

# A New Kind of Service: A Proposal to Create Opportunities for Transitional US Marines as Environmental Leaders

by

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

United States Marines possess unique skills in leadership and management. As a Marine exits service, he or she often joins a new career path in line with their previous assigned military occupational specialty (MOS), or job. Current transition programs exist to connect Marines with organizations that capitalize on their learned experience, however, the Marine Corps does not have a program that focuses on jobs in the environmental community. As the global climate changes, industry is in need of new devoted professionals with leadership and a sense of greater purpose. Marines are an untapped resource for research and conservation efforts with work experience in data sampling and site management. The Marine Corps needs to implement a program that links Marines with installation environmental offices to further develop hard skills and industry specific language.

My objective was to propose a program known as the Enlisted Environmental Conservation Occupations (EECO) program, which would place transitioning Marines in the workspace of their installation's environmental office. With six months or less on active duty orders, Marines would assist environmental managers with tasks that include water and soil sampling; assisting with adherence to policy and procedure; and protection of natural resources and endangered species. Participating Marines would then be able to walk away from EECO with clearer vision of their own future career; as well as new skills able to be reflected on resumes or in applications for follow on education.

The process to develop EECO included the following steps:

**Research and Interviews:** Current major programs that assist Marines in transition include Skillbridge, Marine Corps Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL), and the various Troops to programs. Although valuable programs and certifications, none were directed towards including Marines in efforts against climate change. Recognizing the need for EECO, I turned to my workplace at the Staff Non-Commissioned Officer Academy at Camp Lejeune. Staff members are a strong sample group of the Marine Corps with different backgrounds and experiences in the Marine Corps. Feedback from my peers led me to the installation's education office that recommended a clear plan with concerns addressed and mitigated. The environmental office, too, expressed reservations with accountability and longevity of the program. All questions and intentions were addressed in the strategic plan.

**Strategic Plan:** My strategic plan included the mission of the Marine to include its current focus and vision. I paired the organization's goals with the mission of EECO. A SWOT analysis was used to determine the most and least favorable strategies to creating a proposal. In conjunction, a communication plan provided a visual to ensure affective correspondance while improving the proposal. The primary take away from the strategic plan was to ensure stakeholder involvement while exploiting current doctrine and guidance to strengthen the proposal for EECO.

**Program Development:** Allowing the Marine Corps vision for the future and its Marines to guide my development, I used a six phased approach to developing, implementing, revamping, and evaluating the program. In total, EECO's first review would span 36 months.

Evaluation: Although EECO will complete its first review cycle after 36 months, periodic reviews with adjustments would be considered during the 6 phases. At the end of the 6 phases, a Marine Corps Evaluation Board will be held to determine the effectiveness of the program and if it should continue. Marines enrolled in the program will complete surveys to help determine areas of improvement. Those who have completed the program will also be asked to complete surveys that help determine if EECO played a part in their follow on career after military service.

In an ever changing world where natural resources are threatened, Marines can join the fight against climate change as environmental leaders. EECO is the program that will take a Marine's leadership skills and make not only better citizens, but new warriors for climate change.

Approved:

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## Introduction: Background and Review of the Issues

The Marine Corps is one of the United States six military branches along with the Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, and most recently, the Space Force. A branch specializing in amphibious warfare, the Marine Corps' mission statement is

*The Marine Corps has been America's expeditionary force in readiness since 1775. We are forward deployed to respond swiftly and aggressively in times of crisis. We are soldiers of the sea, providing forces and detachments to naval ships and shore operations. We are global leaders, developing expeditionary doctrine and innovations that set the example, and leading other countries' forces and agencies in multinational military operations. These unique capabilities make us "First to Fight" and our nation's first line of defense. (Marine Corps Community Service Marketing Plan 2018 Camp Pendelton, 2018)*

Marines focus their attention on training for America's next battle regardless of climate or place. This strict devotion to preparation ensures an effective force but can leave some Marines exiting the service with little time to network for follow on careers. However, the Marine Corps and other branches do offer classes that assist with civilian life (*Transition Readiness - Marine Corps Community*, 2019.). Additional resources like the education office found on most installations help members learn about education opportunities and positions hiring (*Education Assistance*, n.d.).

Many Marines join for education benefits like the Post 911 GI bill and tuition assistance. However, a recent study from the veteran's affairs education office showed that approximately only 50 percent of veterans use their GI bill to its full extent (*Education Assistance*, n.d.). Reasons are hard to pin point, but veteran's affairs representatives believe that many veterans are earning degrees while on active service or are uncomfortable navigating the enrollment processes for degrees and certifications. A relatively new development in policy for the GI bill is the ability for service members to transfer their GI bills to family members. Veteran parents feel that it is more important their children or spouses receive the education benefits. Military members

believe that their skill sets will be enough for follow on employment after service. While providing for family is admirable, veterans tend to sacrifice a pursuit for fulfilling future work in the process. Veterans are unable to explore careers or training to better assess later job opportunities. Leadership needs to take into account external circumstances and allow veterans to experience different paths that will combine employment with quality of life and job satisfaction after active service.

