



SERPPAS
Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability

2021+ SERPPAS STRATEGIC PLAN

Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability





The Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS), established in 2005, is a unique six-state partnership among Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina and South Carolina that promotes collaborative decision-making to support the conservation and resilience of national defense, natural resources, working lands and communities in the Southeast US. SERPPAS serves as a forum to build effective working relationships between state and federal partners in partnership with diverse stakeholders to accomplish its mission, as stated in its charter:

This SERPPAS Strategic Plan describes a set of objectives to help the partnership advance its mission across the region. The plan serves as a framework for identifying and implementing collaborative and cooperative solutions to various challenges affecting national defense, natural resources, economic sustainability, and the quality of life in the Southeast region. The plan is organized by focus areas, which are topics of mutual interest for the SERPPAS partners. Each of the five focus areas listed throughout this plan are supported by collaborative work groups that identify priority actions to accomplish these objectives.

To seize opportunities and solve problems in value-adding ways that provide mutual and multiple benefits to the partners, sustain the individual and collective missions of partner organizations, and secure the future for all the partners, the region, and the nation.

SERPPAS is driven by collaborative leadership and each partner strives to identify and seize opportunities for mutual gain, to deal well with differences, and to solve complex problems.

To be a good SERPPAS partner, each will strive to:

- + Communicate openly and effectively
- + Consult before deciding
- + Use persuasion rather than coercion
- + Accept each other as someone worth dealing with
- + Be easy on the people, hard on the issues
- + Focus on interests, not positions
- + Balance emotion with reason
- + Understand each other's interests

As a Partnership, SERPPAS strives to:

- + Build effective working relationships that yield trust and progress
- + Tap the power of a good map
- + Invent options for mutual gain
- + Tap the power of partnership, and move the evolution of SERPPAS cooperation to another level and scale
- + Tap the power of leadership
- + Tap the power of innovation

Focus Area – Sentinel Landscapes in the Southeast

WHY? Increased population growth and development, inadequate planning, climate change impacts and other incompatible land uses, threatens the ability of military installations to carry out their mission. **HOW?** In response to these growing challenges, the U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA), Defense (DoD), and the Interior (DOI) established the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership to strengthen military readiness, conserve natural resources, bolster agricultural and forestry economies, and increase climate change resilience. The SERPPAS Sentinel Landscapes Work Group connects currently designated partnerships to address shared challenges, share lessons learned and promote the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership's mission in the Southeast. The Work Group disseminates information to developing



partnerships and serves as a regional coordinating body between currently designated and future Sentinel Landscapes partnerships. **BENEFITS** Sentinel Landscapes benefit the military mission and the other partner missions by promoting compatible land use near military installations; strengthening the economies of forests and farms surrounding military bases; improving coordination between the military services, local governments, and state and federal agencies; and encouraging state interest and prioritization of resources supporting military installations and surrounding communities.

SENTINEL LANDSCAPES IN THE SOUTHEAST OBJECTIVES

1. Continue to refine a shareable composite mission footprint map of the Southeast to better understand the DoD priority areas across the region, utilizing existing and promoting continued local planning efforts to identify where new Sentinel Landscapes Partnerships would be most valuable.
2. Focus on promoting private landowner interests and explore innovative ways to increase the number and type of compatible land use tools to offer landowners to conserve working lands and promote resilience where appropriate.
3. Leverage the 'Power of SERPPAS' to attract both financial and non-financial support to increase awareness and capacity for the implementation of Sentinel Landscapes designated in the Region.
4. Assess and integrate other SERPPAS focus area objectives into implementation strategies for Sentinel Landscapes in the region, to create more conservation opportunities that support working lands, natural resources and military missions.
5. Assist Sentinel Landscapes in the Southeast assess their climate exposures and vulnerabilities and integrate resilience planning and adaptation into their landscape implementation plans.
6. Use the SERPPAS network to share information, resources and lessons learned of the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership, as well as demonstrate the value and purpose of these partnerships.

