

Partnership  
FOR  
**Protection**



WEST REGION

Army Compatible Use Buffers

The Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program is an integral component of the Army's sustainability triple bottom line: mission, environment and community. In recent years, Army installations are experiencing increasing encroachment from a variety of sources, including population growth, urban land use and environmental requirements. The ACUB program proactively addresses encroachment, which causes costly workarounds or compromises training realism. The program is a powerful tool that allows the military to contribute funds to the partner's purchase of easements or properties from willing landowners. These partnerships preserve high-value habitat and limit incompatible land use in the vicinity of military installations.

Title 10, Section 2684a, of the United States Code authorizes the Department of Defense to partner with nonfederal governments or private organizations to limit encroachment and protect habitat around installations. The Army implements this authority through the ACUB program, which is managed at Army Headquarters level by the office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management according to priorities established by the office of the Director of Training. The Army Environmental Command provides technical assistance, facilitates ACUB proposal development and monitors program execution and advancement.



The IMCOM-West Region consists of 27 states from Louisiana to Washington, with headquarters at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and six approved ACUBs.



FORT LEWIS ACUB OBJECTIVE

The Fort Lewis ACUB program addresses several encroachment issues related to endangered species requirements. Fort Lewis is home to several prairie species, whose future listing as threatened or protected could present significant training restrictions on post. The ACUB program preserves prairie lands in the vicinity of Fort Lewis to act as a conservation safety net for recovering off post populations of candidate species.

*"Army Compatible Use Buffers help sustain the Army mission into the 21st century. Training and testing missions have been enhanced significantly because of the ACUB program. In the West Region, ACUB partnerships strengthen relationships between diverse communities by protecting local cultural, agricultural and natural resources. ACUB programs have given our installations one of the best tools to carryout the Army's commitment to the Triple Bottom Line — Mission, Community, Environment."*

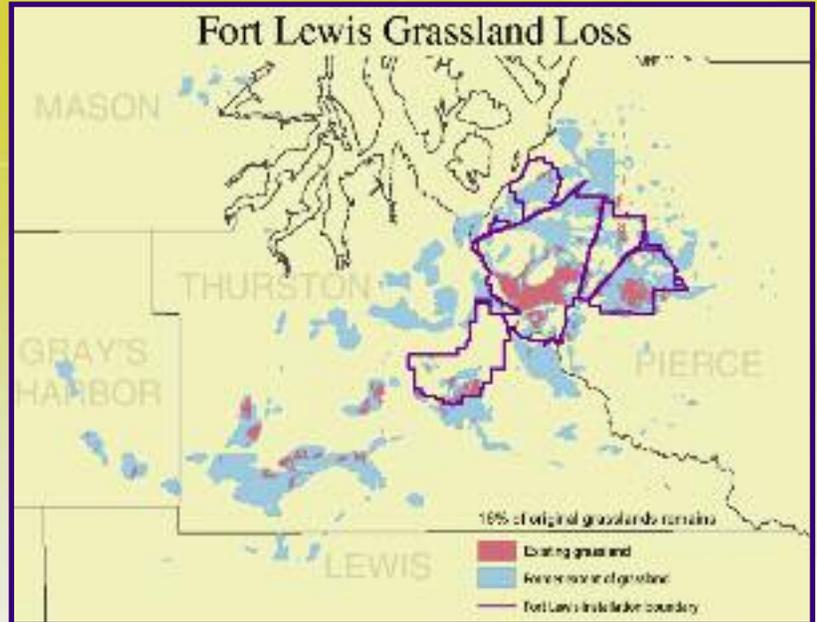
J. Randall Robinson,  
Director, IMCOM-West

## Fort Lewis, Washington

Fort Lewis is located in the Pacific Northwest on Puget Sound, adjacent to McChord Air Force Base. Fort Lewis is home to the I Corps, the Madigan Army Medical Center, the Army's three new Stryker brigades and ranger and special forces units. Fort Lewis currently supports live fire events up to platoon level for Stryker units, as well as combat support and combat service support units. Maneuver exercises are routinely conducted up to Stryker battalion and occasionally brigade levels.

