Media Advisory

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Fort Drum Public Affairs

Fort Drum Natural Resources Branch awarded for environmental stewardship

FORT DRUM, N.Y. (Dec. 4, 2023) – Members of Fort Drum Environmental Division’s Natural Resources Branch were presented with the 2023 Northeast Region Military Conservation Partner Award from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Dec. 4, recognizing their achievements in resource management and partnerships with state and federal agencies to develop significant conservation programs.

Col. Matthew Myer, Fort Drum garrison commander, congratulated the team of biologists, botanists, foresters, and environmental protection and wildlife specialists who sustain more than 100,000 acres of land that serve as a critical training asset for the Army.

He credited their innovative and collaborative approach to stewardship and community outreach for providing the best environment for training and recreating at Fort Drum.

“In the short time I’ve been here, one thing I always hear is that people love Fort Drum because of the nature all around them,” he said. “We appreciate everything that you do to enable our mission, provide recreation, and conserve species. Being in a garrison is all about integration and this is what I’ve seen this team do – bringing in our partners from the community to share information and increase our understanding.”

Jason Wagner, Fort Drum Natural Resources Branch manager, said the award is a credit to a group of professionals who understand the military mission is ever-changing, and that they must adapt in a way where short-term needs won’t conflict long-term assets.

“We are here to support the Army and enable the training that happens at Fort Drum,” he said. “It’s not always easy telling someone in camouflage what they can’t do. But when you can articulate that with the knowledge that our team has, and the hard work that happens every day here, it allows us to speak in a way where we can achieve mutual understanding. And we always chase that win-win outcome.”

Fort Drum was the first installation to implement a natural resources project under the new Interagency Agreement between the USFWS and the Department of the Army, working together on a survey of the post’s walleye population.

The Natural Resources Branch has invested in bat community research with the establishment of a 2,200-acre Bat Conservation Area. Their support of national research efforts included the endangered species management of the Indiana bat and the Northern Long-eared bat, and the impact of White-Nose Syndrome on bat species.

They also collaborate with Ducks Unlimited and Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust on the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) Program. More than 8,000 acres have been preserved through this program, which minimizes encroachment and protects habitats and sensitive areas. Preventing residential and commercial development sustains the resiliency of land that supports the training and readiness of the 10th Mountain Division (LI).

Fort Drum is the largest Fish and Wildlife Management Act (FWMA) Cooperator Area in the state, first signed in 1959 to promote outdoor recreational opportunities to the public.

With roughly 70,000 acres – including three lakes and four ponds – the Environmental Division’s Fish and Wildlife Management Program offers year-round activities for recreationists, in addition to hosting Outdoor Adventure Day, Maple Days, and the Youth Fishing Derby (<https://fortdrum.isportsman.net>).

The Natural Resources Branch has previously earned accolades such as the Secretary of the Army Environmental Award for environmental conservation and restoration.

“Our military partners are vital to achieving conservation outcomes that both benefit wildlife and their habitats and enhance our nation’s readiness,” said Kyla Hastie, USFWS deputy regional director. “We commend Fort Drum’s dedication to protecting our natural heritage and our national security.”

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Photo Caption:

Members of Fort Drum Environmental Division’s Natural Resources Branch were presented with the 2023 Northeast Region Military Conservation Partner Award from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Dec. 4, recognizing their achievements in resource management and partnerships with state and federal agencies to develop significant conservation programs. Pictured, from left, are Col. Matthew Myer, Fort Drum garrison commander; Kyla Hastie, USFWS deputy regional director; and Jason Wagner, Fort Drum Natural Resources Branch manager. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)