

2018 Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program Challenge

Goal:

The Department of Defense's (DoD) Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program may provide up to \$15 million in FY18 funding for:

- Land conservation or management activities that leverage species crediting approaches to relieve current or anticipated environmental restrictions on military testing, training, or operations;
- Targeted land conservation within watersheds important to the safe and adequate supply of water to DoD installations and ranges; or
- Acquisition of water rights that directly sustains or enhances military mission activities as a key element of a land protection project that limits incompatible development or preserves habitat in accordance with 10 U.S.C. 2684a.

Background:

Since 2003, the REPI Program has helped fund cost-sharing partnerships between the Military Services (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force), private conservation organizations, and state and local governments to maintain compatible land uses and to conserve habitats around DoD installations and ranges in support of military readiness (www.repi.mil). REPI has a long and successful history of partnerships around the country. The challenges of conserving the acreage necessary to adequately protect military missions though, continues to be threatened by incompatible development. For this reason, the REPI Challenge was established in 2012 as a competitive process to seek projects that accelerate land conservation and military mission protection efforts through innovative partnerships and shared financing. Since 2012, REPI has offered between \$5M and \$10M each year for projects that incentivize new business practices, increase partner cost-share, and promote compatible land use around military installations and ranges at a larger scale.

As an example of best practices, the REPI Program supports regulatory approaches that support the protection and management of ecologically-related habitat outside installations and ranges in exchange for regulatory relief of restrictions for species on DoD lands. Military lands host over 400 threatened and endangered species and over 550 at-

risk species. Listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) may apply environmental restrictions on an installation during critical testing, training, and operation activities, resulting in costly training alternatives to accommodate the species. DoD worked closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to address current environmental concerns and the cooperative efforts led to the DoD Gopher Tortoise Conservation and Crediting Strategy, published in April 2017. The Strategy establishes a collaborative methodology for DoD, USFWS, and state wildlife agencies to identify, acquire, and conserve habitat for the gopher tortoise—a candidate species for protection under the ESA across its eastern range. The Strategy will utilize conservation activities to offset adverse effects to the species resulting from current or future military activities in the event USFWS lists the eastern population. It also provides a framework that can be adopted to proactively address other at-risk species around the United States whose ESA listing would impact mission capability.

In addition to species crediting strategies, the REPI Program continues to explore opportunities to protect lands in watersheds that support the safe and adequate supply of water to DoD installations and ranges. Recent droughts and growing populations increase pressures on ground and surface water supplies for DoD installations that depend on the water to sustain their missions. An installation's access to the quantity and quality of water necessary to perform its current and future military capabilities supports the military's overall readiness. Through the REPI Challenge, the program improves on project successes that prevent incompatible development by not only protecting the military's ability to test, train, and operate, but also providing benefits to the installation's water supply.

2017 REPI Challenge Outcomes:

In 2017, the REPI Program awarded \$9.2 million that attracted nearly \$10.1 million in non-DoD partner funding to the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Partnership. This partnership represents a coordinated effort between the Army, Marine Corps, Air Force, other Federal agencies, state and local governments, and non-profit organizations to protect rural and natural lands important to the Nation's defense mission across 33 counties in the state.

The Marine Corps will use \$5.8 million of the REPI Challenge award to leverage funding from the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission to establish an easement and support management of over 12,100 acres of state-owned land for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) habitat. The Bear Garden project, in conjunction with other initiatives, will enable Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune to expand lands dedicated to RCW recovery, reduce the installation's RCW recovery goal, and provide flexibility and capacity to infantry training at the base. The Bear Garden project will help promote conditions necessary to proceed with the development of new training ranges, expansion of ship-to-shore exercises, and enhancement of tactical tank maneuver areas, as well as ensure operational training realism.

The Air Force will leverage \$3.4 million of the REPI Challenge award with contributions from the North Carolina Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund to protect more than 5,600 acres of high priority land necessary to maintain viable training airspace for Dare County Bombing Range. Potential barriers to mission training and flight paths include renewable energy compatibility and spectrum encroachment. Dare County Bombing Range is the primary training range for F-15E aircraft crews from Seymour Johnson Air Force Base and the primary backyard range for F/A-18 squadrons operating out of Naval Air Station Oceana. The range is an electronic combat, day-night, and air-to-ground training site critical to multiple installations and Army and Navy special operations teams (including SEALs).

