Large undeveloped landscapes are critical to agricultural and forestry productivity and wildlife habitat protection. Undeveloped landscapes that surround military installations are also vitally important to this country’s military readiness.

While numerous existing programs promote conservation of agricultural and forestry lands and wildlife habitat, Sentinel Landscapes formally recognize these large undeveloped landscapes, which collectively support working lands, conservation and national defense.

Sentinel Landscapes are working or natural lands important to the nation’s defense mission — places where preserving the working and rural character of key landscapes strengthens the economies of farms, ranches and forests; conserves habitat and natural resources; and protects vital test and training missions conducted on those military installations that anchor such landscapes.

The Value of Sentinel Landscapes

Compatible land uses near or adjacent to military installations are important to the military’s ability to use its ranges, airspace and other operating areas to effectively train our men and women in uniform. Sentinel Landscapes encourage compatible land use where urban sprawl or development may conflict with the military’s readiness mission.

Working forest, agriculture and other undeveloped landscapes can also provide important public benefits such as

- commodity production,
- habitat for imperiled species,
- open space and wildland preservation,
- watershed and biodiversity protection,
- support to local economies,
- maintenance of a rural way of life.
Sentinel Landscapes Partnership

The U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Defense and the Interior announced a new initiative in 2013 — the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership, a nationwide federal, local and private collaboration dedicated to promoting natural resource sustainability in areas surrounding military installations. The Partnership identifies opportunities that benefit national defense, local economies and conservation of natural resources. Where shared interests can be identified within a landscape, the Partnership will coordinate mutually beneficial programs and strategies to

- preserve, enhance or protect habitat and working lands near military installations;
- reduce, prevent or eliminate restrictions that inhibit military testing and training;
- prevent incompatible development near our military facilities.

Turning Partnership into Protection

The first Sentinel Landscape was designated in June 2013 at Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) in Washington state. JBLM is collaborating with the Center for Natural Lands Management, U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Thurston County, the state of Washington and private landowners to preserve, restore and manage critical prairie habitat. JBLM was designated as the first Sentinel Landscape in recognition of its success in linking the mutual interests of conservation, working lands and national defense.

Building on this success, the Departments of Defense, Agriculture and the Interior will seek willing partners to identify and pursue additional Sentinel Landscape designations.