



**US Army Corps
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Corps, community clean-up Fort DeRussy on National Public Lands Day

By Lacey Justinger, Honolulu District Public Affairs

(FORT SHAFTER, HI NR 23-09) While bands played and the Aloha parade marched down Waikiki streets, more than 50 volunteers toting blue garbage bags scoured the Fort DeRussy beach, berm and park; picking up trash and performing beautification projects for National Public Lands Day, Sept. 26.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Honolulu District, coordinated the event that was attended by Soldiers from the 7th Engineer Dive Detachment, junior reserve officer training course (JROTC) students from Punahou High School, Girl Scout Troop 893 from Mililani and Corps employees.

“We try to do our part to help the environment and foster good Army and community relations,” said Capt. Thomas Darrow, commander of the 7th Engineer Dive Detachment.

“We’re here because of extreme sense of civic duty,” added Spc. John Hoover.

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The volunteers spent the Saturday morning installing tree identification signs throughout the park, labeling storm drains to prevent toxic dumping that flows to the ocean and picking up abandoned litter throughout the beachfront property.

“We want to educate the public on the importance of preserving and improving our precious natural and cultural treasures,” said Angela Jones, park ranger from the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers Pacific Regional Visitors Center.

The morning started with more than 20 Punahou JROTC students scrambling over rocks, and climbing into crevices to clean up the beach berm in under an hour.

“Our school is an environmentally-committed school this is a natural follow-up to make students aware of the practical applications,” said Bob Takas, senior Army instructor for Punahou and a retired servicemember. “We do a lot of service throughout the year but this is our most popular event. The students really believe in making a difference.”

To open the National Public Lands Day event, Lt. Col. Jon Chytka, the Corps Honolulu District commander, read a signed proclamation from President Barack Obama that stated:

“National Public Lands Day is an opportunity for all Americans, young and old, to celebrate the majesty of our open spaces and devote our collective efforts to conserving our Nation’s unique landscapes. Committed individuals, including participants from schools and universities, private businesses, non-profit organizations, and government agencies, are continuing the American tradition of stewardship through their service.”

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The Pacific Regional Visitors Center park rangers also scheduled a corresponding educational presenter to speak to volunteers and visitors. Suzanne Frazer, from the Beach Environmental Awareness Campaign-Hawaii, spoke about marine debris and prevention techniques to a standing-room-only crowd in the Center. Her prediction that cigarette butts and bottle caps would be the most prevalent non-biodegradable, plastic-based litter collected, proved to be true during the morning's labor.

Throughout the United States, thousands of local volunteers at more than 90 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project sites participated in this year's 16th annual National Public Lands Day. Last year, National Public Lands Day involved 120,000 volunteers at 1,800 sites nationwide.

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