



2023 Secretary of Defense Environmental Awards Sustainability, Individual/Team Award

Each year since 1962, the Secretary of Defense has honored installations, teams, and individuals for outstanding achievements in Department of Defense (DoD) environmental programs. These accomplishments include outstanding conservation activities, innovative environmental practices, and partnerships that improve quality of life and promote efficiencies without compromising DoD's mission success. The 2023 Secretary of Defense Environmental Awards cycle encompasses an achievement period from October 1, 2020, through September 30, 2022 (Fiscal Years [FY] 2021-2022). A diverse panel of 54 judges with relevant expertise representing Federal and state agencies, academia, and the private sector evaluated all nominees to select one winner for each of the nine categories. These nine categories cover six subject areas including natural resources conservation, environmental quality, sustainability, environmental restoration, cultural resources management, and environmental excellence in weapon systems acquisition.

About the Sustainability, Individual/Team Award

The Sustainability, Individual/Team award recognizes efforts to prevent or eliminate pollution at the source, including practices that increase efficiency and sustainability in the use of raw materials, energy, water, or other resources. The sustainability award also recognizes energy efficiency and renewable energy practices, greenhouse gas emissions reduction efforts, toxic and hazardous chemical reduction efforts, procurement of sustainable goods and services, waste diversion, electronic stewardship, and efforts to plan for adaptation and resilience. Sustainable practices ensure that DoD protects valuable resources critical to mission success. The 2023 winner of the Sustainability, Individual/Team award is the *366th Environmental Management Team, Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho*.

About 366th Environmental Management Team, Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho

Mountain Home Air Force Base (MHAFB), located on the Snake River Plain, 50 miles southeast of Boise, Idaho, is home to the 366th Fighter Wing (366 FW). With the impressive firepower of the F-15 Strike Eagle aircraft, the 366 FW is home to 3,610 active-duty members, 450 civilians, 440 contractors, and 3,500 family members. The base comprises 1,610 facilities, including military family housing, and provides a \$760 million annual total economic impact in Idaho. The 366 FW Environmental Management Team accomplishes its unique mission in conformance with Federal and state regulations, Department of Air Force Instructions, and the Environmental Management System. The Team, which is composed of 10 people with over 190 years of combined experience, is dedicated to environmental stewardship and mission resilience by continually optimizing processes, reducing environmental risks, and preventing pollution.



The 366th Environment Management Team. Left to right: Master Sergeant Daniel Hamden, Ms. Paula Jo Brown, Mr. Hodge Echeverria, Mr. Glenn Sansone, Ms. Katie Gomez, Mr. Mike Wussow, Ms. Sheri Robertson, Mr. Eddie Jackson, Ms. Beth Burgess, Mr. Cory Mikita, Mr. Michael McDaniels, and Captain Ronald Diaz-Cataldo.

Major Accomplishments in FY 2021-2022

- MHAFB overcame immediate water challenges derived from a rapid decline in its regional aquifer by employing mitigation measures including utilizing 89 million gallons of reused water from the base wastewater treatment plant for irrigation use and aquifer recharge. The AFB also secured a 14-mile water pipeline project that will further reduce aquifer withdrawal while ensuring base sustainability and mission resiliency.
- MHAFB partnered with local utilities establishing a program to ensure installation electric needs are met in case of a catastrophic power grid failure. Additionally, the Team pursued a \$25 million geothermal power pilot program that primes the base for an estimated \$3.5 million annual cost savings and reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 54,000 tons.
- The Team maintains a strong, dedicated waste diversion program. This base-wide effort gathered 18,000 pounds of recyclable material and revived 5 acres of unusable recreational grounds. Additional long-term initiatives include diverting 32,400 tons of landfill waste, reusing 18,000 cubic yards of construction project soils, and repurposing 2,000 gallons of herbicide to reduce invasive vegetation, saving \$1.7 million in disposal costs.
- The Team worked closely with the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality to properly characterize MHAFB fire training complex soils amid a redesign project. The base received the Department of the Air Force approval to encapsulate 600 cubic yards of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances containing soils, saving \$900,000 of taxpayer dollars.
- Partnering with local supporters allowed the Team to reach stewardship goals by eliminating highly invasive vegetation through collaborative methods, including increasing targeted grazing, establishing fire tolerant flora, and re-establishing sage brush groves. The Team continues to safeguard critical sage grouse and slickspot peppergrass habitat and protect 4,000 cultural resources sites including the largest known concentration of Paleolithic archaeological sites in the American Northwest.
- Alternative landscaping practices, such as xeriscape design, were implemented by MHAFB to create a natural system that can withstand and adapt to a changing environment. MHAFB transformed 218 acres of community space from irrigated land to desert landscaping, saving 2.4 million gallons of water. Future conservation measures include transforming an additional 159 acres, further reducing high water demands.



By working with engineers and Idaho Environmental Quality to manage per- and polyfluoroalkyl substance-contaminated soils, a \$2 million redesign of the MHAFB Fire Training Complex was achieved.



Reducing Bird Aircraft Strike Hazard mishaps and water usage, vegetation was removed from the semi-subterranean National Historic Landmark Cold War Alert Facility.