Although the Marine Corps has several resources in place to assist service members transitioning to the civilian sector, none of these programs are directed toward environmental research or conservation. The Marine Corps' current job listing consists of military occupational specialties (MOS) include a wide variety of occupations from cyber security to mechanical specialists; all of which open doors to future careers. A Marine will maintain their assigned MOS for the duration of their career, unless they conduct a lateral move; usually after their first enlistment or before their second enlistment. Each enlistment and subsequent reenlistment is four to five years depending on the MOS. For most Marines, assigned jobs during their service are based on Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) scores (*Education Assistance*, 2019.). The ASVAB is a multiple aptitude battery that measures developed abilities and helps predict future academic and occupational success in the military. Sections of the ASVAB includes arithmetic reasoning, assembling objects, auto and shop information, electronics information, and general science. Most common, high school students take the ASVAB their junior or senior year, but the test can be given to anyone eligible for military service. Each military branch requires a minimum overall score known as the Armed Forces Qualification Test score, or AFQT. The Marine Corps' AFQT is 32 with specific MOSs requiring certain minimum individual section scores. There are 80 different job fields with hundreds of MOSs a new Marine

could be assigned, however, no occupation coincides with restoration or conservation. Marines may be assigned collateral duties monitoring hazardous material or petroleum, oil, lubricant (POLs) in their workplace, but not as their primary focus (*Marine Corps MOS List + ASVAB Scores: Details On All 125 Jobs*, n.d.). In turn, Marines exiting the service will pursue new careers often in line with their previous military experience. Any time a service member can move seamlessly into a new career is positive and exciting, but in a world where the environment is changing at a rapid pace, jobs highlighting environmental science and ecology are essential to a better future. Our military forces contain an underexplored source of environmental leaders.

### **Need for the program**

Although important and needed in today's workforce, current transition programs in the Marine Corps are primarily directed toward trade skills, first responders, or nursing. Marines' mindsets and experiences could make them uniquely qualified in environmental conservation and restoration efforts. The average Marine chooses to join the Marine Corps over other branches for a few common reasons: pride of belonging, a challenge, and travel and adventure (*Marine Corps Demographic 2016*, n.d.). These three reasons, or benefit tags as they are called by recruiters, are the foundation from which the Marine Corps boot camp builds Marines (*Enlisted Benefit Tags | Benefits Explorer | Marines*, n.d.). These same tags can be cultivated to produce environmental leaders. A program needs to exist to expose Marines to environmentally focused jobs not only to meet the commandant's objective for better citizens but also the rising need for more professionals working to improve global conservation.

Although it may appear exclusory, any new program developed should be focused on the enlisted Marine. Most enlisted members join service for benefits not easily available or achievable in their preservice lives. As previously mentioned, different benefit tags that entice

would be Marines in the form of health care, skill development, or education. According to The Marine Corps Demographic Update (2016) only 3% of enlisted Marines hold an undergraduate, graduate, or doctoral degree. More than 85% of officers have or are completing a degree. By the time an officer has completed basic training and follow on schools, he or she will arguably be better equipped for the work force. Enlisted members deserve to be exposed to new career paths not common in their current service or previous lives.

If a program existed to bring awareness to environmental concerns, Marines would not only be better informed, but also more invested in their communities. Many military installations are involved in lawsuits in response to environmental wrong doings. Most recently, military families filed a class-action law suit against Marine Corps Base Hawaii in Kanehoe Bay after experiencing adverse health effects from contaminated water and soil (Marine Corps Times 2021). Residents were unaware the proximity of various fuel storage systems to their homes and leakage into water sources. Reports confirmed contaminated water and more than 3,000 families were placed in local hotels while the area underwent cleaning.

In July 2021, Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point was found to be in violation of the Clean Air Act after coal-powered steam boilers exceeded the emissions limit. The facility, located on the air station, was part of a state-issued permit from 2014 that allowed the facility to operate in order to generate heat. A compliance test in 2016 revealed the violation. In 2018, the state and Department of Environmental Quality filed a lawsuit. Government defendants moved the case to federal court believing the lawsuit should be dismissed with belief that the government was immune to punitive civil penalties (*USCourts.Gov*, n.d.)

In February 2022, Department of Defense (DOD) tested several military installations in search of polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) to determine severity of the contamination. North



Carolina's Marine Corps installation Bogue Air Field was found to have several sections of contaminated soil around the flight line. Bogue Air Field is often used as a training site for Marine Corps Air Craft Recovery and Fire Fighting Specialists, with fire surprising foams containing PFAS. The Pentagon is required to provide a time line to clean the contaminated soil at Bogue and other installations (*WHQR*, 2022).

The Marine Corps, like many other major organizations, has faced scrutiny in environmental management. Several cases exist from shortcomings and poor practices, but even with new regulations and standards, there is still a need for change. Allowing members of its communities, i.e. Marines, to engage in conservation would not only encourage investment in the installations, but also produce better hosts of lands.

