



OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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ENERGY, INSTALLATIONS,
AND ENVIRONMENT

MEMORANDUM FOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
(ENVIRONMENT, SAFETY AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH)
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
(ENVIRONMENT AND MISSION READINESS)
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE
(ENVIRONMENT, SAFETY AND INFRASTRUCTURE)

SUBJECT: Department of Defense Avian Knowledge Network Program

The Department of Defense (DoD), like other federal agencies, has significant regulatory, management, and stewardship responsibilities related to migratory birds. These requirements are driven primarily by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), the “Military Readiness Rule” (50 CFR § 21.15, Authorization of take incidental to military readiness activities) and Executive Order (EO) 13186 “Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds.” In accordance with EO 13186, DoD has also established a Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service outlining the management and stewardship activities DoD will implement for migratory bird conservation. All DoD natural resources conservation programs support DoD access to its land, air, and water resources for realistic military training and testing and to sustain the long-term ecological integrity of the resource base and the ecosystem services it provides, in accordance with the Sikes Act. Collecting data and information from ongoing surveys, inventories, and monitoring are essential to make informed management decisions, efficiently and effectively meet regulatory requirements (e.g., the MBTA, the Sikes Act), conduct environmental analyses, and support planning to adaptively manage migratory bird populations in the context of mission activities. As such, the DoD spends millions of dollars annually to collect these data.

However, even with the collection of large amounts of data, DoD faces significant challenges to fully utilize and optimize our avian data. These challenges include: (1) inefficient access to data for regulatory requirements, environmental analyses, and planning; (2) a lack of visibility on avian species population trends and management across the Military Services and broader landscapes; and (3) a lack of a centralized, secure data repository resulting in data loss during personnel turnover.

To address these challenges, DoD began partnering with other federal agencies (i.e., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service) in the development of the Avian Knowledge Network (AKN) in 2016. The AKN is a national clearinghouse for avian data and decision support tool for assessing bird population health, status and trends, specific stressors, and conservation measures. The AKN connects partner datasets, includes metadata and data assumptions, contains powerful data analysis tools, and is a permanent archive of all data records.

This office fully endorses the use of AKN and requests that each DoD Component utilize AKN to the maximum extent practicable and provide staff the support needed to make AKN the best tool for DoD. A coordinated and comprehensive approach to implement DoD's participation in the AKN will directly support the military mission and improve the quality and effectiveness of bird conservation on DoD installations. For DoD to fully employ the power of AKN, user training and significant initial data management is required. This office, through the DoD Legacy Resource Management Program, is committed to providing baseline support and resources to help implement AKN. This support will provide training and education for personnel, and technical assistance related to system use and data management. The DoD AKN Director is Ms. Elizabeth Neipert, at elizabeth.s.neipert@erdc.dren.mil or 907-201-6244.

Additionally, a national Cooperative Agreement has been established to support AKN implementation. It provides a streamlined process for DoD Components and installations to contribute additional resources to meet their unique needs.

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