

Navy Holds

Natural Resources Conference

Jacksonville Provides Forum for 2003 Event

Within walking distance of the scenic St. John's River, the Navy held its annual Natural Resources Conference from 8–12 December in Jacksonville, Florida.

The event was hosted by Commander, Navy Region Southeast (CNRSE), and

was titled "Natural Resources Management: Ensuring the Navy's Mission and Operational Readiness."

Approximately 200 attendees and speakers gathered to share information on wildlife and habitat management programs; meet with senior leadership from the Navy, partnering organizations and regulatory agencies; and explore science-based approaches for maintaining and enhancing biological

diversity while carrying out the Navy's primary mission of national defense.

Plenary Session: Navy Leadership Sets the Stage

The conference plenary session began with introductory remarks by Rear Admiral (RADM) Annette Brown, who is Commander, Navy Region Southeast and the Navy's southeast regional environmental coordinator (REC). She welcomed the attendees, briefly described some of the natural resources-related challenges and successes within her region, and also summarized the



A historic sailing ship is moored on the St. John's River near Jacksonville Landing.



Natural resource specialists try to identify bird species from the talons and wings on display at this conference exhibit.

role of the new Commander, Naval Installations (CNI) in providing uniform policy, funding, and shore installation support to the Fleet.

William Mattheis, acting director of the Chief of Naval Operations Environmental Readiness Division (CNO N45), followed RADM Brown, summarizing the current scope and funding status of the Navy's successful environmental programs, describing the effects of the CNO N45 reorganization that was completed in June 2003 and looking ahead to future changes that will likely result from the standup of CNI. With the increased mission flexibility gained through the Range and Readiness Preservation Initiative (RRPI) provisions included in the fiscal year 2004 National Defense Authorization Act, Mattheis made it clear that natural resources management will continue to be recognized as vital by the entire Navy chain of command.

Donald R. Schregardus, deputy assistant secretary of the Navy for environment (DASN(E)), spoke next, discussing progress on Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Gordon England's four priorities of combat capability, people, application of advanced technology, and improved business practices. Schregardus called upon attendees to continue building trust and effective relationships with the public and local regulators in order to succeed at long-term natural resources management, which will in turn make it easier to sustain the Navy's mission.

CNI Regional Environmental Workgroup members Jerry Wallmeyer (CNRSE deputy program manager for environment) and Camille DeStafney (environmental services team leader for Engineering Field Activity Southeast), introduced CNI's organizational structure and explained the principles, roles and responsibilities envisioned to achieve the CNI goal of "one environmental voice."

Additional plenary session speakers were Ron Tickle, branch head for the CNO Operational Environmental Readiness and Planning Branch (N456); CDR Scott Kenney, legal advisor to CNO N45; and CAPT James Scholl, commanding officer of Naval Air Station (NAS) Key West.

Session 1: ESA 101

Day two of the conference focused on the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and featured presentations by officials from environmental regulatory agencies as well as Navy and Department of Defense (DoD) personnel. Senior representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) gave insight into the regulatory process and highlighted ongoing military/regulatory partnerships that preserve habitat and protect species while minimizing impacts to military operations.

Dr. Rick Sayers, branch chief for consultation and habitat conservation programs in the USFWS Washington, DC office, discussed critical habitat exclusions on DoD lands based on effective Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans (INRMPs) that provide a benefit to at-risk species. He also described options for using the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 as a possible vehicle for federal environmental regulatory agencies to make "not likely to affect" determinations on DoD lands, provided that alternative conservation agreements are made prior to implementation.

Craig Johnson, ESA coordinator for NOAA Fisheries, used the Navy/NOAA Fisheries consultation that took place for approval of the Surveillance Towed Array Sensor System (SURTASS) Low Frequency Active (LFA) system testing as



Loggerhead Shrike.

Photo by Dave Menke, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



West Indian Manatee.

Photo by Gaylen Rathburn, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Pitcher Plant.

NOAA National Estuarine Research Reserve Collection photo

a case study to illustrate the importance of good communication at all levels of the consultation process. Johnson characterized the SURTASS LFA consultation as an example of a project that, despite sound science and a significant effort on the part of the Navy and NOAA Fisheries to explain highly technical information, has often been misunderstood by external audiences.

