

## WORKING GROUP MEMBER PROFILE - FORT LEWIS ITAM -- BY INGER GRUHN, FORT LEWIS ITAM COORDINATOR



The Fort Lewis Integrated Training Areas Management (ITAM) program was implemented on Fort Lewis in 1991 with actual field work beginning in 1992. The ITAM program is the Army's comprehensive approach to land management that is based on the integration of military mission, natural resource stewardship, and environmental compliance. ITAM provides for the maintenance of Army training land in order to ensure quality training and realism, reduce environmental damage, and enhance the public image of the Army as a conscientious land steward. Per Army Regulation 350-19, the Army ITAM program is composed of five major elements: 1) Range and Training Land Assessment (RTLTA) inventories and monitors natural resources in order to document resource conditions and assess the ability of the land to withstand impacts; 2) Land Rehabilitation and Maintenance (LRAM) uses vegetation removal, revegetation, and preventive and corrective measures to restore the land and enhance the realism of training; 3) Sustainable Range Awareness (SRA) educates officers, enlisted soldiers, and community members to foster the wise use of our land; 4) Training Requirements Integration (TRI) improves coordination and facilitates cooperation by providing information on land resource requirements; and 5) Geographic Information System (GIS) capability provides standard mapping and spatial analysis capabilities that support the ITAM Program components. The Fort Lewis GIS element is located within Public Works (PW) and employs its own staff for support of the base GIS dataset.

Fort Lewis is an approximately 86,200-acre military reservation located in western Washington and is a major military facility for both weapons qualifications and field training. Major land uses within the Fort Lewis boundary fall into two principal areas: the cantonment area (approximately 9,100 acres), and training areas (approximately 76,900 acres).

Natural resource management on Fort Lewis is conducted on many ecosystems to include forests, oak woodlands, wetlands, and prairies. The military training mission is dependent on all of these natural ecosystems. The natural resource management activities are completed by two main Directorates, Public Works (PW) and Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization, and Security (DPTMS). The PW Environmental and Natural Resources Division (ENRD) and the

DPTMS ITAM program manage the training lands. The overall land management goal is to ensure that natural resources under the stewardship of the Army at Fort Lewis are managed to support and be consistent with the military mission, while protecting and enhancing those resources for multiple use, sustainable yield, and biological integrity (INRMP 2006).

The Fort Lewis ITAM program began restoring prairies and inventorying and monitoring the Fort Lewis landscape in 1992. The RTLA component collects physical and biological resource data on prairie and oak woodland ecosystems to assess their ability to sustain training. The LRAM component slashes scot's broom and other unwanted vegetation on prairies and prairie edges. The LRAM component also has developed a plant propagation program that places native seed and plugs into damaged areas. The SRA component educates soldiers and their families about the importance of sustaining the training lands.

Prairie and oak woodland habitats serve as excellent terrain for military training and are the most heavily trained upon landscapes at Fort Lewis. It is estimated that approximately 3% of historical prairie habitat remains with the largest and most diverse reserves existing on Fort Lewis. As prairie and oak woodland dependent species continue to decline due to habitat modifications throughout the region, there is increasing pressure on Fort Lewis land managers to sustain rare plant and animal populations. It has been this foresight that started the South Puget Sound Prairie Working Group and had two members of the ITAM team as part of the working group since day one. You could say that Fort Lewis ITAM is a Charter Member of the working group. The ITAM team is still very involved in the working group and will continue to be in the future.

