



SERPPAS
Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability

2024 SERPPAS STRATEGIC PLAN

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Department of Defense training space, places where soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen prepare for the complexities and challenges of warfare, are critical to our Nation’s defense. “We train as we fight because we fight as we train” is the motto, and this pledge represents a solemn and sacred commitment to prepare and equip our warfighters before sending them into battle. Training space and the natural environment inherent to that landscape is the “classroom” for learning critical skills and battle techniques in the conditions warfighters might expect on actual battlefields. Preserving these critical landscapes for their intended training and test missions directly supports our warfighters and the national defense mission.

There are many forces that can impact the natural landscapes where these critical training and testing missions take place. Rapid population growth in the Southeastern United States and the conversion of land into developed communities has resulted in the loss of agricultural land, critical wildlife habitats, and working landscapes such as farms, forests, and fisheries. The loss of these land uses increases encroachment on military installations, hindering the military’s ability to train effectively. As a result, it becomes essential to preserve compatible land uses and natural habitats near military installations to remove and avoid land use conflicts, reduce regulatory restrictions and sustain open and natural landscapes to enable key mission capabilities.

The [Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability \(SERPPAS\)](#), established in 2005, is a unique partnership among leaders from the Department of Defense, the military services, six states [AL, FL, GA, MS, NC, SC], and the federal natural resource, wildlife, ocean and working lands agencies in the Southeast. These leaders work together to identify where the interests of military readiness, conservation, working lands, and communities overlap, depend on each other, are incompatible, or are complementary.

SERPPAS Mission: *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 Vision: *A partnership of Southeastern state, military, and federal agencies working together to sustain and advance national defense through land and resource conservation, in support of the communities and economies that depend on them.*

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:

- + Balance emotion with reason
- + Understand each other’s interests
- + 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

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

** These values are inspired by the book, “Getting to Yes” by Fisher, Ury, and Patton (2013 version).*



This SERPPAS Strategic Plan describes a set of objectives that will help the partnership advance its mission across the region in the next three to five years. The plan serves as a framework for identifying and implementing collaborative and cooperative solutions to various challenges affecting national defense that minimize encroachment on military installations and benefit natural resources, working lands, installation resilience, and the quality of life in the Southeast region. It is organized by focus areas that have established work groups collaborating on priority actions to accomplish the objectives.

Focus Area – Sentinel Landscapes in the Southeast

WHY? Population growth, poorly planned development, incompatible land uses, coastal and inland flooding, drought, wildfire, and extreme heat threaten the ability of the military services to carry out their vital testing and training actions in support of the Nation’s warfighters. These same encroachment concerns can dampen or restrict economic and other benefits to the states and communities that share important landscapes with key military installations and other military test and training facilities – landscapes that support the military’s readiness mission but also serve to support conservation, working lands, recreation and other open spaces. **HOW?** In response to these growing challenges, the U.S. Departments of Defense (DoD), Agriculture (USDA), and the Interior (DOI) established the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership to strengthen military readiness, conserve natural resources, bolster agricultural and forestry economies, increase public access to outdoor recreation, and enhance landscape resilience. The SERPPAS Sentinel Landscapes Work Group connects designated Sentinel Landscapes in the Southeast to address shared challenges, share lessons learned, and advance the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership’s mission in the Southeast. The Work Group disseminates information to emerging partnerships in the Southeast pursuing designation and serves as a regional coordinating body among currently designated and future Sentinel Landscapes. **BENEFITS** Sentinel Landscapes benefit the military mission and the other partner missions by connecting with private landowners and promoting compatible land use near military installations; strengthening the economies of forests and farms surrounding military bases; protecting large, connected natural areas; improving coordination between the military services, local governments, and state and federal agencies; and encouraging state interests and prioritization of resources supporting military installations, participating landowners, and surrounding communities.

SENTINEL LANDSCAPES IN THE SOUTHEAST OBJECTIVES

1. Coordinate with the Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC) on status of ongoing and future Compatible Land Use Planning efforts in the Southeast and share relevant information with SERPPAS work groups and Steering Committee.
2. Focus on exploring and promoting innovative ways to increase the number and type of compatible land use tools to encourage increased landowner participation to conserve working lands and promote installation 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. Expand coordination and collaboration between all SERPPAS work groups to better integrate actions that complement and support the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership goal of addressing shared encroachment challenges and negative impacts affecting the military mission, conservation, and working lands.
5. Assist Sentinel Landscapes in the Southeast to assess their encroachment and hazard exposures and vulnerabilities and integrate resilience planning and adaptation into their landscape implementation plans as a means to support the resilience of military installations and the broader military readiness mission.
6. Use the SERPPAS network to share information, resources, and lessons learned of the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership to demonstrate the value and purpose of these partnerships in supporting national defense and the military’s test and training mission and communicate the benefits to military installation leadership and other key SERPPAS partners.



Focus Area — At-Risk, Threatened & Endangered Species

WHY? Military testing and training requires natural and undeveloped lands to simulate wartime conditions, and military installations provide habitat for significant populations of federally listed and at-risk species. DoD demonstrates stewardship of natural resources in its trust by protecting and enhancing those resources for mission support. Meeting the requirements of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) can and does impede training and testing on military installations. At-Risk species are defined as those species that 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, or rare species. **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 proactive conservation of at-risk species and increased flexibility for addressing negative impacts to 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 that will result in less interference with military operations. **BENEFITS** These efforts will increase flexibility for on-installation training and testing; increase regulatory predictability for military services, other federal and state agencies, and private landowners who engage in proactive conservation; and promote and support ecosystem restoration, maintenance, and monitoring on and off military installations to enhance the conservation of at-risk and listed species.