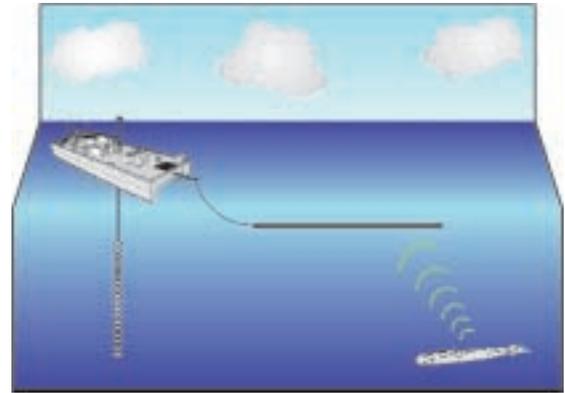
Mollie Palmer, deputy chief of staff for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), described the Northwest Florida Greenway Partnership, which would create wildlife corridors that preserve open

space adjacent to military lands, and several Florida Forever projects that benefit Florida naval installations and the natural environment.

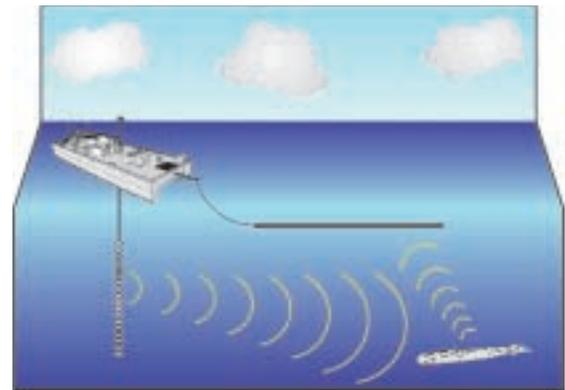
During the ESA session, Navy speakers described lessons learned based on past ESA consultations with regulators and also presented case studies of natural resources projects. Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program (SERDP) Conservation and Compliance Program Manager Dr. Robert Holst delivered an overview of the SERDP program and made suggestions for submitting specific, actionable statements of need to SERDP for natural resources-related projects.

Session 2: Marine Species and the Ocean Environment

As the Navy continues to expand its capabilities and extend its presence at sea in response to terrorism and other threats, Navy environmental personnel are working with the war fighters and numerous scientific organizations to improve understanding of how naval operations may impact the marine environment, and to reduce or eliminate those impacts when possible. To this end, day three of the conference incorporated presentations by scientists and contractors engaged in marine mammal and ocean-related research, Navy and NOAA personnel involved in environmental policy-making, and Navy natural resources managers with regional or installation-specific projects that have marine components. Dr. Frank Stone, CNO



Passive Sonar System.



Active Sonar System: Active sonar systems detect objects underwater by sending out a sound pulse (or "ping") that bounces off a submarine and returns as an echo that the system can detect. A Low Frequency Active (LFA) system will be used when a submarine is too quiet to be detected by the passive system alone.



Wood Stork.

Photo by Ryan Hagerty,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Florida Marsh.

Photo by Gary M. Stolz,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

N45's living marine resources research and development program manager, moderated the session.

Among the topics covered were data systems for tracking and quantifying marine mammals; analysis of sound in the water; the Tactical Training Theater Assessment and Planning Program (TAP) that is being implemented for Navy training range complexes; and efforts to create maritime sustainability for Navy operations through establishment of metrics, clarification of existing environmental laws, and interaction with Congress and regulators.

A presentation by Lieutenant Commander (LCDR) Todd Kraft, legal counsel to Commander, Fleet Forces

Part of the Navy's At Sea Policy includes posting a lookout for marine mammals while conducting exercises and training at sea.

Here, Seaman Josh Jones stands the forward look out using the large binoculars known as "The Big Eyes" aboard USS MOUNT WHITNEY (LCC/JCC 20).

U.S. Navy photo by Photographer's Mate 2nd Class Steven G. Crawford



Command (CFFC), outlined elements of the Secretary of the Navy's At Sea Policy that now serves as a consistent framework for Navy compliance with environmental regulations while conducting exercises and training at sea. He also explained the mitigation measures developed for unit-level routine training at sea in support of this policy. These measures will be implemented fleet-wide via the Protective Measures Assessment Protocol (PMAP) CD-ROM tool, which will provide operators with easy-to-access environmental data, mitigation and guidelines for use during routine training.

Dr. Darlene Ketten, who is an assistant professor at Harvard Medical School and a senior scientist at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI), gave a presentation entitled "Marine Mammals and Noise: Is It Apocalypse Now or Apocalypse Never?" Dr. Ketten summarized the existing science on how marine mammals hear and reviewed the many causes of marine mammal trauma and hearing loss, both natural and manmade.