In the mid-19th century, prairies covered 150,000 acres in the southern Puget Lowland. Today, only 20,000 acres of prairie remain, with two-thirds of them on Fort Lewis. These native prairies are disappearing due to land development, invasion by exotic plants and conifer forest invasion in the absence of fire. Many species of plants and animals occur only in these prairies, making Fort Lewis a true island of biodiversity. In 2002, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) added four Puget Lowland prairie species to its roster of candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act. To protect important habitat and prevent further population declines, the USFWS could impose training restrictions on large portions of Fort Lewis's open training lands. If imposed, restrictions would apply to activities that destroy native vegetation or cause soil disturbance, such as digging, bivouacking and off-road vehicle maneuver. As a major power generation platform, this would be problematic for Fort Lewis because it must maintain its ability to train troops in realistic natural environments.

Fort Lewis is taking a proactive approach to land stewardship. The installation's partners are acquiring privately owned parcels containing native prairie at various locations in the vicinity of Fort Lewis. The Army then funds land management activities to restore and enhance newly protected areas and existing, publicly owned prairies. This allows the installation to assist recovery of candidate species away from existing prime training lands. To date, Fort Lewis and its ACUB partners have protected more than 4,000 acres of candidate species habitat. The goal is to protect an additional 1,000 acres, complete habitat restoration on all ACUB lands, and begin reintroducing candidate species onto these lands.



### Fort Lewis Partners

- The Nature Conservancy, Washington Chapter
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Washington Department of Natural Resources

## FORT CARSON ACUB OBJECTIVE

The Fort Carson ACUB program enhances and protects unique habitats, training areas, critical ranges and the installation's large impact area by preventing incompatible land use of properties adjacent to its southern and eastern boundaries.

### Fort Carson, Colorado

Fort Carson is located between Colorado Springs and Pueblo, Colorado. The installation is home to the 1st Squadron, 6th Cavalry; 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division; 2nd Brigade, 91st Support Brigade; 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division (FWD); 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division; 43rd Area Support Group; 4th Engineer Battalion; 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), HQ DIV WEST, and 1st U.S. Army. A brigade combat team and unit of employment will move to Fort Carson as part of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure recommendations.

The population in the vicinity of Fort Carson is growing, bringing residential land use and conservation issues that could potentially restrict the installation's ability to conduct a full range of training activities. Four essential firing ranges on the southern part of Fort Carson would be restricted or closed if incompatible land use were to reach the southern boundary.

Less than 50 percent of what was Colorado's short-grass prairie exists today, with much of it threatened by suburban sprawl. In addition, state and federally protected wildlife species — including the Mexican spotted owl, mountain plover, greenback cutthroat trout and black-tailed prairie dog — are increasingly finding their previous home ranges limited to the installation because their original habitat is disappearing from the surrounding land.

Fort Carson and its ACUB partners have been working since 2002 to preserve current land use on 75,000 acres of private property. To date, the Fort Carson ACUB has permanently protected more than 14,000 acres. Fort Carson's ACUB is a unique opportunity to protect large tracts of primarily private ranch land under single ownership. The ACUB protects available habitats, preserves open-space and reduces current and future training restrictions by protecting the threatened short-grass prairie ecosystem and preventing incompatible land use along the installation's boundary.

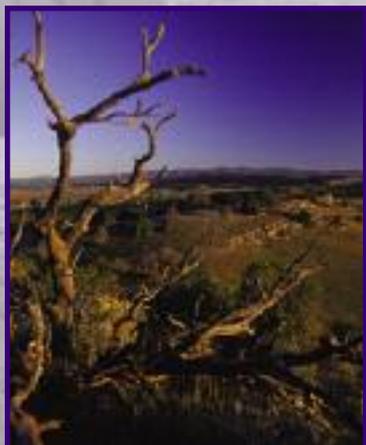


Photo by Peter McBride/Aurora Photos.

### Fort Carson Partners

- The Nature Conservancy
- El Paso County
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Colorado Department of Natural Resources



## FORT RILEY ACUB OBJECTIVE

The Fort Riley ACUB program will protect and enhance the installation's mission readiness by preventing incompatible land use along the installation boundary and promoting conservation initiatives to protect Topeka shiner streams and grassland bird habitat.

### Fort Riley, Kansas

Fort Riley provides Army-wide strategic training capability. Its mission is to provide training, readiness and deployment support for two Heavy Brigade combat teams, one light brigade combat team, one combat aviation brigade and other corps forces. Fort Riley facilities provide year-round support for live-fire exercises and maneuver training for most weapons systems in the Army. Fort Riley already requires workarounds in order to train at the battalion task force level. By 2008, Fort Riley will grow significantly due to the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure requirements. Current and future mission requirements would likely be jeopardized if growth-related encroachment continues.

