

When Will the U.S. Navy Bring Itself into Full Compliance with the Sikes Act at Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico?

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The U.S. Navy for many years has maintained a large reservation, Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, encompassing substantial lands and waters in eastern Puerto Rico, from Ceiba to the island of Vieques. The Navy controls most of the land on Vieques, and as a result of the exclusion of people from portions of this land, some beautiful habitats have been inadvertently preserved. Attendees at the recent Conference of the Society for Caribbean Ornithology in Santo Domingo had the pleasure of viewing some of these gems of Caribbean natural history indirectly, through a fine presentation by Myrna Pagan of the Vieques Conservation and History Trust. Yet, the Navy's stewardship of its lands, and its relationships with local fishermen and cattlemen have not been without controversy. Many people may not be fully aware that responsible stewardship of military lands has been mandated by an act of the U.S. Congress, and that the extent to which the Navy is in compliance with this act at Roosevelt Roads has been a matter of some considerable debate.

The Sikes Act is an act of the U.S. Congress (16 U.S.C. 670o), enacted in 1985 and renewed in 1988, "To enhance the carrying out of fish and wildlife conservation and natural resource management programs on military reservations, and other purposes".

Section One of the Sikes Act authorizes money to the Secretary of Defense and Secretary of Interior to carry out the purposes of the Sikes Act on military lands. It also authorizes money to be spent by the Secretary of Agriculture and Secretary of Interior to carry out the purposes of the Sikes Act on other public lands, including those of the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and Department of Energy Lands.

Section Two of the Sikes Act states, "The Secretary of each military department shall manage the natural resources of each military reservation within the United States that is under the jurisdiction of the Secretary-

(1) so as to provide for sustained multipurpose uses of those resources; and

(2) to provide the public access that is necessary or appropriate for those uses; to the extent that those uses and that access are not inconsistent with the military mission of the reservation." In ordinary

Sikes Act (Continued)

English this means that each military department must manage the natural resources within its jurisdiction for sustained multiple use, and public access appropriate and necessary for those multiple uses should be provided, although public access is required only to the extent that it does not interfere with the military mission of a given reservation (for example(?), the U.S. Navy allowed Clint Eastwood to use Vieques to make a movie about the Grenada invasion).

Section Two also requires that the development, implementation, and enforcement of fish and wildlife management activities on U.S. military installations be provided by Department of Defense personnel with professional training in those activities (for example, the Navy employs two full time professionally trained biologists (with graduate degrees in biology) to manage its lands in San Diego, California).

The Secretary of each military department is required to prepare and submit to Congress a detailed report of all fish and wildlife management related expenditures on their installations. The report is to be submitted to the Committees on Armed Services and on Environment and Public Works of the Senate, and on Merchant Marine and Fisheries and on Armed Services of the House of Representatives. The report shall be submitted within 180 days after the close of the fiscal year.

Section Three of the Sikes Act authorizes the development and implementation of fish and wildlife conservation plans cooperatively agreed to by the Secretaries of Defense and the Interior and appropriate state (or in this case Commonwealth) fish and wildlife agency. These plans must be reviewed by the participating parties at least every five years. During the development and review of multiuse natural resource management plans, the cooperative fish and wildlife plan will be treated as the exclusive component of that plan for managing wildlife, fish and game conservation and rehabilitation. This section also clarifies that proceeds from fees for special state hunting and fishing permits ("Installation Permits") for military lands may only be used at the military installation on which the fees are collected, and will remain available until expended (one example would include the special hunting permits for the U.S. Marine Corps' land at Camp Pendleton, California, and a special State of California Game Warden to oversee those hunting activities).

Section Three also requires that, after the parties have agreed to a cooperative fish and wildlife plan, no sale or leasing of land, or sale of forest products from land within the military reservations covered by the cooperative plan is permitted unless the effects of

the sale or leasing are compatible with the purposes of the cooperative plan. In the event that the Department of Defense elects to provide these services through contract, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the appropriate state (or in this case Commonwealth) fish and wildlife agency should receive priority for award of these contracts.

Will the Navy ever bring itself into full compliance with the Sikes Act at Naval Station Roosevelt Roads? The Navy is at a crossroads in its relationship with the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in land use and conservation issues. The old saying about taking lemons and turning them into lemonade could be brought to very real fruition at Roosevelt Roads if the Navy acts in a responsible manner.

With proper stewardship of the lands and waters under its authority, Roosevelt Roads could in fact become a conservation showcase, and a major positive influence towards the preservation of some of Puerto Rico's precious few remaining natural areas. Two major issues in conservation and wildlife biology being loss of habitat and direct human exploitation, it should not surprise anyone that, for example, Puerto Rico's last remaining Brown Pelican nesting colony is located adjacent to a bombing range, or that the waters of the Roads have become an important refuge for the West Indian Manatee. Over the long term, active responsible stewardship can only improve the Navy's relations with its neighbors. In the aftermath of Hurricane Hugo, this becomes even more important.

The Navy has done a better than expected job of managing its lands around San Diego, California, and Camp Pendleton is a well-known example of management practices which historically have reduced civilian pressure for acquisition of the land. Given these precedents, it is possible (and relatively inexpensive) for the Navy to become a major voice, and a leader in the conservation movement in the Caribbean Basin. Possible, yes, but will they ever actually do it?

Grupo Jaragua, Inc.

The Grupo Jaragua, Inc., a private, non-profit organization of the Dominican Republic, just signed a cooperative agreement with the National Direction of Parks (Dominican Republic) to work for the development of the Jaragua National Park, in the southwest of the country.

The Jaragua National Park is the largest park in the Dominican Republic and in the Antilles. The Park includes a broad system of coastal lagoons and little- or un-disturbed natural forests, which serve as permanent or temporal residence to thousands of

aquatic and terrestrial birds. The Park encompasses the important Oviedo Lagoon and Beata and Alto Velo islands.

The Grupo Jaragua, Inc., wishes to develop a relationship with members of the Society of Caribbean Ornithology. For more information, please write to:

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Grupo Jaragua, Inc.

El Grupo Jaragua, Inc., grupo privado sin fines de lucro de la República Dominicana, acaba de firmar un convenio de cooperación con la Dirección Nacional de Parques (República Dominicana) para impulsar el desarrollo del Parque Nacional Jaragua, en el suroeste del país.

El Parque Nacional Jaragua es el más grande del país y Las Antillas. Incluye un amplio sistema de lagunas costeras y la Laguna de Oviedo, que sirven de residencia permanente o transitoria a miles de aves acuáticas. Además, el parque incluye bosques naturales poco o no perturbados, con una gran diversidad de aves terrestres e incluye las islas de Beata y Alto Velo, importantes por su ornitofauna.

El Grupo Jaragua, Inc., desea expresar por este medio su deseo de mantener intercambios con la Sociedad de la Ornitología Caribeña. Para más información, se pueden referir a:

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Current Research Projects Joseph M. Wunderle, Jr.

I am currently involved with research projects at the Institute of Tropical Forestry (two year temporary position) and at the University of Puerto Rico (my home position). The projects are summarized by the institutional affiliation:

Institute of Tropical Forestry

1. My primary research focuses on the fate of