Session 3: Land Management and Information Sharing

The third day of the conference covered a wide range of issues pertaining to natural resources at land installations and communicating Navy environmental data to internal and external audiences.

Joe Hautzenroder, natural resources program manager at Naval Facilities

Engineering Command (NAVFAC) headquarters, kicked off the session with a demonstration of the NAVFAC Data Call Station, a web-based system for compiling natural resources data from INRMPs. The system provides a standard format for natural resources personnel responding to data calls, and can be updated by the system users (primarily natural resources managers).

Jim Rudroff of the CNO Afloat/Shore Environmental Systems Integration Branch (N452) and Ken Bible, Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR) Integrated Systems Division manager gave a joint presentation and demo on the Navy's Environmental Information Management System (EIMS). The operational requirement for EIMS is to provide fleet operational and environmental planners with access to relevant environmental data including natural and cultural resources, meteorological and hydrographic data, and standard mapping functions allowing the environmental planner to determine potential impacts and plan proven mitigation strategies.

Three presentations focused on birds. Tom Egeland, environmental planning and conservation policy director for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Environ-

Northern Right Whale.

NOAA Sanctuary Collection photo



Bald Eagle.

Photo by Dave Menke, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Coral Reef.

Photo by Jerry Reid,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



American Alligator.

Photo by Gary M. Stoltz,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

ment (OASN E) discussed the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MTBA) and its present applicability to the Navy. Matt Klope, Bird Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) Coordinator for the Naval Facilities Engineering Service Center (NFESC), stressed the importance of reporting bird strikes, identifying bird strike remains, and incorporating BASH planning into facilities' Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans (INRMPs). Chris Eberly, program manager of the DoD Partners in Flight (PIF) Federal Agencies Committee, described DoD's recent bird conservation efforts, outreach programs, and joint PIF projects with other agencies.

Currents managing editor Bruce McCaffrey spoke about how to promote natural resources programs to

DoD and public audiences, using Currents as a vehicle.

Session 4: INRMPs

Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans (INRMPs) are crucial tools for natural resources managers, allowing installations to plan and document their conservation efforts with input from external sources (federal/state regulators, the public) while supporting the military mission. Day four of the conference was primarily a discourse on INRMPs, with topics ranging from overarching INRMP policy issues to installation-level examples of the INRMP process in action.

Aileen Smith, natural resources manager for Commander, Fleet Forces Command (CFFC), reviewed the status of INRMP guidance. INRMP guidance is currently being updated to incorporate revisions to DoD policy, as well as to prepare the Navy to implement RRPI language on endangered species.

The legal requirements for INRMPs under the Sikes Act and Sikes Act Improvement Act, as well as the specific steps undertaken by NAVFAC Southern Division (SOUTHDIV) to review INRMPs throughout CNRSE installations on an annual basis, were part of a presentation by Billy Drawdy, natural resources branch head for NAVFAC SOUTHDIV. He spoke about the importance of partnering with environmental regulatory agencies and the usefulness of INRMP annual reviews to generate data for the Measures of Merit required under Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Installations and Environment (DUSD I&E) direction and for the annual Environmental Quality Report to Congress.

Engineering Field Activity Chesapeake (EFA CHES) Natural Resources Manager Tommy Wright reviewed the use of contracts and cooperative agreements to accomplish INRMP goals. He mentioned the types of natural

resources projects that are presently contracted through EFA CHES (INRMP development, invasive plant control, wetlands projects, etc.) and explained the process for getting new INRMP-related contracts in place through his office.

Christine Bauer, natural resources manager at Naval Air Station (NAS) Jacksonville, touched on the many programs underway to manage the diverse natural habitat and various species that dwell within the station's boundaries.

Tammy Conkle, wildlife biologist with Commander Navy Region Southwest (COMNAVREG SW), presented a template for INRMPs that is being considered for Navy-wide use. Later in the day, conference participants attended a working session to offer input for refining draft guidance that is being developed on preparing, revising, and implementing INRMPs.

A Multi-level Dialogue

The conference was an opportunity for attendees to collaborate on several levels—from working sessions that developed hands-on approaches for solving problems at the installations, to discussions among natural resources managers, Navy leadership, and representatives from regulatory agencies, to absorbing mutual lessons learned from specific natural resources projects. ⚓

CONTACT

Ron Tickle

Chief of Naval Operations
Environmental Readiness Division
703-602-2787
DSN: 332-2787
ronald.tickle@navy.mil