Smoke and noise from heavy weapon fire, demolitions and rotary-winged aircraft operation are the primary off post impacts to the nearby commercial airport and residential areas. The Fort Riley ACUB will initiate a long-term plan to minimize encroachment impacts and prepare for increased mission requirements.

In addition to the residential encroachment threat, Fort Riley is addressing the training implications if the regal fritillary, Henslow's sparrow or greater prairie chicken are listed as threatened or endangered species by the USFWS. Fort Riley would have a role in the species recovery effort, and restrictions on training activities could potentially be imposed.



Source: ACUB proposal for Fort Riley.



Fort Riley's ACUB was approved in May 2006. Fort Riley's ACUB partner, the Kansas Land Trust used U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Farm and Ranchland Protection Program funds to purchase easements in the ACUB priority area, including one easement entirely with NRCS and other partner funds. During the Fort Riley ACUB proposal process, four excess parcels adjacent to key training areas at the western boundary were transferred at no cost to Fort Riley to prevent sale and future development.

### Fort Riley Partners

- Kansas Land Trust
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- The State of Kansas

## FORT POLK ACUB OBJECTIVE

The Fort Polk ACUB program reduces or avoids restrictions on range and training land capabilities resulting from endangered and candidate species management requirements and incompatible land use adjacent to installation boundaries.

### Fort Polk, Louisiana

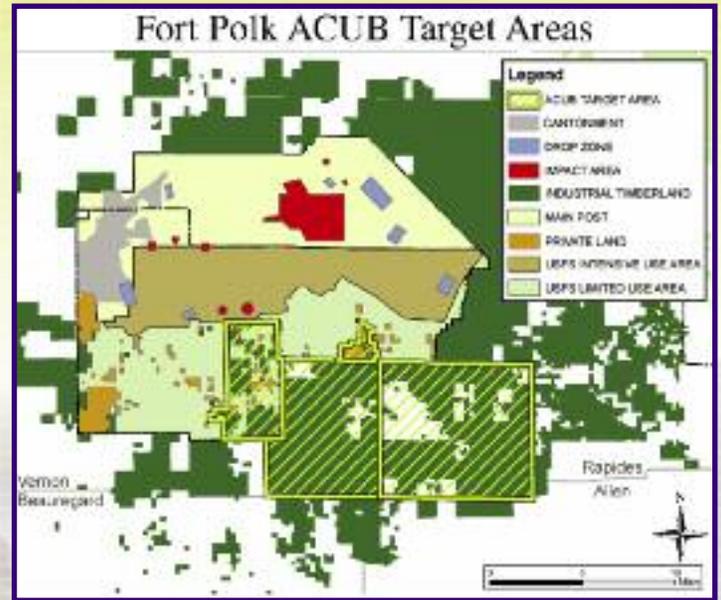
Fort Polk is one of the Army's premier training installations, home to the Joint Readiness Training Center, a rapid deployment brigade combat team/unit of action and 19 strategic force/general support force units. Its mission includes training and deploying combat and combat support units.

Approximately one-half of the 198,500-acre training land is within the Kisatchie National Forest (KNF), which is owned by the Forest Service and used by Fort Polk under the terms of a special-use permit and operating plan.

Fort Polk is also home to a designated recovery population of the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW). The RCW requires mature longleaf pine forests for nesting and foraging. Historically, the longleaf pine forest extended across 90 million acres from Virginia to east Texas, but today, less than three million acres remain, mostly on Department of Defense and other federally owned lands.

RCW population recovery and habit management requirements increasingly constrain the installation's ability to use its lands for current and future mission requirements. RCW habitat management requirements similarly constrain the use and development of KNF land. The Louisiana pine snake (LPS), found on the installation and KNF permitted-use lands, could also pose a problem for the installation if listed under the Endangered Species Act. There could be significant regulatory restrictions on installation training operations and land use.

Fort Polk's ACUB strategy addresses encroachment threats through conservation easements on private lands in the region or acquiring the development rights to parcels adjoining key range and training facilities. The buffers support Fort Polk and KNF RCW recovery and habitat management requirements by ensuring continuity of RCW and LPS habitat. By protecting RCW habitat and extending RCW populations on the buffers, Fort Polk can achieve its RCW recovery goals more quickly, leading to greater training flexibility. The first ACUB actions will be the protection of parcels totaling up to 5,500 acres of prime RCW habitat along the southern border of the KNF Limited Use Area.



Source: Fort Polk staff.



