



2023 Secretary of Defense Environmental Awards Cultural Resources Management, 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 Cultural Resources Management, Individual/Team Award

The Cultural Resources Management, Individual/Team award recognizes efforts to promote effective cultural resources management through proactive stewardship of DoD's extensive and rich heritage assets, including archaeological sites, cultural items, the historic built environment, and cultural landscapes. Through dynamic cultural resources management programs that partner with installation stakeholders, such as master planning, public works, and range management, DoD identifies and evaluates cultural resources that impact training, testing, and operational capabilities. Awards also showcase successful partnerships with American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, Native Hawaiian Organizations, states, and other historic preservation stakeholders to protect cultural resources in a manner that sustains mission readiness as responsible stewards of the nation's collective heritage. The DoD Components may nominate any individual or team. The 2023 winner of the Cultural Resources Management, Individual/Team award is the *Cultural Resources Office Team, Eglin Air Force Base, Florida*.

About the Cultural Resources Office Team, Eglin Air Force Base, Florida

Situated along the Emerald Coast and extending into the heart of Florida's panhandle, Eglin Air Force Base (AFB) is home to the 96th Test Wing, which comprises 3,211 military personnel, 2,967 civilians, and 1,916 contractors. The Eglin AFB Cultural Resources Office Team supports the warfighter by meeting present compliance responsibilities, planning future activities to minimize cultural resources impacts, and managing those resources responsibly. The team is composed of 12 environmental professionals who are committed to proactive and responsive environmental management to ensure continued access to Eglin AFB's vast air, land, and water ranges. The Cultural Resources program goals are outlined in the Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan, and they affirm that Eglin AFB will remain in compliance with applicable cultural resources laws and regulations, provide both internal and external cultural resources educational opportunities to the community, and improve tribal relationships.



The Cultural Resources Office Team. Back row (from left to right): Joseph Meyer, Tony Cross, Brandon Dominguez, Alexander DeCaro, Jane Pope, Jean Paul Pentecouteau, and Jessica Higley. Front row (from left to right): Patricia Williams, Catherine Nolan, Melinda Rogers, Maria Rodriguez, and Brady Swilley.

Major Accomplishments in FY 2021-2022

- Eglin AFB has the unique challenge of managing the Eglin Gulf Test and Training Range (EGTTR), which comprises nearly 123,000 square miles of airspace over the Gulf of Mexico, an area with a rich maritime history, and known for submerged archaeological sites and historic shipwrecks. To improve EGTTR mission readiness, the Cultural Resources Office Team established partnerships, consultation parameters, and standard operating procedures (SOPs) to assess effects on cultural resources and ensure National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) compliance. The SOPs saved an estimated \$40 million expenditure during an EGTTR fiber-optic cable project.
- In 2021, after years of collaboration with stakeholders, including six Federally recognized Native American Tribes, the Cultural Resources Management Team finalized and established a Programmatic Agreement (PA) among Eglin AFB, the Florida State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regarding the management of historic properties at Eglin AFB. This extremely comprehensive PA improves and streamlines Eglin AFB's ability to assess cultural resources impacts more effectively and ensure NHPA compliance.
- The Cultural Resources Office Team maintained a robust education and outreach program that brings respect and awareness to cultural resources, recruits community support for stewardship of Eglin AFB's heritage, and enhances community relations. These efforts educate hundreds of attendees. For example, the Cultural Resources Office Team supports the Thunderbird Intertribal Powwow, including providing an educational display that reaches over 300 students.
- The Cultural Resources Office Team protects archaeological sites from weathering and erosion along the many shorelines within the installation boundary. The team worked with Eglin AFB's Natural Resources section to execute numerous living shoreline projects during the achievement period, resulting in the protection of 14,000 linear feet of shoreline and 11 archeological sites. These projects focus on immediately halting coastal erosion as well as further developing a long-term solution for this issue.
- The Cultural Resources Office Team has fostered a strong relationship with the Florida SHPO due to continuous communication and a comprehensive PA. Through close consultation with the SHPO, the team cleared the \$13 million modernization and upgrade project of a 57,000-square-foot historic aircraft hangar ensuring ongoing and effective use by the Air Force and continuance of the mission.
- The Cultural Resources Office Team sustained an active and strong government-to-government relationship with six Federally recognized Native American Tribes through consultations, regular and open communications, annual meetings, participation in outreach programs, and improving the Installation Tribal Relations Plan with better readability and organization.



Mr. Rick Kelly of the Nottoway Indian Tribe addresses the children at the Thunderbird Intertribal Powwow during National American Indian Heritage Month.



Mr. Jean Paul Pentecoteau prepares a thorough recording and written report of Building 110's history and current conditions.