



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**

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Corps of Engineers, community clean-up Fort DeRussy and Kakaako Parks on National Public Lands Day

By Joseph Bonfiglio, Honolulu District Public Affairs

(FORT SHAFTER, HI NR22-10) More than 102 volunteers scoured Fort DeRussy and Kakaako Waterfront Parks, picking up trash for National Public Lands Day, Sept. 25.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Honolulu District, coordinated the event which was attended by Soldiers from the 84th Engineer Battalion, Junior Reserve Officers Training Course (JROTC) students from Punahou and other local schools, the North America Taiwanese Women's Association Hawaii Chapter and Corps employees.

"I feel good about doing this," said Lt. Col. Robert Takao, commander of the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps at Punahou High School. "Our program has been doing this for several years now. It's a very worthwhile endeavor. This is about our future. It's really our way of giving back to this great land and world that we live in," Takao said.

"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 Visitor Center.

The morning started with about 20 JROTC students scrambling over rocks, and climbing into crevices to clean up the beach berm.

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“Our school is an environmentally-committed school this is a natural follow-up to make students aware of the practical applications,” said Takao.

To open the National Public Lands Day event, Lt. Col. Douglas Guttormsen, Honolulu District commander, read a proclamation from President Barack Obama which stated:

“From majestic mountain ranges to beloved neighborhood parks, Americans enjoy the natural places our ancestors have celebrated and protected for centuries. Our public lands represent the American spirit and reflect our shared experience our history, our culture, and our deep love for wild and beautiful places. Every September, thousands of Americans volunteer their time and talents to protect our parks, national forests, wildlife refuges, and other public lands. National Public Lands Day is an occasion to join together in honor of our Nation's unique natural treasures. On this day of service and celebration, I encourage all Americans to give their time and energy to care for and to go out and enjoy our public lands. Together, we can build upon our history of stewardship so our unique landscapes are preserved for countless generations to come.”

“It’s great to be part of a celebration of our Public Lands, particularly for us out here in Hawaii who draw so much joy and entertainment and pleasure from all the great Public Lands we have out here. It’s great for us to be able to give something back to them. We’re very fortunate to have all the volunteers out here and to give something back,” Guttormsen said.

In the same vein, Julie Rohrer, administrative assistant for the Honolulu District Engineering Services Branch and Public Affairs Officer for the North America Taiwanese Women’s Association Hawaii Chapter said, “it makes us feel good that we are useful and that we’re doing something and contributing our efforts to our community to keep our environment nice and clean.”

In 2009, nearly 150,000 volunteers nationwide pitched in to collect litter and debris; remove fence and invasive plant species; plant trees and shrubs; build and improve trails; and participate in numerous other projects on public lands and waters. At USACE events last year, more than 13,000 volunteers worked approximately 46,000 hours to remove more than 900 tires, clear litter and debris from 270 miles of shoreline, build 48 miles of trails, and plant some 1,000 trees and shrubs.

USACE has been involved with National Public Lands Day since its inception in 1994 and has consistently been one of the event’s largest providers of sites and volunteers. As the nation’s leading federal provider of outdoor and water-based recreation, USACE manages more than 400 lake and river projects in 43 states. With a majority of these projects located within 50 miles of metropolitan areas, USACE sites provide a wide range of safe, affordable outdoor recreation opportunities close to home. For information on Corps of Engineers recreation opportunities visit www.CorpsLakes.us

