Out of 650 million acres of federal land, the US Department of Defense (DoD) owns or manages some 30 million acres as military installations, training ranges, laboratories, and testing areas. These “test and training areas” are increasingly facing encroachment challenges—competition for resources (e.g., access to land, water, airspace, and frequency spectrum) and development from urban sprawl—that impact DoD’s ability to conduct military readiness activities, including live fire exercises.

In 2002, the Sustainable Ranges Initiative (SRI) was chartered under the authority of the Senior Readiness Oversight Council to address these encroachment concerns through measures such as compatible land use planning, community partnering, education and outreach, and regional partnerships. In 2003, the Office of the Secretary of Defense asked Booz Allen Hamilton to support the SRI on projects to engage federal agencies, states, communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and public and private stakeholders on readiness and land use issues affecting the military and its neighbors.

**Finance and Partnerships for Compatible Development**

One component of SRI is the Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI). This initiative enables installations to enter into agreements with state and local governments, private conservation organizations, and land owners to promote compatible land uses and protect habitat around test and training areas.

In 2005, Booz Allen began to assist DoD with the administration of REPI financial grants. To date, the program has put $136 million toward the protection of more than 75,000 acres near military ranges for conservation, agriculture, or recreational use. State and local government and non-governmental organizations involved in SRI land preservation programs have provided another $351 million in matching funds.

REPI is but one tool being used to address challenges stemming from development encroachment. DoD is employing other strategies to bring stakeholders together to collaborate on solutions that provide multiple and mutual benefits. In support of these initiatives, Booz Allen developed tools and processes to improve education and communication between installation commands, stakeholders from surrounding communities, and state and local governments, as well as conservation groups and land owners.

Through our collaboration with DoD on this initiative, Booz Allen helped bring stakeholders into creative partnerships that led directly to innovative and sustainable solutions to the encroachment challenge.
An example is the Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS), a coalition of federal agencies and state environmental and natural resource officials from North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Florida. Drawing on expertise in land use planning and technology, Booz Allen helped SERPPAS make more informed planning decisions through the use of a Strategic Lands Inventory (SLI). We based the SLI prototype on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) modeling of the 11-county region surrounding military installations near Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The SLI map overlays partner mission requirements on a map of the land’s natural features and development patterns, providing a rule-based, expert opinion approach to land suitability analysis.

The Booz Allen team also helped SERPPAS develop agreements that would provide buffers around military test and training sites while protecting wildlife habitats. For example, we helped design a two-year pilot program to expand existing translocation of the red-cockaded woodpecker, a federally listed endangered species that lives in old growth pine ecosystems in the Southeast. And to protect another regionally important species, the gopher tortoise, we helped coordinate drafting of a Candidate Conservation Agreement, which was signed by military and state and federal agencies, including the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

In addition to guiding collaboration with DoD and its partners, Booz Allen developed outreach tools and materials for military and community stakeholders to advance SRI goals across the country. For example, we expanded a series of guidebooks and primers promoting compatible land use and best management practices. And, working with the SERPPAS communications and community partnering team, we collected case studies from around the United States that illustrate different models for community-military partnerships.

**Helping the US Department of Defense Be Ready for What’s Next**

As SRI continues to evolve, Booz Allen staff members are developing training sessions and workshops to inform community members and promote effective partnerships. For example, our team coordinated a workshop staged by the National Association of Counties and The Conservation Fund at Fort Stewart in Georgia. Through efforts like these we support military, non-governmental, and local stakeholders as they build a curriculum model for collaboration on regional land planning issues.

In addition, Booz Allen is helping to shape a new organization that is guiding partnerships to address landscape-level conservation and planning issues near installations in the Western states. One goal for the Western Regional Partnership (WRP) is to create wildlife corridors that benefit key wildlife species in a manner fully compatible with, if not complementary to, military operations. Because of our experience with SERPPAS, Booz Allen staff members are able to assist in the growth of WRP, providing continuity between the regional partnerships.

**Ready to Help You**

With our extensive experience in government and defense, Booz Allen is skilled at developing partnerships and creating win-win initiatives among government agencies and the broader civilian community. SRI is a forward-thinking approach that enables military officials to take on new roles in communities that are growing and evolving beyond the fence line. Booz Allen is ready to support the military and its many partners in this mission. To learn more about how we can help your organization be ready for what’s next, visit www.boozallen.com.

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