



SUBJECT: Virtual Pacific Environmental Security Forum

1. Purpose: To provide stakeholders with the concept, background, description and objectives for the Virtual Pacific Environmental Security Forum (PESF).
2. Background: Environmental security can be broadly defined as countering vulnerabilities caused by the abundance or scarcity of environmental resources and/or degradation. Increasingly, environmental factors—extreme and frequent weather and climate events, water resources, food security and environmental disasters—can affect national and regional security by exacerbating hunger, poverty, instability and conflict. Environmental factors often have cross-border impacts. Sharing lessons-learned and encouraging militaries and governments to plan, operate, and execute in an environmentally sustainable manner that supports regional cooperation will improve security for all.

The PESF is the cornerstone of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's (USINDOPACOM) Environmental Security Program, which seeks to 1) increase understanding of environmental stewardship obligations among militaries in the Indo-Pacific region; and 2) lead a multilateral civil-military organization focused on mitigating environmental security threats, advancing collaborative partnerships, sharing information and resources, and developing strategy that advances the Indo-Pacific region.

The PESF recently underwent transformation from an event-centric initiative to a non-binding multilateral partnership known as the *Pacific Environmental Security Partnership* (Partnership or PESP). At the 2019 PESF in Wellington, NZ, 34 countries established the Partnership Charter. The PESP is designed to be a sustainable mechanism for future cooperative environmental security in the Indo-Pacific region. PESP transformation will take time, and its path will be shaped by PESF activities.

The PESF will remain an annual event, PESP's keystone activity, where civilian and military partners can gather to discuss and share environmental security best practices and lessons-learned. The PESF will also continue as a platform to service a community of action focused on prioritizing regional environmental security projects that couple unique civil and military capability and expertise, deliver tangible and efficient results, and advance security in the region.

Environmental security projects and cooperation are platforms for building relationships and opening doors for dialogue on other subjects. Ultimately, USINDOPACOM is dedicated to promoting environmental security awareness and sustainable environmental operations, and will continue to partner with civilian and military agencies in order to achieve environmental security objectives.

3. Description:

a) WHO:

- The forum will be held virtually due to COVID-19, and aims to involve more than 20+ countries and organizations in the Indo-Pacific region dedicated to advancing environmental security.
- New Zealand Ministry of Defence, Australian Defence Force, and Arizona State University's Global Institute for Sustainability & Innovation serve as the Partnership's working group focal points and will be paramount in shaping the agenda and outcomes.

b) WHAT:

- The Virtual PESF will be the tenth Indo-Pacific environmental security Forum and first virtual online event.
- The event will include a combination of live and pre-recorded sessions.
- Each day of the Forum will be dedicated to one of the working groups that make up the Pacific Environmental Security Partnership: 1) Education, 2) Policy, 3) Networking, 4) Mitigation.

c) WHEN:

- 22-25 February 2021 (US)

d) WHERE:

- Online virtual platform

4. Objectives: The Virtual PESF objectives are:

- To increase awareness of environmental security issues, best practices and lessons-learned in the Pacific region;
- To maintain a network of civil-military environmental security partners;
- To educate and advance partner capacity;
- To contribute to Pacific regional environmental security strategies; and
- To mitigate environmental security threats and vulnerabilities.

5. Points of Contact:

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