross boundary treatments to reduce hazardous fuels, accomplish ecological goals, and provide for public safety
- Encourage reduction of hazardous fuels by considering other techniques such as hand thinning, mastication, and herbicide treatments

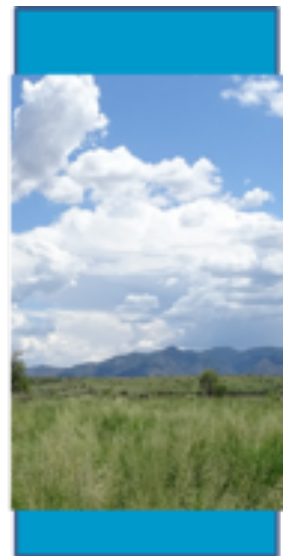
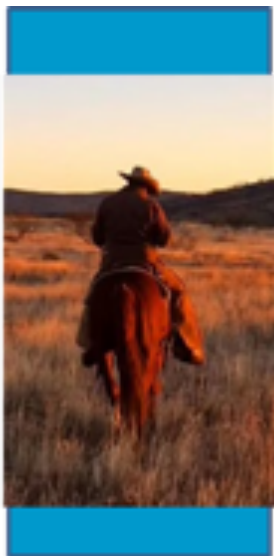
Habitat enhancements

- Work with State and Federal partners to implement recovery plans for federally listed species
- Work with willing public and private landowners to preserve and enhance appropriate habitat areas for listed species

Bolstering agriculture economies

- Keep open space and rural working lands sustainable by helping improve the economic viability of local ranches to reduce development pressure

Partners for the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership application included DOD-U.S. Army Fort Huachuca, U.S. Customs and Border Protection; U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; Arizona Game and Fish Department; Arizona Department of Forestry & Fire Management; Quail Forever; and Borderlands Restoration.



Shortly thereafter, the Arizona Land and Water Trust (the Trust), submitted a Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Challenge proposal in the spring of 2020, which included land acquisition and forest health opportunities. In conjunction with the Trust's land conservation work, the U.S. Forest Service agreed to lead hazardous fuels reduction projects in the Coronado National Forest, using internal staff, third-party contractors, and seasonal technicians. The U.S. Forest Service also agreed to coordinate partnerships with AZ Conservation Corps, Borderlands Restoration, Quail Forever, National Forest Foundation, National Wild Turkey Federation, and Sheltowee Environmental Education Coalition to complete the projects.

Projects included in the proposal served to also meet the goals of the FHSL Strategic Plan and included the following:

Land acquisition

- 800-acre conservation easement, plus an additional 1,300 acres of landowner donations, which remain critical maintain to the integrity of the Fort's nested testing ranges including the Sunnyside Test Range, the R2303 Restricted Military Air Space, the Buffalo Soldier Electronic Testing Range (BSETR), and the Tombstone Military operating Area (Tombstone MOA).

Forest health

- Proposed fuels reduction treatments included hand thinning, chemical applications, mastication of biomass and prescribed burns in key areas. In addition to reduced risk to the installation, treatment areas remain strategically beneficial for the Fort's testing and training.

In the fall of 2022, the U.S. Forest Service Sierra Vista Ranger District and the USDA-NRCS Douglas Field Office submitted a Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape, Phase Two proposal to the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership program. The proposal builds on previous accomplishments towards the FHSL strategic goals where 33,875 acres of forest and woodland restored were restored, 50,000 acres of aquatic invasive control were applied, and eight aquatic sites for listed species were established.



Border 4 and Sunnyside prescribed burns, conducted in March of 2022.



~ FHSL Working Group Tours ~

On September 29, 2022, the Open-Space and Working Lands (OWLs) Group, one of three working groups within the FHSLP, held its first internal tour of conservation projects within the Landscape. Matthew Jewell, Forest Legacy Program Specialist with the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management and OWLs Co-Chair, led the group to three stops within the Landscape. The first stop was the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area, the second was at the Vera Earl Ranch, and the third was at a Forest Legacy Program site, Sonoita Creek Wildlife Corridors.



Above, Kiosk at the Las Cienegas NCA.

Below, Scott Feldhausen, Gila District Manager, Bureau of Land Management, addressing the tour attendees.



Below, Matthew Jewell, Forest Legacy Program Specialist with the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management, addressing group about the Forest Legacy Program site, Sonoita Creek Wildlife Corridors.



Above, Damian Rawoot, TNC addressing Andrew Quarles, ALWT, and Bailey Kennett's, ALWT, questions about closing on the Vera Earl Ranch conservation easements.



On October 5, 2022, the Sentinel Landscape Restoration Partnership (SLRP) Working Group, another one of the three working groups of the FHSLP, held its first internal tour of restoration and resilience projects within the Landscape. Site visits included: Ramsey Canyon fuel reduction work, a collaborative project between the Fry Fire District, AZ Department of Forestry and Fire Management, and the Department of Corrections; the Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park, the proof of concept project for the Cochise Conservation and Recharge Network (CCRN) that uses effluent water to recharge local aquifers; and the Palominas Stormwater Recharge and Flood Control Project completed in 2014 by CCRN.



Above, fuel reduction work within Ramsey Canyon by Department of Correction crews, which protects private residences and abuts up to USFS land.

Below, Chief Savage, Fry Fire District, addresses the SLRP group attendees about fuel reduction work within Ramsey Canyon, which protects private residences and abuts up to USFS land.



Left, Mark Apel, Cochise County, and Sharon Flissar, City of Sierra Vista, both members of the CCRN addressing the SLRP group at the Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park.



Left, Mark Apel, Cochise County, showing Tina Thompson and Bill Schock were a recharge well exists at the Palominas site.

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For More Information Visit
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