



2020 Secretary of Defense Environmental Award Cultural Resources Management – Large Installation Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler

Introduction

Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler (MCB Butler), located in the islands of Okinawa, Japan, is a dynamic collection of widely dispersed installations and training areas, creating a unique cultural resources management challenge. Supporting more than 32,000 active duty military and civilians, MCB Butler provides base support and training areas for III Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF).



III MEF is a deployable Marine-Air-Ground Task Force able to conduct operations across the spectrum from humanitarian assistance to contentious operations. MCB Butler provides unique training opportunities in various environmental habitats; including the only U.S. Marine Corps Jungle Warfare Training Center (JWTC) and the only U.S.-controlled live fire ranges in Japan. MCB Butler encompasses more than 30,000 acres and is home to over 3,000 species of flora and fauna, of which approximately 260 are rare, threatened, or endangered. More than 700 archeological sites, some dating over 6,000 years old, have been identified including prehistoric shell mounds, ancestral tombs, buried village sites, and sacred springs and shrines that remain culturally significant to Okinawan people. The various types of training and facilities supported by MCB Butler necessitate a Cultural Resources Management Program skilled in supporting military readiness, balancing environmental sustainability, and fostering collaborative environmental stewardship between the U.S. and Japanese governments.

The island of Okinawa is key to strategic operations in the Pacific.

Background

Because of MCB Butler's broad military mission, the Cultural Resources Management Program focuses on conservation, protection, and preservation through the implementation of several key guidance documents. These documents include MCB Butler's Integrated Natural Resources and Cultural Resources Management Plan (INRCRMP), Section 402 of the National Historic Preservation Act (Section 402), the Japan Environmental Governing Standards (JEGS), and various U.S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Installation Pacific (MCIPAC), and MCB Butler orders.



One of the hundreds of shrines the Cultural Resource Program Manages.



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One of the more extraordinary finds recovered in recent years.

The last update to the INRCRMP was completed in 2014 and therefore is at the end of its five-year lifecycle. Much of the 2019 fiscal year has been dedicated to the update of the INRCRMP. It was just recently finalized and signed in January 2020. This updated INRCRMP will improve the Cultural Resources Program by addressing recent findings in Okinawan archaeology, providing an up-to-date reference for Japanese cultural laws, and containing an easily accessed synthesis of cultural resources at MCB Butler.

MCB Butler's Cultural Resources Program Team includes Mr. Masayuki Yonaha and Mr. Paul French. Mr. Masayuki Yonaha, an archaeologist at MCB Butler since 2001, has more than 20 years of archeological experience in Okinawa and co-oversees the Cultural Resources Management Program. As a Cultural Resources Program Manager, Mr. Yonaha serves as the primary point of contact for the thirteen local Boards of Education that MCB Butler consults with to ensure proper protection of significant cultural assets within training area and camp/station boundaries. The local Boards of Education are similar to the State Historic Preservation Offices in the U.S. As well as reviewing installation construction and repair projects that have the potential to impact cultural resources, Mr. Yonaha is responsible for securing funds for cultural asset surveys and has initiated an extensive cultural resources study of both the Central Training Area and JWTC at MCB Butler. These studies include archival research, field verification, and reconnaissance survey of remote areas that until now have received little attention from archaeologists. With his expansive understanding of Okinawan cultural resources and his tireless dedication to the field of archaeology, Mr. Yonaha's contributions reach beyond the boundaries of MCB Butler, significantly enhancing Okinawa's body of archaeological knowledge.

Mr. Paul French, an archaeologist with 9 years of government service, became a part of the MCB Butler Cultural Resources Management Program in 2019. He has provided technical expertise in various aspects of the Cultural Resources Program, including cultural asset survey, site testing, and report editing and production. Additionally, Mr. French's duties include reviewing preliminary environmental impact review documents submitted to the MCB Butler Environmental Affairs Branch for cultural resource concerns. Mr. French also coordinates with U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps units to ensure that all comply with cultural resource protection requirements.

Together, Mr. Yonaha and Mr. French maintain positive collaborative relationships with both national and local Japanese government officials and frequently provide advice and assistance on



2020 Secretary of Defense Environmental Award Cultural Resources Management – Large Installation Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler

host nation cultural resource issues outside of the installation. These cooperative and constructive partnerships serve to enhance relations between the U.S. and Japan.

Cultural Resources Summary of Accomplishments

In 2019, an environmental compliance audit conducted by the Headquarters of the Marine Corps (Marine Corps Installations Command GF-5 Environmental) returned positive results for the MCB Butler Cultural Resources Management Program. This audit found the program to be in complete compliance with required guidance documents and marks a continued trend of excellence. To maintain this record that has stood in place since 2013, the Cultural Resources Management Program exhibits tireless dedication to the conservation, protection, and preservation of cultural resources that is essential in furthering Marine Corps readiness throughout MCIPAC. The following accomplishments are a small sampling of its vital and ongoing efforts.