### **Training Marines to Address Climate Change**

As it stands, the Marine Corps is shifting from armed conflicts in the Middle East to other threats to both country and corps. As a primary training base for the Marine Corps, Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville North Carolina is a focal point for training and demonstration of mission capabilities for all units aboard the installation. In his strategic plan 2040, Marine Corps Installation East Commander Brigadier General T.D. Weidley addressed concerns to both Camp Lejeune specifically as well as the greater mission the base offers (Weidley, 2017). The commander recognized that for his units to effectively train, they would need to have a greater understanding of the scope of influence the physical and mental environment offered. Honing in on future education and training opportunities, he wrote a chapter specifically addressing climate change (Weidley, pg 8., 2017). Global climate change will affect training operations as temperatures and sea levels rise with a strain on natural resources threatening military ranges and increase coastal flooding.

Camp Lejeune is not alone in its battle with climate change and so the changes the base experiences can only be a marker for other environmental troubles worldwide. Troops must recognize heavy gear will wear on individual bodies; changes in land and sea will affect the movability of forces and armored vehicles; rising sea levels and coastal scour will increase the number of displaced communities and climate refugees. Marines needs to become savvier in environmental impacts to better support and be prepared for any mission.

As the Marine Corps takes time to recognize the global effects of climate change, the organization needs to lean on another pillar in the overall goal of sustaining the transformation of civilian to Marine to better citizen (Berger, 2019). By the end of a Marine's career, whether that be four years or twenty years, the Marine Corps wants its people to return to the civilian sector as contributors to a better society. Current transitional programs and resources include Military Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) or Skillbridge, which offer curriculum and or certifications to give members a leg up in the workforce (*Department of Defense Instruction*, n.d.). Most available programs are geared toward trade schools that capitalize on current MOS experience or are aimed towards making more first responders. The Marine Corps recognizes that a service member's training and exposure make them prime candidates for work in service. However, as climate change accelerates and natural disasters occur more frequently, environmental research, management, restoration, and conservation activities will become increasingly important. Right now, the Marine Corps is missing opportunities to train Marines in these disciplines and prepare them for emerging opportunities in related fields. The Marine Corps has already acknowledged the need for a better educated force with an understanding of the complex social and environmental conditions of any given place Marines may occupy.

In a time where more environmentally focused jobs are needed, transitioning Marines have unique training and experiences to offer. Even though the Marine Corps does not have a specific environmentally focused MOS, all levels of planning and education involve climate consideration. Recent strategic plans to improve Marine Corps installations and missions recognize climate change as a threat to success (Weidley, 2017). All Marine Corps installations are located in environmental “hot spots” where climate change is measured most. Coastal areas are ideal for amphibious assault training but infrastructure and shorelines impacted by rising sea levels, storm surges, degradation, and loss of valuable buffering ecosystems, such as marshes and dunes. The abilities of service members extends past conventional training with many units designated to activate in a disaster. Marines have untapped potential as environmental warriors whose experience and training in natural disaster response directly correlates to preservation and restoration. Several MOSs already possess skills that could be developed and cultivated to existing environmental jobs. These MOSs could be feeder MOSs for follow on careers in the civilian sector as described in Figure 1 below.

<u>Military Occupational Specialty</u>	<u>Environmentally relevant skills</u>	<u>Environmental occupation / Starting Annual Salary in US</u>	<u>Hard Skills</u>
Bulk Fuel Specialist	-Soil Sampling -Water Sampling -Hazardous Waste Containment	-Environmental Technician (\$46,000) -Environmental Risk Assessment Specialist (\$48,000) -Ecological Monitoring Field Technician (\$42,000)	-Soil Sampling -Water Sampling -Site management -Water Sampling
Command and Control Electrician	-Soil displacement and site clearing -Hazardous waste containment	-Environmental Technician -Greenhouse Technician for Native Species Propagation	-Native Species monitoring -Soil Assessment
Combat Engineer	-Environmental Hazard Assessments -Site Survey Analysis	-Environmental Engineering (\$50,000) -Environmental Technician (\$46,000)	-Environmental Surveying -Site Development -Ecological Monitoring

	-Expeditionary Airfield Analysis	-Environmental Risk Assessment Specialist (\$48,000)	
Marine Corps Air-Craft Rescue and Firefighting Specialist	-Site clearing -Fire Science -Soil Sampling	-Environmental Protection Specialist (\$46,000) -Natural Resource Damage Specialist (\$41,000)	-Native Species Monitoring -Air quality monitoring
Water Purification Specialist	-Water sampling -Site testing	-Environmental Protection Specialist (\$46,000)	-Soil Sampling -Water Sampling
Heavy Equipment Operator	-Environmental Assessments -Coastal nourishment	-Environmental Technician (\$46,000)	-Ecological Monitoring -Restoration efforts

**Figure 1:** Comparable MOS's to Environmental Occupations

Relevant environmental occupations found through Disabled Veterans National Foundation and O\*Net Online. Estimated average annual salary achieved through O\*Net, Indeed Jobs, and Salary.com

## Developmental Approaches

The best way to expose Marines to new environmental careers is to develop a program geared towards the transitioning service member. To recommend a program, I developed a proposal through three primary phases. First, I conducted research of existing programs and opportunities through online databases and brick and mortar facilities. I interviewed three primary organizations that would be involved in my program if it were to exist. Secondly, I developed a SWOT analysis to help address potential obstacles I would encounter and approaches to mitigate. I used my findings to develop a proposal that outlined a recommended timeline and considerations to include stakeholders. Below provides a brief narrative of each potentially involved party I considered when developing the proposal.