2018 Award Criteria:

The goal of this year's REPI Challenge is to commit up to \$15 million in FY18 REPI funds for proposals that focus on:

- Land conservation or management activities that leverage species crediting approaches to relieve current or anticipated environmental restrictions on military testing, training, or operations;
- Targeted land conservation within watersheds important to the safe and adequate supply of water to DoD installations and ranges; or
- Acquisition of water rights that directly sustains or enhances military mission activities as a key element of a land protection project that limits incompatible development or preserves habitat in accordance with 10 U.S.C. 2684a.

For projects leveraging species crediting approaches, competitive proposals will demonstrate the following key criteria:

- Conserve important natural resources that support imperiled species and habitats, or improve other ecosystem functions in a manner that will enhance mission activities and provide regulatory certainty for DoD;
- Implement or pilot a conceptualized or documented crediting approach with USFWS or other regulatory agencies (e.g., DoD Gopher Tortoise Conservation and Crediting Strategy); and
- Identify a methodology for determining the amount of credits to DoD for discretionary conservation investments on non-military lands that provide specific regulatory relief and predictability under the ESA.

For projects intended to limit development or uses that could either limit the quantity or degrade the quality of water supplies necessary to support the military mission, competitive proposals will address the following:

- Describe how the protection of DoD water supplies is a component of a larger effort to limit incompatible development or preserve habitat under a partnership agreement that complies with the requirements of 10 U.S.C. 2684a.
- Describe the source, rights, and demand of the installation's supply of ground or surface water;
- Articulate the current or emerging threats (e.g., population growth, economic development, mission expansion, water intensive agricultural uses, water-dependent species, drought, salt water intrusion) to the installation or range's ability to provide enough clean water to fulfill its current or anticipated future mission;
- Demonstrate other complimentary actions or tools that partners are employing to address the installation's water supply concerns; and
- Incorporate a long-term strategy that builds off the REPI Challenge investment by ensuring the prolonged protection of the installation's water supply.

For projects intended to protect water supplies or acquire water rights needed to address the habitat needs of imperiled species (whether currently ESA-listed or not) in order to eliminate or relieve current or anticipated environmental restrictions on the military mission, competitive proposals will address the following:

- Describe how the acquisition of water rights is a component of a larger effort to limit incompatible development or preserve habitat under a partnership agreement that complies with the requirements of 10 U.S.C. 2684a.
- Justify an existing or future need for the direct use of the water rights by DoD once acquired;
- Examine and understand the applicability of federal reserved water rights and state water rights within the context of the proposed project; and

Proposals also will be evaluated based on the following traditional REPI Challenge criteria:

- Protect large parcels of land in priority areas already targeted by DoD installations in a manner that benefits the mission of the installation by protecting, sustaining, enhancing, or facilitating optimum range and installation operations.
- Attract at least a 1:1 match, with preference given to higher ratios, to include other federal, state, local, or private funds, in-kind contributions, bargain sales, technical assistance, land management and restoration activities, outreach and engagement, planning, etc.
- Attract multiple and diverse partners who bring financial support and an increased constituency for REPI, including federal and state resources and assistance programs.

- Coordinate with multiple levels of government to foster effective delivery of local, state, and federal initiatives or programs focused on maintaining compatible land use, land or habitat management or conservation, sustainable management of working lands, or other such interests.
- Model promising strategies to finance conservation, including market-based incentives, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency revolving funds, and partnerships with private investors and landowners that could be extended to other locations.
- Leverage land protection or conservation programs managed by the Departments of Agriculture (primarily NRCS and USFS) and the Interior (primarily USFWS) to achieve large-scale land protection with significant conservation and working lands benefits to support the goals and objectives of the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership.

Priority consideration will be given to proposals contributing to identified goals and outcomes within designated Sentinel Landscapes. More information on Sentinel Landscapes can be found at: www.sentinellandscapes.org.