Focus Area — At-Risk, Threatened & Endangered Species

WHY? Military installations provide important habitat for populations of federally-listed and at-risk species. These species can and do impact training and testing on military installations because of Federal agency responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). At-Risk species are defined as species which have been proposed for listing* by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), designated as candidate species by the Service or which the Service has been petitioned to list under the ESA. **HOW?** The SERPPAS At-Risk, Threatened and Endangered Species Work Group collaborates with federal, state, and other partners to develop and promote innovative strategies for conservation of at-risk and listed species and increased flexibility for addressing impacts to both military missions and listed species. These approaches include conservation agreements, mitigation credit strategies, and projects to increase status information of at-risk species to inform Service listing decisions and to support partner efforts for the overall conservation and recovery of these species. **BENEFITS** These efforts promote and support ecosystem restoration,

* Proposed for listing means the Service has proposed a draft rule in the Federal Register to list the species as threatened or endangered under the ESA; however, a final listing decision has not been made.



maintenance, and monitoring on and off military installations to enhance the conservation of at-risk and listed species; increase flexibility for on-installation training and testing; and increase regulatory predictability for military services, other federal and state agencies, and private landowners who engage in proactive conservation.

AT-RISK, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES OBJECTIVES

1. Identify focal species and funding opportunities to promote the implementation of programs that conserve, manage, and support recovery of listed species and provide direct benefits to military installations (both on and off installations) and SERPPAS partners. This could include but is not limited to habitat and multi-species crediting strategies.
2. Identify opportunities to proactively conserve at-risk species populations or habitat that are important to SERPPAS in a manner that would preclude the need to list a species. This could include but is not limited to Candidate Conservation Agreements, and Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances.
3. Use existing geospatial information, such as the SERPPAS Good Map and SECAS layer to enhance, improve and/or make functional corridors for wildlife with an eye to climate resilience, and to enhance and support larger conservation goals and Sentinel Landscapes.
4. Share lessons learned and case studies on habitat management for unique lands and habitats, such as isolated wetlands or pollinator habitat, that challenge military operations and training and/or have the potential to benefit at-risk and listed species.

Focus Area — Southeast Prescribed Fire Initiative

WHY? Fire is a critically important agent of renewal in natural ecosystems. However, wildfires can pose a substantial risk to people and infrastructure and the Southeast has more wildfires than any other region. This region also includes several fire-dependent ecosystems where prescribed burning is necessary to safely manage the land and resources.

HOW? By promoting prescribed fire as a land management tool, SERPPAS partners minimize the risk of destructive wildfires while restoring critical habitat and species in the Southeast. Working with fire experts from around the region, the SERPPAS Prescribed Fire Work Group developed a Comprehensive Prescribed Fire Strategy that guides their work. This strategy describes regional, state, and local activities needed to progress toward the strategic goals. **BENEFITS** Managing land properly with prescribed fire helps restore ecosystems, reduces the risk of catastrophic wildfire, protects air quality, and improves wildlife habitat for game, at-risk, threatened, and endangered species. Military testing and training in the Southeast is critically linked to prescribed burning, as installations use this management practice for fuels reduction and to manage critical habitat. Increasing prescribed fire as a management tool on and off base can enhance military readiness by increasing flexibility under the Endangered Species Act by expanding and sustaining key habitats off-post; reducing fuels to increase resiliency and create natural buffers to DoD facilities, infrastructure and assets; and decreasing liability claims and fire costs from surrounding communities.



SOUTHEAST PRESCRIBED FIRE INITIATIVE OBJECTIVES

1. Identify, encourage, and support efforts to quantify and prioritize the use of prescribed fire to achieve desired conditions considering the missions and objectives of SERPPAS.
2. Identify needs and opportunities to provide funding, capacity and other support to achieve desired conditions in SERPPAS priority areas, as needed.
3. Encourage and share successful models of burn teams and/or Prescribed Burn Associations that plan, prioritize, and conduct prescribed burns and associated fuels reduction work within Sentinel Landscapes and other SERPPAS priority areas.
4. Share successful models of shared stewardship and interagency cooperation to increase burning across boundaries, and to share personnel, equipment, and resources on fires within SERPPAS priority areas.
5. Increase engagement with landowners, communities, and contractors by supporting workshops, field days, and other programs that provide prescribed burning experience, training, and education within SERPPAS priority areas.
6. Encourage and support the development, dissemination, and utilization of new relevant fire science and tools that foster collaboration among scientists and natural resource managers, and that address the information needs of SERPPAS, regional fire managers, and partners.
7. Promote cooperative conservation, protection of public health, and keeping areas in attainment with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) by encouraging use of basic and enhanced smoke management practices.
8. Support efforts that identify and seek to overcome gaps in knowledge, training, and information needs relevant to SERPPAS prescribed fire managers, policy makers, and partners. Topics include but are not limited to:
 - + Climate Change and Carbon
 - + Resilience and Sustainability
 - + Smoke and Air Quality
 - + Water quality and quantity
 - + Fire Effects and Ecosystem Management
 - + Societal Impacts (including social justice, diversity, and inclusion)
 - + Liability

