

# Earth Day at Fort Eustis

By Lyna Tucker

More than 50 military and civilian volunteers from various installation activities gathered to clean up and perform maintenance on the Fort Eustis Nature Trail and other areas of post during the Fort Eustis Transportation Center Earth Day activities on Friday. The Earth Day activities were spearheaded by the Fort Eustis Environmental and Natural Resources Division, Directorate of Public Works, and planned by the Environmental Protection Specialist.

Volunteers gathered at the head of the nature trail near Jacobs Theatre and assigned to teams lead by Environmental Management Systems (EMS) staff; teams were charged with storm water management and habitat preservation on the nature trail and other areas of the post.

One team was dispatched to stencil storm drains with the warning, “No Dumping, Flows to the Bay” in parts of the housing area and at General Stanford Elementary School; another team planted 700 Spartina marsh grass seedlings along the beach on Harrison Road.

PV2 Sylvia Parker of C Company, 1/222<sup>nd</sup> Aviation Regiment, explained the importance of expanding the presence of marsh grasses.

“The grass is helping bring in more nutrients, which is attracting more fish, more crabs and aquatic wildlife which is bringing in a lot more birds; it’s creating a better habitat for them because it’s bringing in their food that’s helping them sustain some sort of livelihood during the months that they’re here.”

Much of the focus was centered on the nature trail where volunteers and EMS staff pulled weeds, picked up trash, and planted trees, shrubs, and flowers along the trail. One group painted tree roots with bright, eco-friendly paint as a safety precaution to people jogging or walking on the trail. A different group planted Wax Myrtle trees a natural screen between the trail and the U.S. Army Reserve Center.



Soldiers painting storm drains



Volunteers work on garden

“People do need a retreat at different times, you know sometimes being out in nature is really soothing to people,” said Rice.

A new addition to the trail is the Rain Garden, located at the juncture of the Fort Eustis Travel Camp and the nature trail. The garden is a joint effort aimed at diminishing the amount of storm water runoff and cutting down on pollution reaching the wetlands. The Rain Garden team planted more than 40 native plants, shrubs, and trees.



Soldier plants native shrub

At the end of the day, volunteers were presented certificates of achievement for the work by Col. Andy Bowes, Fort Eustis garrison commander, and received the gratitude of Environmental and Natural Resources staff members.

“Everyone was great and the soldiers...I just can’t say enough,” stated Environmental Protection Specialist Tracey Sugg.