## Stakeholders

Base education offices are focused on assisting service members and their spouses explore educational and career opportunities. Whether the member is looking to retake the ASVAB for a potential transition in military job placement or pursuing a degree, the education

office is an existing resource. All military members are required to check in with their education offices to attend tuition assistance classes or as a way of consulting with an education advisor to review schools or programs. The office is familiar with the structure of the programs the military endorses and presents pathways to proposals or career development. Parallel to the education office and its goals is the Marine Corps University (*Education Assistance*, n.d.).

Skillbridge is a program that allows service members to work in specific industry training 180 days prior to exiting the service. Military members gain experience through apprenticeships and internships to connect with industry partners in real-world jobs. Unique among other offered programs, Skillbridge allows the potential of 180 permissive temporary assigned duty (PTAD) days where the member focuses on the new career (*DOD SkillBridge*, n.d.).

Marine Corps COOL is a credentialing program that assists Marines in achieving certification based on their MOSs. Service members receive full funding for qualified certifications and tests that translate to meaningful employment through civilian agencies (*Welcome to Marine Corps Credentialing Opportunities Online (COOL)*, n.d.).

United Services Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP) documents military job skills and experience through the Department of Labor (DOL) registers apprenticeship program. An apprenticeship will expand on career options and provide Marines with a certification of work history to supplement a resume (*USMAP*, n.d.).

## **Process: Development of the EECO Program**

I knew from my own experiences and those of Marines I have worked with, that there was an interest in environmental management and conservation. There was not, however, a clear path as to how a Marine could pursue a job in conservation after exiting the Marine Corps. We do have to give credit to the current programs available that do assist service members in finding or learning about opportunities after service; Skillbridge and the various Troops to programs that connect military members to teaching, commercial truck driving, or welding to name a few. Yet, there is not a program that reaches past the normal career channels previously mentioned in this paper. I am fortunate enough to work in an office where providing recommendations to higher headquarters is part of the norm and felt I could use lessons learned to develop a proposal.

It may be important to take a moment and identify two major hurdles I encountered while developing this proposal; one, COVID was real, and two, adherence to a chain of command. In the initial phase of my research I found it, like so many of us, difficult to reach people. Many were working from home and using different networks from the ones in our government buildings. Others were coping with the new norms and busy negotiating changes. What would have been a simple drive to a building became several weeks of emails traffic, waiting for responses. Additionally, as an active duty service member, I have defined channels to contact leadership. Although most senior leaders are willing to lend an ear, there are appropriate customs and courtesies, policies and procedures that we follow.

### **Research and Interviews**

**Canvas Interviews and an Initial Search.** To begin, I needed to verify whether or not there was an initiative in existence that would satisfy the need for a conservation transition program. I began at work, where I asked team members if in their military careers, they had or

had not come across an environmental program in any capacity. I work for the Staff Noncommissioned Officer Academy Camp Lejeune as a faculty advisor; essentially a leadership school for specific ranks. We consist of a myriad of MOSs, time in service, and backgrounds, but our focus is educating sergeants, staff sergeants, and gunnery sergeants. We have to be well versed in Marine Corps doctrine, programs, and literature; therefore, our building tends to have at least one person who has the answers to a given question. Our director is a Sergeant Major who also teaches for different universities along with her normal duties. Neither she nor the rest of the academy was aware of any conservation program.

I completed the normal searches through the various assistance programs but to no avail. The Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune Education Office would have to be my next stop. Offering guidance for both education and follow on paths, the education office manager sat with me in hopes of better understanding the vision of an environmental transition program. I explained that the program would be an opportunity for those transitioning to work with the installations environmental office to develop hard skills towards a future career in conservation. He cautioned that the Marine Corps would want something more official for Marines to use as certifications or resume builders. Would they be offered a job at the end of the program? How would the program be funded? The Marine Corps likes new ideas but presented in a way similar to existing ones. Recommendations from Marines is usually presented through point papers or defined proposals. Senior leadership who reviews proposals wants research and thorough analysis to assess the viability of an environmental program. Visiting the base education office and speaking with the program manager not only helped determine the feasibility of a program, but also gave perspective to proposal development for a final product.

In each semester of my Duke Environmental Leadership Environmental Management program, I have been able to use the installation Environmental Office as a resource for different assignments. The environmental manager and endangered species base biologist were kind enough to sit with me and express concerns they would have for a program like the one I am proposing. Their primary concern was determining what recorded accountability of the Marines would involve and ensuring there was enough work for the Marines to complete on any given day. As some jobs have to be completed by a trained professional, there may be times where Marines have little to do.