AT-RISK, THREATENED & ENDANGERED SPECIES OBJECTIVES

1. Identify focus species and funding opportunities to promote implementation of programs that provide direct benefits to military installations (both on and off installations) by conserving, managing, and supporting the recovery of listed species. 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, through conservation agreements and other approaches.
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 military installation and landscape resilience, and to enhance and support larger conservation goals and Sentinel Landscapes that prioritize military encroachment concerns.

Focus Area — Southeast Prescribed Fire Initiative

WHY? Fire is a critically important agent of renewal in natural ecosystems which serve as important landscapes for military testing and training. However, wildfires can pose a substantial risk to military facilities, including people and infrastructure, and the Southeast has more wildfires than any other region. The Southeast region also includes several fire-dependent ecosystems where prescribed burning is necessary to safely manage the land and resources. Military testing and training in the Southeast is critically linked to prescribed burning, as installations use this management practice for fuels reduction to reduce the severity of wildfires and to manage critical habitat. **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

* 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.



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. The strategy recommends leveraging numerous funding sources, organizations, and networks, and identifies existing tools and models to maximize efficiency and success. **BENEFITS** 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 create natural buffers to DoD facilities, infrastructure, and assets; and decreasing liability claims on military installations and fire costs from surrounding communities. Managing both private and public 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.

SOUTHEAST PRESCRIBED FIRE INITIATIVE OBJECTIVES

1. Identify, encourage, and support efforts to quantify and prioritize the use of prescribed fire to achieve desired conditions.
2. Identify needs and opportunities to provide funding, capacity, and other support for prescribed burning in SERPPAS priority areas.
3. Encourage new and share successful models of burn teams, Prescribed Burn Associations, and other collaborative burn groups.
4. Increase burning across boundaries and sharing of personnel and equipment.
5. Increase engagement with landowners, communities, and contractors by supporting programs that provide prescribed burning experience, training, and education.
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 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 prescribed burn practitioners, policy makers, and partners.

Focus Area – Coastal Resilience and Regional Adaptation

WHY? Weather-related events and hazards such as hurricanes, inland and coastal flooding, extreme temperatures, drought, 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?** Although the missions of the SERPPAS partners are different, the partners share an interest in assessing and mitigating these risks and improving resilience of military installations and the supporting defense communities in the face of these challenges. Collaboration on coastal resilience and regional adaptation, with a focus on integrating nature-based solutions into resilience planning and projects, will provide significant benefits to all partners and their respective missions. **BENEFITS** Regional collaboration and coordination on coastal resilience will support military mission sustainment by minimizing loss of coastal training infrastructure or interruption of operations at low-lying bases; minimizing the potential for new 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 on installations and surrounding communities; minimizing damage to stormwater systems and other utilities shared between bases and communities; and increasing the effectiveness of joint installation and community planning for and recovering from hazards such as hurricanes, inland and coastal



flooding, extreme temperatures, drought, and wildfires. This collaboration will increase shared knowledge, resources, and tools among the military, natural resource agencies, and local communities by expanding the opportunities for successful solutions. As a result, SERPPAS will better protect military installations and personnel, lands, waters and wildlife, towns and cities, forests and farms, economic opportunity, and quality of life.

COASTAL RESILIENCE AND REGIONAL ADAPTATION OBJECTIVES

1. Continue expanding partnerships and capacity focused on connecting military installations and surrounding communities on resilience planning and actions.
2. Explore how weather-related impacts are influencing the other SERPPAS focus areas and identify opportunities to collaborate.
3. Use and assist in the development of mapping tools, such as the SERPPAS good map, that can advance installation and community resilience planning and implementation.
4. Support the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative (SASMI) and the Marsh Forward Plan.
5. Support the development, implementation, and evaluation of nature-based solutions for resilience projects benefiting military missions and communities in the southeast.

Focus Area — Energy Development and Siting

WHY? Due to rapidly changing energy policy and advancement in energy technologies, the Southeast is increasingly seen as an ideal region for locating various forms of energy infrastructure. Despite the benefits these technologies may bring, without proper planning and siting, they can have adverse impacts on military readiness, natural resources, and agricultural working lands. Interference with military aviation and radar operations, potential habitat destruction and fragmentation of wildlife corridors, and conversion of agricultural lands which serve as buffers to military installations are examples of impacts that need proactive efforts now to avoid future potential problems. **HOW?** The SERPPAS Energy Work Group is assessing various measures that 1) ensure early stakeholder notification of proposed energy projects; 2) encourage and facilitate robust coordination; and 3) 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 protecting the military mission, conserving natural resources, and strengthening effective working relationships 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, share resources and priorities in the region, and identify intersecting opportunities.
2. Support the creation and advancement of mapping tools for new energy development, pinpointing critical zones for wildlife, habitat, military operations, and cultural resources.
3. Promote, develop, and share innovative strategies to produce mutually beneficial outcomes for energy development and military operations, and avoid detrimental impacts to wildlife, natural and cultural resources, communities, and agricultural working lands.
4. Coordinate with the other SERPPAS work groups to identify strategies for the protection of military operations and natural resources and address energy resilience in the context of enhancing military installation resilience.