Who May Apply:

The 2018 REPI Challenge is open to any state government, political subdivision of a state, or private entity whose organizational purpose or goal is conservation, restoration or preservation of land and natural resources. See additional information in the “Eligibility” section below.

Geography:

The 2018 REPI Challenge is open to all DoD installations.

Process:

The first step in the 2018 REPI Challenge application process is to complete a pre-proposal. The purpose of the pre-proposal is to allow the 2018 REPI Challenge review team the opportunity to evaluate viable project concepts and provide feedback to applicants earlier in the application process. Applicants submitting the most promising projects in their pre-proposals will be invited to complete full proposals.

An essential part of the pre-proposal process is for the applicant to coordinate with the appropriate Military Services contact for the installation or range associated with your proposed project (see Service contact list below). The contacts may provide installation-specific information regarding priority lands, incompatible development and water resources concerns, and natural resource management needs to better inform partners

for potential projects. Pre-proposals that present projects not coordinated with the appropriate Military Service contact will not be considered.

The U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities will administer the 2018 REPI Challenge application process. The 2018 REPI Challenge pre-proposal form will be available at www.usendowment.org/news/latestnews.html.

Timing:

For interested partners, the following estimated milestones apply:

- January 26, 2018: Pre-proposals are due by 8pm ET. Pre-proposals are required to be submitted through the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities electronic application portal (www.usendowment.org).
- February 23, 2018: All pre-proposal applicants will be notified regarding the status of their pre-proposal.
- April 27, 2018: Full proposals are due by 8pm ET.
- May 2018: DoD announces REPI Challenge award recipients.
- June-July 2018: DoD obligates funding to REPI Challenge award recipients.

Ideally, the selected project would be executed within six months after funds are obligated to the successful applicant.

Eligibility:

Proposals may be submitted by eligible entities as described in [10 U.S.C. § 2684a](#): private conservation groups and state and local governments.

Note: Eligible entities that are not currently REPI Program Partners should be aware that if you are selected to submit a full proposal, you must begin negotiations with the appropriate Military Service to become a REPI Program Partner while your full proposal is being reviewed. This will include negotiating a cooperative agreement or similar arrangement once you are selected to submit a full proposal. You will begin this negotiation without knowing the outcome of your 2018 REPI Challenge application. The 2018 REPI Challenge is designed to encourage conservation at a greater scale and to promote the use of new and diverse sources of funding. Innovative partnerships that bring new ideas to the REPI process are strongly encouraged. State and local governments, corporations, private investors, and conservation groups are welcome to participate in the 2018 REPI Challenge.

Funding:

The REPI Challenge attempts to award one or multiple projects up to a total of \$15 million. Funding is contingent upon the availability of appropriations. Funds will be consistent with existing partnership agreements and support the purchase of conservation or other restrictive easements, fee interests in land, and/or natural resource management where such actions can be shown to benefit military mission activities. If an appropriate project is not forthcoming, potential funding will be redirected to other priorities.

Contacts:

Installation-specific questions on priority lands, agreement areas, incompatible use threats, and natural resource conservation needs should be directed to the appropriate Military Service contact below:

Army: John Housein john.g.housein.civ@mail.mil

Marine Corps: Erica Rohr erica.rohr@usmc.mil

Navy: Tony Danesi tony.danesi@navy.mil

Air Force: Scott Spencer scott.spencer@pentagon.af.mil

Questions on the REPI Challenge application process should be directed to:

Peter Stangel, U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities;
peter@usendowment.org; 404-915-2763

General questions on the 2018 REPI Challenge, or on engaging with other federal or state agencies, should be directed to osd.repi@mail.mil.

Resources:

REPI Program website: www.repi.mil

REPI Challenge fact sheets: <http://www.repi.mil/Buffer-Projects/REPI-Challenge/>

REPI Webinar recordings archive: <http://www.repi.mil/Resources/Webinars.aspx>
REPI Webinars are a valuable resource for learning about past REPI Challenge winners, Sentinel Landscapes projects, innovative finance techniques, and best practices.

Sentinel Landscapes Partnership website: www.sentinellandscapes.org