Although not an interested party, the Marine Corps University is a main developer of education curriculum with the Marine Corps mission in mind (*Marine Corps University Strategic Plan*, 2016). Their headquarters command in Quantico Virginia suggested providing a detailed outline of a proposal with expected timeline, but not saturating the document with too many assumptions; instead, leaving some room for a reviewer's considerations and concerns.

The overall consensus of the interviews was to develop and share a proposal for EECO, but first, a best method needed to be identified. The strategic plan on pg. 17 of this document outlines the mission and vision of the Marine Corps with follow on analysis of the issue at hand.



## **Strategic Plan to implement the Environmental Enlisted Conservation Occupations (EECO) program through installation education offices**

**Background:** The Marine Corps does not currently have a transition program for Marines and Sailors exiting the service who are interested in environmentally-focused occupations. The private sector has shown an increase in the need for more jobs focusing on restoration and conservation efforts. As it stands, the military transition programs are geared toward civil service careers or labor (*Department of Defense Instruction, 2020.*). The Marine Corps needs to expand the potential market for other careers in order to assist in the global need for qualified workers in the workplace and the need for a greater involvement in solving difficult environmental issues.

**Core Values:** The Marine Corps' three core values of honor, courage, and commitment set a foundation for young professionals to build careers. In order to become the best possible leaders, Marines are taught to be ethical and honorable members in their communities. Regardless of the definition a community takes in the moment, Marines and Sailors who desire and understand the natural world will use these same values while participating in the EECO program.

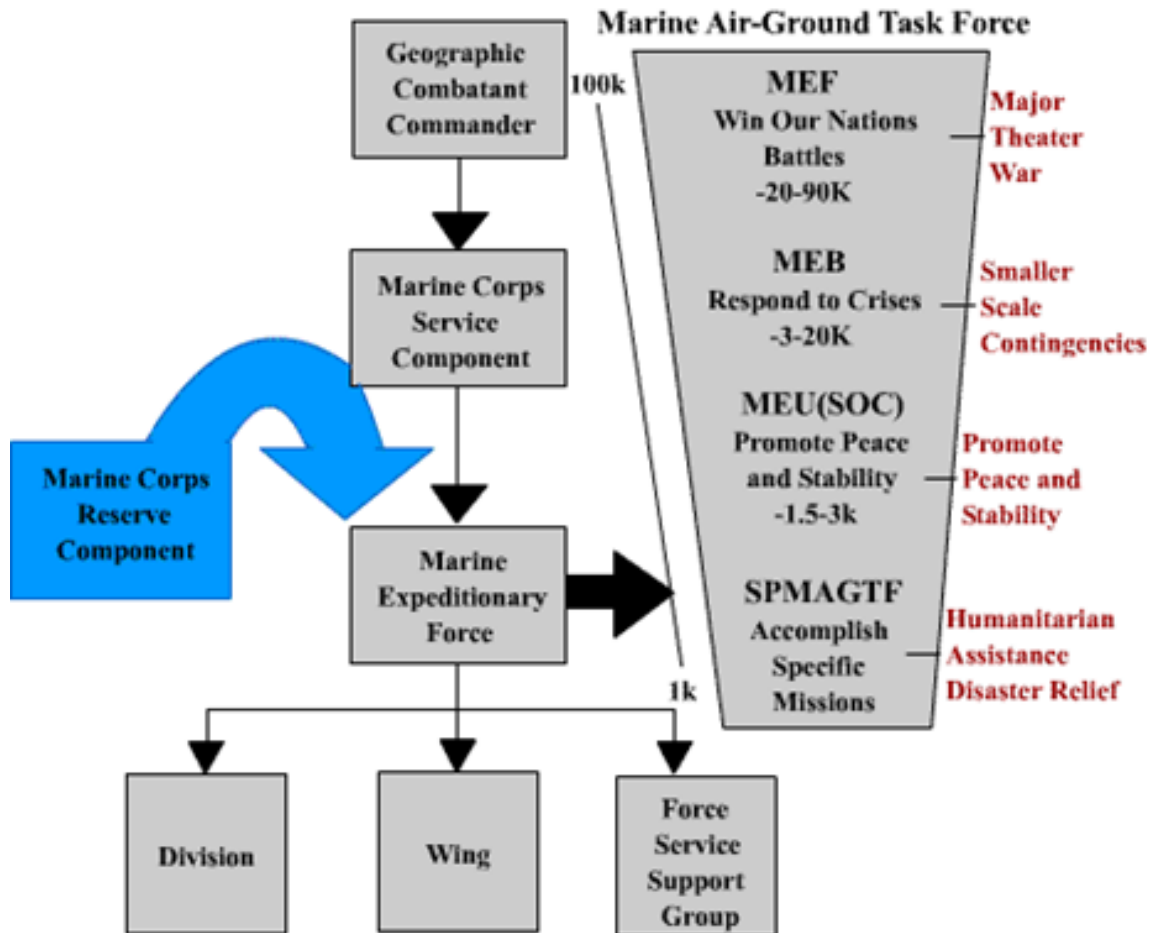
**Vision Statement:** The EECO program will act as a new pathway to expose Marines and Sailors to greater commitment to our communities and our natural resources. Participants will develop baseline skills to assist researchers in the field for conservation and restoration efforts. Upon exiting military service, Marines will continue to support a greater cause in battling climate change and creating a better future for the next generation as environmental warriors.

