



Naval Base Ventura County Receives Award for Natural Resources Conservation

WASHINGTON — The Navy isn't something that immediately comes to mind whenever most people think about groups that are working to protect nature's resources, but Capt. James McHugh says environmental stewardship is an important part of the culture at Naval Base Ventura County.

"The Navy uses the environment — we've got to make sure we take care of it," said McHugh, the base's commanding officer. "There's a perception out there that the Navy, that the military doesn't really care about the environment. But we do a great job, and I think we do a lot better job than some of the private sector does."



Photo courtesy Ventura County Star. Capt. Jim McHugh, left, commanding officer of Naval Base Ventura County, is presented with the Fiscal Year 2010 Environmental Award for Natural Resources Conservation, Large Installation, by Adm. Gary Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations.

Top Navy officials in Washington seem to agree. For the second time in three years, Naval Base Ventura County has earned national recognition for its conservation efforts.

The base was honored with the Chief of Naval Operations Environmental Award for natural resources conservation and with a separate Secretary of the Navy Environmental Award in the same category. Both awards were presented during ceremonies at the Navy Memorial and Naval Heritage Center in Washington, D.C.

The annual awards competition recognizes exceptional environmental stewardship by Navy ships and Naval and Marine Corps installations worldwide. All told, 27 winners were selected in 10 categories for the Chief of Naval Operations awards. Seventeen winners were honored with the Secretary of the Navy awards.

Naval Base Ventura County was cited for, among other things, a marsh restoration program that restored habitat in areas once covered by invasive plants and for another program that monitored southwest pond turtles and marked them for release.

The base also won praise for a program that captures and relocates falcons, hawks and owls that present a strike hazard to aircraft and for monitoring marine mammals, including

81,000 adult elephant seals, California sea lions and harbor seals.

"Being right there on the coast, environmental (conservation) is very important to me and to the base, with having all of the wetlands," said McHugh, who accepted the awards along with Joe Montoya, head of the base environmental division's conservation branch.

At Point Mugu alone, the base maintains 2,500 acres of wetlands and works to keep them as pristine as possible, McHugh said. "Out on San Nicolas Island," he said, "we've got over 100,000 marine mammals out there. It's just very important to be able to take care of them and be good stewards of the environment."

Besides the awards, top Navy officials also gave the base a symbolic green flag in recognition of its conservation efforts. McHugh said he will "proudly fly that flag over the base."