Focus Area – Coastal Resilience and Regional Adaptation

WHY? Extreme weather events and changes in environmental conditions, including hazards such as hurricanes, flooding, sea level rise and wildfires, put military readiness, natural resources, communities and working lands at risk. These serious threats to mission assurance and mission-essential functions require collaboration to successfully enhance resilience across geographical and governance boundaries. **HOW?** The SERPPAS Coastal Resilience and Regional Adaptation Work Group fosters collaboration among Federal, State and local partners to build capacity, develop plans, share resources, and implement projects that increase resilience for military installations and communities. With a specific focus on comprehensive planning and integrating natural infrastructure into the resilience strategies,



the Work Group provides significant benefits to all partners and their respective missions. **BENEFITS** This increase in shared knowledge, resources and tools will serve to better conserve and protect our people, our military installations, our lands and waters and wildlife, our towns and cities, our forests and farms, our economic opportunity and our quality of life. Regional collaboration and coordination on resilience strategies will help sustain the military mission by: minimizing loss of coastal training infrastructure or interruption of operations; minimizing the potential for new coastal species placement on the endangered species list and/or critical habitat designated in the vicinity of military installations; prioritizing watershed protection for increased water supply resilience and flood mitigation; minimizing damage to storm water systems and other utilities shared between bases and communities; and increase the effectiveness of joint installation and community planning for and adapting to severe climate change impacts.

COASTAL RESILIENCE AND REGIONAL ADAPTATION OBJECTIVES

1. Continue building partnerships and capacity focused on connecting DoD installations and surrounding communities on resilience planning and actions, with an initial focus in coastal areas.
2. Enhance the SERPPAS Good Map by adding resilience-related data that will help identify vulnerabilities to climate and weather-related risks as well as identify further research and data gaps needs.
3. Develop plans and implement projects involving nature-based solutions, such as living shorelines, oyster reefs, and saltmarsh conservation, based on DoD and community vulnerabilities and natural and cultural resource benefits.
4. Develop and share resources on authorities, funding, and tools from key federal and state agencies focused on resilience to changing environmental conditions to assist on the ground projects and identify future needs.
5. Continue to explore how extreme weather and changing environmental conditions are influencing the other SERPPAS focus areas and identify opportunities to collaborate.
6. Explore opportunities to evaluate and measure success of nature-based, natural infrastructure solutions in lessening vulnerabilities to climate and weather-related events impacting military installation resilience.
7. Consider how best to expand and include participation of Federal, State and local partners that are focused on community resilience but have not historically been part of the SERPPAS community.

Focus Area — Energy Development and Siting

WHY? Due to rapidly changing energy policy and advancement in renewable energy technologies, the Southeast is increasingly seen as an ideal region for locating wind, solar and other forms of energy infrastructure. Despite the benefits these technologies may bring, without proper planning and siting, they can have adverse impacts on the conservation of natural resources, as well as military readiness. Potential habitat destruction and interference with military aviation and radar operations are examples of such impacts that need proactive efforts now to avoid the



potential problems that could come. **HOW?** The SERPPAS Energy Development and Siting Work Group is assessing various measures that ensure early stakeholder notification of proposed energy projects; encourage and facilitate robust coordination; and make effective use of new or existing tools that could aid developers' understanding and ability to address potential impacts. **BENEFITS** This collaborative regional approach will establish the means to ensure federal and state officials are able to effectively influence and mitigate potential project impacts, thereby preserving natural resources, protecting the military mission, and strengthening effective working relationships among these interests into the future.

ENERGY DEVELOPMENT AND SITING OBJECTIVES

1. Build diverse partnership of military, natural resources and energy industry stakeholders to raise awareness of challenges and priorities in the region and identify intersecting opportunities.
2. Assist with and promote the development of mapping tools that identify important areas for habitat/species, military mission, and cultural resources for early notification and communication with energy industry.
3. Develop and share innovative strategies culminating in a SERPPAS Energy Siting Blueprint/Framework designed to produce mutually beneficial outcomes for energy development and military mission by facilitating project siting planning and avoiding detrimental impacts to natural and cultural resources.
4. Develop and share resources to assist agency and organization coordination on energy development and siting within the SERPPAS geography and beyond.
5. Coordinate with the Coastal Resilience and Regional Adaptation work group to identify strategies to address energy resilience in the context of enhancing military installation resilience.