**Mission Statement:** Expose transitioning service members to other environmentally focused careers to provide more options for follow-on careers after service. Develop better communities and mark a new pathway for the individual service member to become better citizens in the future.

**Challenges and Opportunities:** Implementing a new transition programs comes with many hurdles. The Marines Corps, like most military branches, wants programs structured a specific way. New products with new approaches can be foreign and difficult to understand for reviewers. Compounding concerns of how and why Marines should be allowed to attend a research focused program can feel as if there is no benefit to the Marine Corps. The Marine does not have given skills from Marine schools to argue that the jobs are similar. Even the nursing program offered through Skillbridge allows Marines to capitalize on causality response learned in their careers. Environmental management may not have the personnel or ability to lead the EECO. Asking civilian employees to reach outside their job descriptions could be too much to ask. They would have to maintain written evaluations or records to determine the work ethic or involvement of the Marines.

**Structure:** The Marine Corps is a hierarchal paradigm with information flowing up and down a chain of command. The organization is led by the Commandant of the Marine Corps with his enlisted advisor being the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps. As depicted in Figure 2, the primary focus of the geographic combatant commanders are the Wing, Division, and Force Service Support Group that include all supporting battalions and squadrons. Parallel to the geographic combatant commanders is the Marine Air Ground Task force (MAGTF) comprised the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB), Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) with Special Operations Capable (SOC), and the Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF). Each component of the Marine Corps operates independently of one another or in cooperation. An important aspect of the MAGTF is its frequent participation with other nations or militaries in joint operations.

# The Marine Corps



**Figure 2: Marine Corps Structure**

Figure shows the components of the Marine Corps and its MAGTF as a hierarchal paradigm.  
 Image Credit: Vet Friends (2017), Vetfriends.com. Accessed 05 January 2022

Although a force in readiness, the Marine Corps recognizes the need for inovation and creatvie solutions. Writing competitions and innovation panels offer a platform for Marines to submit ideas. The Marine Corps would be open the review of a new transition program, but will require the input of several stakeholders. In order to best approach a proposal, the following SWOT analysis was developed in Figure 3.

<p style="text-align: center;">← External to EECO Program →</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑ Internal to EECO Program ↓</p>	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Chapters of 38 Commandants Planning Guidance directing new educational opportunities for Marines.</li> <li>-New 2020 revamp of in military curriculum through existing programs</li> <li>-New social media platforms the Marine Corps uses to communicate with its members to understand and learn new desired benefits for Marines to join and gain.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Marine Corps potential lack of interests in a program that does not guarantee a job after service</li> <li>-The Marine Corps is focusing attention on restructuring units and future threats.</li> <li>-Unit leaders may not want their Marines in what could be a considered a weaker program.</li> <li>-As a new program, EECO will challenge unit commander’s beliefs on when and where Marines should be allowed to transition.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-No cost to the Marine Corps</li> <li>-Capitalizes on existing offices aboard each installation.</li> <li>-In line with the Marine Corps objective to encourage educational opportunities for Marines</li> <li>-Manageable and will not take away from unit operations.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Domination Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Exploit new guidance and plans from higher leadership to implement a no cost program</li> <li>-Use existing formatting to present program</li> <li>-Develop a multi angle approach to best present information to commanders in real time.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Confrontation Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Combination approach emphasizing the benefit of a no cost program that helps build experience for Marines who are already unable to complete future missions.</li> <li>-Create a platform that allows unit leaders that allows unit leaders to make suggestions and address concerns</li> </ul>
<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-EECO does not guarantee follow on careers for exiting service members</li> <li>-EECO will require the commitment of base environmental office.</li> <li>-EECO will require interest from Marines.</li> <li>EECO will require unit leaders agree to send Marines to the base environmental offices.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mitigation Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The Marine Corps is encouraging the growth and development of new programs to better develop exiting Marines. EECO is in line with new guidance</li> <li>-Create an open line of communication for unit leaders to voice concerns with EECO.</li> <li>-Create an open approach for all lesson plans to be available to unit commanders and Marine Corps planning personnel to offer feedback and guidance.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Minimization Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Develop communication plan to network with organizations that will be involved with EECO to encourage investment.</li> <li>-Develop realistic timelines and TAD periods that minimally affect unit operations, while still providing assistance to base environmental offices.</li> <li>-Develop a way for unit leaders and program managers to voice concerns with solutions.</li> </ul>

**Figure 3:** SWOT Analysis

Addressing the primary issues discovered in the SWOT Analysis allowed for follow on strategic approaches with mitigation opportunities in Figure 3.

