

Unique setting

From the sand dunes along the shores of Monterey Bay to the riparian forest of Toro Creek, the 27,827 acres of former Fort Ord encompass a biologically diverse and unique region. The range and combination of climatic, topographic, and soil conditions at Fort Ord support several plant communities, with central maritime chaparral being the most extensive. Plants within this community are well adapted to periodic fires and poor soil conditions present on Fort Ord, and some of them occur only in the Monterey Bay area, such as Monterey manzanita (*Arctostaphylos montereyensis*), Monterey ceanothus (*Ceanothus rigidus*), and Eastwood's Golden Fleece (*Ericameria fasciculata*). Federally listed annual plants such as endangered sand gilia (*Gilia tenuiflora arenaria*) and threatened Monterey spineflower (*Chorizanthe pungens* var. *pungens*) thrive in areas within the central maritime chaparral where prescribed burns, or other disturbance, expose the sandy soils. The vernal pools on the former Fort Ord provide habitat for a federally endangered wildflower, Contra Costa goldfields (*Lasthenia conjugens*), and the federally threatened California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*). Areas along the coast support the federally threatened western snowy plover (*Charadrius nivosus nivosus*) and the endangered Smith's blue butterfly (*Euphilotes enoptes smithi*) - the first insect listed under the Endangered Species Act. Yadon's rein orchid (*Piperia yadonii*), a federally endangered plant, also occurs on the former Fort Ord.

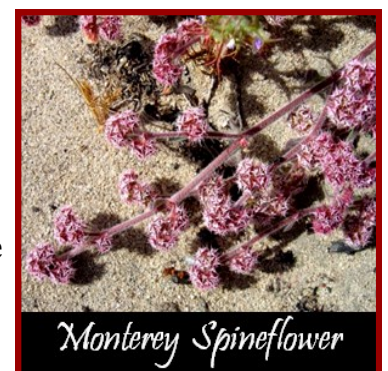


Monterey
(Toro)
Manzanita

How does the Army manage its natural resources?

In order to stay compliant with the Endangered Species Act during Army pre-disposal actions, such as its remediation activities, the Army consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 1993. USFWS issued a Biological Opinion directing the Army to develop and implement an Installation-Wide Multispecies Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for former Fort Ord. Concurrently, the 1993 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the disposal and reuse of former Fort Ord identified the need to develop and implement a HMP as a mitigation measure for impacts on vegetation and wildlife resources. The Army initially published the HMP in February 1994 with input from various regulatory agencies, such as California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and future recipients of former Fort Ord lands. In April 1997 the Army revised the HMP to address changes in the reuse plan and incorporate additional data and analysis related to the disposal activities identified in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement.

The general goal of the HMP is to “promote preservation, enhancement, and restoration of habitat and populations of HMP species while allowing development on selected properties that promotes economic recovery after closure of Fort Ord.” The HMP identified areas that could be developed with or without restrictions and areas set aside as habitat reserves or corridors with specific management guidelines. The HMP and the Programmatic Biological Opinion (BO) issued by the USFWS outline management guidelines and specific minimization measures the Army must implement to mitigate impacts on natural resources that may be affected during the environmental cleanup of the installation.



Monterey Spineflower

The Army monitors rare plant and animal species both before and after remediation activities, and uses the monitoring data to assess whether the success criteria specified in the HMP have been met. Every year the Army publishes annual reports of the monitoring results and presents them at a meeting to USFWS, CDFW, and other the regulatory agencies. The Army continues to consult with the USFWS any time a new proposed action may affect listed species and was not addressed by the HMP or the BO.

What is the relationship between prescribed burns and the HMP?

The Army's cleanup of munitions and explosives of concern (MEC) requires that large areas be cleared of vegetation. The central maritime chaparral is a fire adapted plant community with many species requiring periodic fires for regeneration. One of the management goals outlined in the HMP is to achieve high species and habitat diversity and a mosaic pattern of maritime chaparral with several different age classes. The Army is required under the HMP to use prescribed burning as a main method of vegetation clearance because cutting of central maritime chaparral does not support successful recovery of this rare plant community. Hence, in specific cases where prescribed burns cannot be done safely, cutting of areas larger than 50 acres must be coordinated with USFWS. Manual and/or mechanical cutting is allowed for other vegetation types.

Fort Ord Reuse/Redevelopment and Habitat Preservation

The HMP assumes a reuse development scenario for the former Fort Ord that will result in the removal of up to 6,300 acres of existing vegetation and wildlife habitat including many of these rare and endangered species and their habitats. However, more than 16,000 acres of habitat reserves with about 400 additional acres of connecting habitat corridors have been established in perpetuity to offset the loss of other areas to support the reuse of former Fort Ord. Approximately two thirds of the former Fort Ord is set aside from development to protect biologically important habitat for the target species listed in the HMP.



On April 20, 2012, due to the rich biodiversity and the importance of former Fort Ord in the American history, President Obama declared by public proclamation 14,651 acres of Federal lands on former Fort Ord as a National Monument. Roughly half of the National Monument is managed by the Secretary of the Interior through the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), while the other half is still managed by the Secretary of the Army, where it is currently undergoing environmental remediation activities. Once these activities are completed, all Army land will be transferred to BLM. Other non-federally owned protected areas on former Fort Ord are managed by state and local entities.

To learn more about Fort Ord Habitat Management, please contact people below:

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