### Fort Polk Partner

- The Nature Conservancy of Louisiana

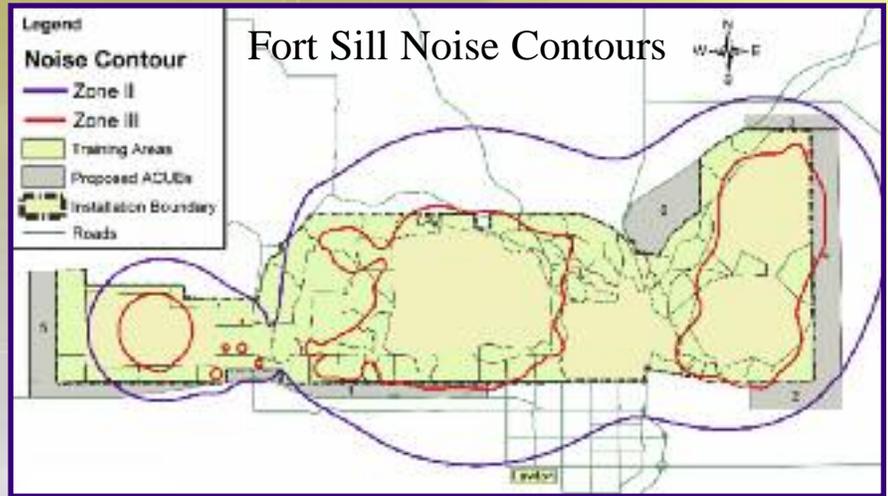
## FORT SILL ACUB OBJECTIVE

The Fort Sill ACUB program establishes buffer areas on private agricultural lands around critical training areas and ranges. Maintaining agricultural and other current land uses will provide a permanent buffer of compatible land uses outside the Fort Sill boundaries in areas that are exposed to excessive noise from training areas and ranges.

### Fort Sill, Oklahoma

Fort Sill is home to the U.S. Army Field Artillery School and Field Artillery Training Center. The installation supports artillery training for both the Army and Marine Corps. These combat-ready forces (along with activated Guard and Reserve service members) can be deployed around the world from Fort Sill's state-of-the-art power projection platform.

Technical noise contours for the installation show that unacceptable noise levels from training and other mission activities may cross installation boundaries into neighboring lands. Fort Sill is concerned noise complaints could escalate as surrounding agricultural lands are converted to residential uses and population densities increase in the high noise and dust areas. Suburban sprawl is approaching Fort Sill on its southern boundary from the cities of Cache and Lawton, Oklahoma. Continued urbanization could produce significant limitations to future use of installation range and training lands.



Source: ACUB proposal for Fort Sill.



In July 2006, Land Legacy, Inc. acquired a conservation easement in the ACUB priority area adjacent to artillery firing areas using USDA National Resource Conservation Service Farm and Ranchland Protection Program funds. This marks the first time that USDA funds were used with DoD funds to permanently protect land in an ACUB priority area — an innovative use of federal resources with the mutual benefit of preserving farmland.

### Fort Sill Partner

- Land Legacy
- State of Oklahoma
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Commanche County