<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Potential Hazard to Strategy</u>	<u>Mitigation</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
<b>Domination Strategy</b> Exploit new guidance and plans to justify EECO.	The Marine Corps' focus on new training for active forces in an ever changing battle field	Develop plan that allows EECO is develop without taking away from the fighting force.	Marines who do not have the allotted time needed to deploy or participate in training can be a part of EECO. Units continue forward with same number of personnel they would have.
<b>Confrontation Strategy</b> Capitalize on current initiatives designed to allow multi access communication.	Although new initiatives exists in the Marine Corps, current global events refocus leadership's attention to severe issues.	Develop a platform that allows Marine Corps planners, unit commander's, and base environmental office to address issues	In real time, leadership can offer guidance to be a part of the solution to more opportunities for exiting members.
<b>Mitigation Strategy</b> Exploit guidance that weighs heavy on education and low cost approaches to new idea.	Regardless of the Marine Corps' long term goal, corps mission and global events take presidents over individual programs	Develop a presentation that focuses on current guidance demanding new educational opportunities, while not interfering with operations.	Marine Corps mission would not be affected by a new educational opportunity. Unit commanders continue to conduct training to support their mission without losing personnel.
<b>Minimization Strategy</b> Occupy forums and online platforms to continue addressing concerns from leadership	Lack of interest/overpowering operations taking away commander's attention	Make a realistic deadline to have the program developed. Taylor the program towards the Marines affected to encourage conversations and interest.	Those interested will approach their own units to gather more information about the program. Commanders will be more inclined to review and offer input.

**Figure 4: SWOT Analysis Strategy Breakdown.** The Marine Corps' mission will continue to be priority with the individual Marine second. Regardless, Marines are only capable of deploying if they have more than six months of active duty service after any given deployment. The best strategy to combat operational tempo and a mission focus objective, is to capitalize on already established policy.

After selecting four primary strategies, it is important to identify the primary stakeholders who would have input in a new program. The communication plan in Figure 4 allows for a clear visual and methods to correspondence.

<u>Stakeholder</u>	<u>Message</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Communication Means/Frequency</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
Base Education	Base Education should act as a liaison for the program	To ensure legitimacy of the program	Primary is email and secondary is telephone	Continued communication with progression in the program
Base Commander	Base Commander should endorse the program	To provide guidance and assist in spreading of program	Quarterly through email. Secondary through telephone	Routine correspondence with continued development in the program
Marine Corps Commandant's Office	Commandant's office should implement the program	To make the program an official opportunity for Marines	Monthly through email and secondary through telephone	Routine correspondence with continued development in the program
Installation Environmental Office	Environmental Office should endorse the program	To act as the location for the program.	Monthly through email. Quarterly through in person meetings. Other form of communication through telephone	Willingness to participate. Marines working in the program

**Figure 5:** Communication Plan

**Management:** The base environmental manager partnered with the individual Marine's unit will maintain monthly reviews on the Marine. The document will identify the days and hours the Marine worked, job assigned, and overall performance and any additional relevant notes.

## **Evaluation: Longevity of EECO and Follow on Controls**

The development of the proposal for the EECO program will be a relatively lengthy process. The Commandant's planning guidance and current focus of the Marine Corps by direction of the DOD requires new approaches to upcoming threats regardless of their form. Education and transition programs are part of the new way forward with a need for adapting opportunities for transitioning Marines. Looking ahead, the best way to evaluate the success or subscription of EECO is if stakeholders are providing suggestions or requirements for the program to exist. Although the proposal is the groundwork, the primary caretaker of EECO will have to be base education, at least in starting years. Their involvement and willingness to host EECO will show investment in its presence as another legitimized transitional program. Regardless of who monitors EECO, the only way for it to continue is if Marines are interested in participating. If transitioning Marines desire to enroll in the program, the Marine Corps will be willing to invest time in an environmentally focused program with conservation at the core.

## **EECO Introduction and Proposal**

Below you will find the proposal for EECO. This proposal is divided by phases with established tasks. Its primary purpose is to offer a clear recommendation for an environmentally focused program for the transitioning Marine. A time line is suggested with anticipated roles of potential stakeholders and follow on actions. Assumptions are addressed and room for further development open for input from high command.



To:

The Commandant of the Marine Corps Office

6 February 2022

### Enlisted Environmental Conservation Occupations (EECO) Program

I am thrilled for the opportunity to submit this proposal for a new transitional program for Marines to develop hard skills geared toward environmentally focused careers. The subsequent outline for the EECO program is sectioned by phases with tasks and assumptions identified. If approved, EECO offers a new vantage point for those leaving service to understand the complexity of climate change while continuing forward as better citizens for a better future.

This program is able to be adjusted for flexibility and to better support the Marine. Evolution of EECO would result in greater input from associated entities and the fleet Marine force.

Respectfully,  
SSgt Lacey A. Ambrosino



# Table of Contents

## Introduction

EECO will result in the exposure of Marines to environmental jobs that currently are in need of dedicated professionals. This program allows transitioning enlisted Marines within six months of their end of service to experience and gain skills through hands on training with the installation environmental office. A phase style approach will allow observation, feedback, and continued development from involved stakeholders.

