

News Release



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Umatilla Chemical Depot Receives Fish and Wildlife Service National Conservation Award

The U.S. Army's Umatilla Chemical Depot in Oregon received the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2010 Military Conservation Partner Award recognizing an extraordinary conservation partnership that, among other highlights, has provided numerous conservation benefits for the burrowing owl and long-billed curlew.

Rowan Gould, the Service's Acting Director, made the announcement at the 76th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Kansas City, Missouri, citing the Depot's exemplary partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state agencies, tribal governments, and non-government organizations.

"The Service is proud to honor Umatilla Chemical Depot's accomplishments in implementing key conservation actions for several species of national concern," Gould said. "Umatilla's leadership in researching and conserving important habitat for burrowing owls and long-billed curlews is extremely important for the entire Pacific region."

The Military Conservation Partner Award was created by the Service to recognize military installations making significant natural resource and wildlife conservation achievements through cooperative work with the Service, state and local governments, and other organizations. Such achievements may include the conservation, protection, and restoration of important habitat for migratory, endangered, native, and game species on military lands.

"As a good environmental steward, the Umatilla Chemical Depot partners well with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife on this successful project," said Lt. Col. Kris Perkins, depot commander. "We're pleased to see our collective efforts recognized."

Umatilla Chemical Depot encompasses about 20,000 acres and provides important breeding habitat for burrowing owls and long-billed curlews, both of which are species of National Conservation Concern and are also listed as high priority species in state Partners-in-Flight conservation plans throughout their range. The partnership between the Depot and the Service has focused on conservation projects supporting these two species and their habitat.

The Depot is a leader in burrowing owl research, restoration and education. The Depot sponsored an international burrowing owl workshop that resulted in the initiation of geolocation migration and wintering area delineation research. Currently, wintering areas of migrating owls from the northern portion of their range are unknown. The Depot marked 20 owls with geolocators in 2010 and will mark an additional 30 owls in 2011 to

identify migration routes and wintering areas. Results of this research will have range-wide implications for the burrowing owl populations in North America.

In conjunction with the burrowing owl work, National Public Lands Day events were held in 2009 and 2010. More than 70 volunteers representing an assortment of organizations from Nevada, California, Oregon, Washington, and Canada installed and maintained burrowing owl artificial burrows. The installation of 26 artificial burrow complexes increased the Depot's breeding population of burrowing owls from 4 pairs in 2008 to 31 pairs in 2010, which may be the largest colony in Oregon. An additional 32 artificial burrow complexes installed in the summer of 2010 are expected to bring the number of breeding owl pairs to more than 50 in 2011.

The Depot also initiated research on the survival of long-billed curlew chicks on the Depot and the adjacent Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge. This research is designed to identify habitat characteristics that are linked to successful curlew reproduction and will have broad implications for the restoration of curlew habitat on and off Depot lands.

For more than 40 years, since the passing of the Sikes Act, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has worked in cooperation with the military to conserve fish and wildlife resources found on the 30 million acres of land owned and managed by the Department of Defense. These lands are invaluable to the continued survival of many important species.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

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