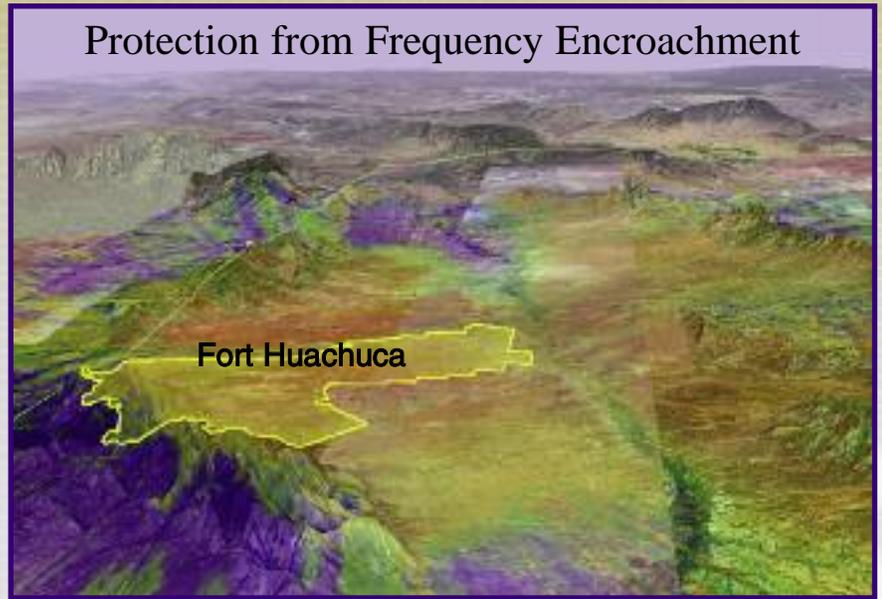


## FORT HUACHUCA ACUB OBJECTIVE

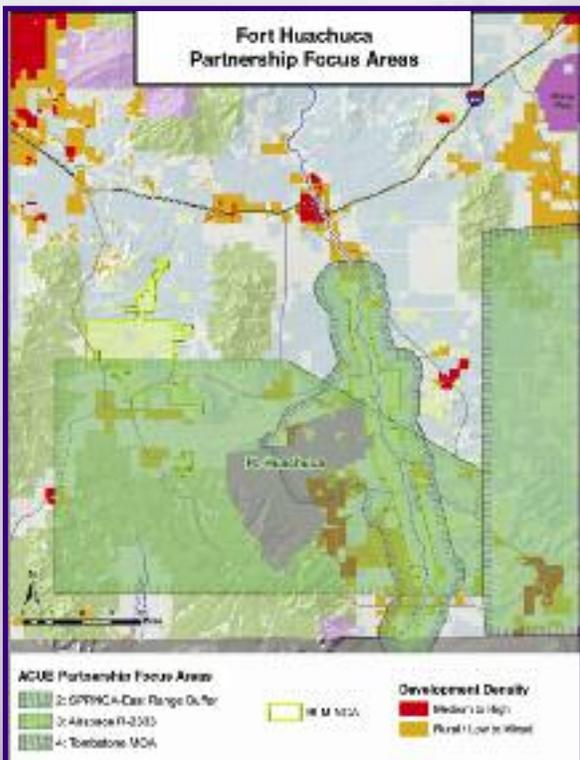
The Fort Huachuca ACUB program prevents incompatible land use in the vicinity of the installation to avoid frequency encroachment on critical electromagnetic spectrum used for military testing and training. A secondary benefit of the buffer is to avoid associated mission restrictions required by the Endangered Species Act to protect the endangered Huachuca water umbel, located on Fort Huachuca's test range in the Upper San Pedro River Basin.

### Fort Huachuca, Arizona

Fort Huachuca is located approximately 60 miles southeast of Tucson, Arizona. The installation comprises 73,000 acres nestled between the ridges of the Huachuca Mountains and the valley of the Upper San Pedro River. The terrain provides steep, forested mountains and hidden canyons that protect the installation from outside frequency interference. Fort Huachuca also manages the 26,000-acre Wilcox Playa near Wilcox, Arizona. The site is a premier testing location due to its extremely low ambient electromagnetic noise level and nearly unrestricted availability to the entire radio frequency spectrum, which is a unique resource and benefit to the Army.



Source: Fort Huachuca, U.S. Army Electronic Proving Ground staff.



Source: The Nature Conservancy, Arizona Chapter.

The primary missions on Fort Huachuca are intelligence and unmanned aviation warfighter training and testing, Army global network management; mission-ready forces deployment and redeployment, and Army and Air Force manned aircraft training and operational missions. The testing mission covers a wide range of command, control, communications, computer, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance systems. All training and testing missions use the isolated radio frequency environment and frequency authorizations assigned to Fort Huachuca. The installation also hosts several critical Department of Homeland Security training and operational missions. These critical missions require protection of the ground below a restricted air space used for Army unmanned aerial system testing.

In 2007, Fort Huachuca partnered with The Nature Conservancy and Bureau of Land Management to secure conservation easements on roughly 487 acres. The ACUB buffers Fort Huachuca from surrounding development and maintains a critical wildlife corridor. The ACUB also supports the Endangered Species Act by reducing the potential for increased water consumption, preserving the long-term regional water supply to the Upper San Pedro Watershed and protecting the Huachuca water umbel, a semi-aquatic plant found in the shallow water ecosystem. Future ACUBs at Fort Huachuca involve potential contribution from the Arizona Installation Military Fund.



## Fort Huachuca Partners

- The Nature Conservancy, Arizona Chapter
- Upper San Pedro Partnership
- Santa Cruz and Cochise County
- Southeast Arizona Land Trust

For additional information,  
contact:

**David Carr**  
**IMCOM-WEST**  
**210.295.2179**

**David.j.carr@us.army.mil**

Or visit:

**[www.sustainability.army.mil](http://www.sustainability.army.mil)**