## Phase I: Initial Development (at 6 months)

Task: Create communication channel with base education, commandant's office, and installation commanders on curriculum and development and budgeting.

Task: Develop outline for EECO with window for revisions.

Task: Complete and offer EECO for pilot program.

## Phase II: Pilot Trial (at 9 months)

Task: Conduct outreach to installation commander focusing on feeder MOSs.

Task: Coordinate with base education and installation environmental office to enroll transitioning Marines into EECO.

Task: Conduct program review with enrolled Marines.

## Phase III: Program for Review (at 12 months)

Task: Compile and evaluate end of program critiques.

Task: Conduct revisions of the EECO based on Marine and environmental office feedback.

Task: Readdress program.

## Phase IV: Implemented Program (at 18 months)

Task: Implement program for second pilot.

Task: Enroll Marines for 3 months.

Task: Evaluate second pilot for further development.

## Phase V: Implement finalized Program (at 24 months)

Task: Complete Implemented program.

Task: Allow Marine enrollment with finalized correspondence.

Task: Compare and evaluate program success.

**Phase VI: Conduct Annual Review (at 36 months)**

Task: Conduct review of EECO program.

Task: Assess feedback and recommended improvements.

Task: Adapt and adjust EECO program.



## Phase I: Initial Development (at 6 months)

**Task:** Create communication channel with base education, commandant's office, and installation commanders.

- **Networking:** Base education will act as the primary point of contact (POC) for EECO. The base environmental office and installation commander's office will ensure units and individual Marines follow requirements for the program. Google Teams will be the primary network for communication and revisions with email the main initial contact.
- **Accountability:** The installation environmental office will act as the primary authority of overseeing the individual Marine. The base education office will initiate the program and the physical location where Marines apply.
  - An excel spreadsheet shared in Teams will be used to track Marines' attendance and performance.
  - Units, at any point, may recall Marines from EECO if they are not performing to standard; in the event of an emergency; or if the Marine displays apathy.
- **Budget:** EECO will be a low cost/no cost program to the Marine Corps.

### Comparable programs

Program	Annual Cost for Participation	Lodging costs	Employee Wages
Skillbridge	No cost to government or service member per current guidance DODI 1322.29	The service member's military branch may offer available lodging space. DODI 1322.29 does not prohibit military departments from providing lodging.	Service members will not collect wages from supporting organization. Only their normal annual income from the military.
Military COOL Program	Through DOD funds, COOL pays for the initial credentials, maintaining, and renewing. No other associated costs	The service member's military branch may offer available lodging space. DODI 1322.29 does not prohibit military departments from providing lodging.	Service members will not collect wages from supporting organization. Only their normal annual income from the military.
EECO	No cost to government or service member per	No Lodging required, unless installation offers lodging to Marines received	Service members will not collect wages from supporting organization. Only

	current guidance DODI 1322.29	from based where program is not offered.	their normal annual income from the military.
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**Task:** Develop outline for EECO with window for revisions.

**Task:** Complete and offer EECO for pilot program.

### **Phase II: Pilot Trial (at 9 months)**

**Task:** Conduct outreach to installation commander focusing on feeder MOSs.

- Provide Education with binder outlining program for potential applicants.
- Provide program outline to installation commanders for review and feedback.
- Create and share program flyer with mass notification system and unit read boards for units that have the following MOSs to target:
  - Bulk Fuel Specialist
  - Heavy Equipment Operator
  - Aviation Mechanic

**Task:** Coordinate with base education and installation environmental office to enroll transitioning Marines into EECO.

- Create folder through base education sharepoint and teams for tracking Marine applicants and progress through EECO. The installation environmental office will also have access to the systems.

**Task:** Conduct program review with enrolled Marines.

- Provide introduction to course for applicant Marines with the added request of a survey upon completion.

### **Phase III: Program for Review (at 12 months)**

**Task:** Compile and evaluate end of program critiques.

- Develop survey that assess the Marines' experience working with the institution environmental office through Survey Monkey.
- Require Marines complete anonymous survey at the end of the program.

**Task:** Conduct revisions of the EECO program based on Marine and environmental office feedback.

## **Phase IV: Implemented Program (at 18 months)**

**Task:** Implement program for second pilot

- Establish controls based on feedback from first pilot of EECO.
- Further develop accountability procedures for the education office, installation environmental office, and unit to maintain attendance of Marines.

**Task:** Enroll Marines for 3 months.

- Continue to encourage transitioning Marines to join EECO for hard skills development.

**Task:** Evaluate second pilot for further development of the program.

## **Phase V: Implement finalized program (at 24 months)**

**Task:** Implement completed program.

**Task:** Allow Marine enrollment with finalized correspondence.

**Task:** Compare and evaluate program success.

## **Phase VI: Conduct annual review (at 36 months)**

**Task:** Conduct review of EECO program.

**Task:** Assess feedback and recommended improvements.

**Task:** Adapt and adjust EECO program.



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