

## Fort Carson forges strong regional partnerships

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Partnering with agencies outside the fence line is becoming an increasingly crucial part of Fort Carson being able to get the job done, securing the mission and sustaining the future.

Military installations, in the past, operate as independent communities, but linking efforts and resources with off post entities has become more critical to ensure efficiency and promote better integration of military members with the local communities. Fort Carson is proactive in pursuing and creating new partnerships.

Partnerships formed enhance mission accomplishment, as well as ensure that Fort Carson community and off-post needs are aligned. Cooperative efforts seek to address ongoing regional concerns such as improving energy and water efficiency.

One of the major, multi-agency partnerships Fort Carson has been involved with formed to conserve natural resources while simultaneously meeting the military mission. The partnership is joining resources and using the Army Compatible Use Buffer program to purchase conservation easements from willing sellers adjacent to Fort Carson. The primary partners in Fort Carson's south eastern boundary ACUB efforts include the Colorado Department of Transportation, the Department of the Army, The Nature Conservancy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and private landowners.

To date, \$4.92 million has been spent to purchase a conservation easement on approximately 5,000 acres of the Walker Ranches on the southern boundary of Fort Carson, said Gary Belew, Directorate of Environmental Compliance and Management, Cooperative Conservation Team program leader. The overall program entails future acquisition of easements on over 60,000 acres of land adjacent to Fort Carson to buffer training from potential.

With drought conditions persisting and fuel costs rising, the drive to become more sustainable is at the forefront of partnership efforts. Fort Carson has stepped up working with agencies such as Colorado Springs Utilities and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory to find ways to decrease costs for utilities and investigate renewable energy applications.

Creating and maintaining healthy communities, is the mission of the Pikes Peak Sustainable Indicators Project, a partnership comprised of government, nonprofit and other agencies. The project will develop community indicators to help measure progress towards sustainable living in the region. Indicators will measure the "health" of the community on many fronts including employment rates, healthcare availability, crime rates, etc. "Once developed, these indicators will be adopted by local government and drive policy and action for the Pikes Peak Region," said Birgitte Tingley, Fort Carson Sustainability Planner.

Numerous other partnerships exist and are continuously forming to help create a smooth path for sustainable growth at Fort Carson and in the region.

A few of Fort Carson's other partners include nonprofit agencies such as:

The Catamount Institute - <http://www.catamountinstitute.org/>

Natural Capitalism Solutions - <http://www.natcapsolutions.org/>

The Nature Conservancy - <http://www.nature.org/>

Colorado Natural Heritage Program - <http://www.cnhp.colostate.edu/>

Wildlife Habitat Council - <http://www.wildlifehc.org/template.cfm?FrontID=3560>

For more information, call the sustainability planner at 526-9777.