The last of 15 large scale mechanically excavated pits dug during the second phase of testing at Kin Blue Beach.

Archaeological Surveys at the Kin Blue Beach Training Facility

During FY19, the Cultural Resources Program began a series of testing projects at the Kin Blue Beach Training Facility. Kin Blue is known for containing a wide variety of cultural resource concerns including shell middens, shrines, and structural remains. Diagnostic ceramics recovered from the project area have provided insight into the occupation of Kin Bay. The recovered artifacts indicate a continuous occupation between the 14th and 20th centuries as well as an earlier Shellmound period site.

Kin Cho Site 17, recorded in the 1960s, includes the Kinhama Shellmound, which pottery remains dated to the Late Okinawan Shellmound period.

The two surveys conducted in 2019 support the continued use of Kin Blue Beach for training operations by addressing the potential for cultural concerns. These surveys also serve to research landform utilization of the Shellmound Period population and attempt to narrow down areas of likely habitation. By narrowing down areas likely to contain cultural material, the results from these two reports will aid the Cultural Resources Program in developing more targeted surveys along similar beach terrain.



2020 Secretary of Defense Environmental Award Cultural Resources Management – Large Installation Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler

Collaborative Partnerships

For the past several years, the MCB Butler Cultural Resources Management Program has been a part of an environmental forum jointly held by the MCIPAC G-F Environmental Affairs Branch and the Okinawa Prefectural Government Department of Environmental Affairs. This interaction has regularly involved coordination with the Cultural Resources Management Program to provide escorted tours to some of the well-developed interpretive cultural sites that are managed on base. These tours have become a popular means of highlighting the management achievements of the program. This year, the tour program expanded to include representatives of MCIPAC G-7 Government and External Affairs. G-7 has been instrumental in the management of cultural sites within MCB Butler as the base has a healthy interest from the surrounding communities to visit sites of religious significance. Providing community access to these important cultural sites has alleviated much of the maintenance requirements that would normally fall under the purview of the Cultural Resources Program.



The reconstructed Chibuga Spring has begun to blend into the natural environment to restore the characteristics it once had.



The Chourouyama site post-restoration work and pre-interpretive sign installation.

During the 2019 tour, Mr. Yonaha and Mr. French provided escort to noteworthy areas including Chibuga Spring, the Chourouyama Site, and the Okinawa Prefectural Government-lead data recovery excavations taking place on MCAS Futenma. Chibuga Spring is recognized as a local folklore cultural property by Chatan Town. Dating back to the 16th century, Chibuga Spring was a significant cultural center for Tamayose Old Village. For centuries, Chibuga Spring supplied surrounding villages with fresh drinking water and irrigation for farming, and was an important part of sacred ceremonies. In 2004, MCB Butler, supported by funds from the Department of Defense Legacy Program, joined the Tamayose Residential Community Group and the Chatan Town Board of Education in a project to restore the spring to its original state. Through this maintained collaborative relationship, the spring still appears much as it did 200 years ago, and



2020 Secretary of Defense Environmental Award Cultural Resources Management – Large Installation Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler

remains a place of deep cultural significance for local citizens. Chourouyama is a site set aside by the U.S. Army in 1957 for the purpose of relocating local prayer sites that had been damaged or destroyed during World War II. Chourouyama currently contains prayer sites from the old villages of Dendou, Tamayose, and Chatan. The Cultural Resources program began consulting with local residents in FY17, and USMC funds were committed in FY18 to upgrade access to the Chourouyama Prayer Site and provide interpretive signs for the public. Restoration work of the Chourouyama Prayer Site officially commenced in September 2018. In the fall of 2019, the Cultural Resources Program purchased a new monument for the site that will act as an interpretive signboard.



Ongoing excavations on MCAS Futenma have uncovered several cultural features including a Late Jomon Period pit house.

Conclusion

MCB Butler provides unique training environments that are vital to mission readiness. Our Cultural Resources Management Program plays a pivotal role by balancing environmental protection and sustainability with mission requirements. Mr. Yonaha and Mr. French have incorporated numerous management strategies to protect and preserve the sensitive cultural resources hidden throughout MCB Butler and MCAS Futenma. Allowing for proactive management and information sharing, their actions aid in maintaining the vitality of the training areas that support Marine Corps. The development of a comprehensive GIS database provides an additional step in cultural resources protection and furthers our commitment to protection of the land and resources entrusted to the Marine Corps. Through community awareness and collaborative partnerships with local governments and agencies, MCB Butler's Cultural Resources Management Program has been a cornerstone in improving relations between the people of Okinawa and the Marine Corps, and supporting the U.S. – Japan alliance.