

2024 SERPPAS Principals Meeting

May 8-9, 2024

Gulfport, MS

AGENDA

Meeting Purpose

To continue to build relationships among the SERPPAS Principals and, through learning and engagement on partnership progress, to inspire continued advancement of the SERPPAS mission in the southeast United States.

Meeting Objectives

- Demonstrate on-the-ground issues and actions that relate to the mission of SERPPAS in the region – specifically highlighting the mission of Keesler AFB and the Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge
- Endorse a revised 2024 version of the SERPPAS Strategic Plan and understand work group priorities for the coming year
- Discuss challenges that present opportunities for advanced SERPPAS coordination and collaboration

Meeting Outcomes

The SERPPAS Principals have established meaningful connections with other regional leaders, have the desire to support the continued progress of the 2024 SERPPAS Strategic Plan objectives and actions, and will look for collaboration opportunities in the face of future challenges.

Tuesday, May 7, 2024 - Travel Day & Welcome Reception (For those that opt-in)

1700 – 1900 Welcome Reception

Location: Chandeleur Island Brewing Company, 2711 14th St, Gulfport, MS 39501

Wednesday, May 8, 2024 – Day 1 Mobile Meeting

0700 – 0800 Breakfast at The Courtyard Gulfport Beachfront (For those that opt-in)

Location: The Courtyard Gulfport Beachfront, Crystal Ballroom

0800 – 0820 Welcome & Principals Introductions

SERPPAS Principal Co-Chairs

Mr. Ron Tickle, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Environmental Management & Restoration, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Environmental Management & Restoration)

Mr. Tim Watkins, Chief Deputy Secretary, NC Department of Environmental Quality

0820 – 0850 Welcome to Mississippi and Overview Brief

Mr. Michael Watson, Mississippi Secretary of State

Purpose: To set the stage for the location of the meeting, highlighting the unique challenges MS faces and the innovative efforts that the State is taking to protect natural resources, the military mission, and communities.

0905 – 0930 Buses depart and travel to Keesler AFB

0940 – 1145 Keesler AFB Tour including NOAA Hurricane Hunters

Location: Sablich Auditorium



Southeast Regional Partnership for
Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS)



Colonel Billy Pope, Commander, 81st Training Wing, Keesler AFB

Dr. Eric Sparks, Director, Coastal and Marine Extension, Mississippi State University

NOAA Hurricane Hunters

Purpose: To learn about different elements of the mission at Keesler AFB including the NOAA Hurricane Hunters, and ongoing projects.

1200 – 1300 Lunch at McElroy's (*For those that opt-in*)

1330 – 1405 Buses depart and travel to Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge

1415 – 1600 Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge

Mr. Jeremy Edwardson, Project Leader, Gulf Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Mr. Marion "Scott Wiggers, Botanist/ Fish and Wildlife Biologist, USFWS Ecological Services

Purpose: To learn about the management highlights and challenges for the Gulf Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex. This visit will include a ¾ mile walking trail in pine savannah.

1615 – 1700 Buses depart and travel back to The Courtyard Gulfport Beachfront

1800 – 2030 Dinner at The Mississippi Aquarium (*For those that opt-in*)

Networking begins at 6pm, buffet dinner at 7pm

Thursday, May 9, 2024 – Day 2 Business Meeting

0700 – 0800 Breakfast at The Courtyard Gulfport Beachfront (*For those that opt-in*)

Location: The Courtyard Gulfport Beachfront, Crystal Ballroom

0800 – 0810 Principal Co-Chairs Welcome

Mr. Ron Tickle, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Environmental Management & Restoration, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Environmental Management & Restoration)

Mr. Tim Watkins, Chief Deputy Secretary, NC Department of Environmental Quality

0810 – 0850 Advancing Resilience After Catastrophe

General Joe Spraggins (retired USAF), Executive Director, MS Department of Marine Resources

Ms. Mary Walker, Executive Director, RESTORE

Purpose: Invited speakers will reflect on two major catastrophes in the Gulf, the BP oil spill and Hurricane Katrina. Both had extensive negative impacts on coastal Mississippi, and both are catalysts for advancing many successful resilience efforts for the communities and the ecosystems of the region. The speakers will share lessons learned, progress made, and ways SERPPAS can chart a more equitable, sustainable, and resilient path forward in the face of continued challenges.

0850 – 1000 The Future of Fire

Moderator: Mr. Ken Arney (USFS Principal), Regional Forester, USFS Southern Region

Mr. John Nicholson, Chief of Staff, EPA Region 4

Ms. Anne Jewell, Program Manager, DOD Wildland Fire & Emergency Services

Mr. Johnny Sabo, Deputy Director, Georgia Forestry Commission

Mr. James Boylan, Branch Chief, Environmental Protection Division, GA Department of Natural Resources

Purpose: SERPPAS has long recognized the benefits of prescribed burning as a land management tool to reduce wildfire risk and restore natural fire-dependent ecosystems in the Southeast. 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 for threatened and at-risk species. Climate



change is contributing to more wildfires, increasing the risk of harmful air quality while at the same time creating conditions that make prescribed burning harder to accomplish. As recognized by the SERPPAS Principals at the 2023 Principals Meeting, maintaining the ability to continue prescribed burning is of critical importance, and navigating new air quality standards will create an additional need for coordination among SERPPAS agencies. This panel will discuss these challenges and ways that SERPPAS can continue to be a leader in advancing good fire.

Principals Engagement:

- **SERPPAS was instrumental in identifying the need for the exceptional events rule process, specifically for prescribed fire. Is there support for SERPPAS taking the initiative to encourage agencies to demonstrate the exceptional events process and identify efficiencies in the context of the new EPA air quality regulation?**
- **What other ways might SERPPAS continue to be a strong leader in advancing good fire?**

1000 – 1020 Networking Break

1020 – 1120 Implementing Coastal Nature-Based Solutions – Regulatory Best Practices

Moderator: Mr. Bill Cary, Brooks Pierce Law Firm, Member of the NBS Regulatory Best Practices Sub-Work Group

Mr. Arne Olsen, Climate Change/Resilience POC, NAVFAC SE

Mr. Jonathan Howell, Section Chief, CAMA Regulatory Section, NC Department of Environmental Quality

Mr. Justin McDonald, Coastal Resiliency Program Manager, Mobile District, USACE

Purpose: SERPPAS has been focused on advancing nature-based solutions as a strategy to adapt to climate hazards and other military encroachment challenges. However, the regulatory process has presented challenges to implementation specifically in the coastal space. The SERPPAS Nature-Based Solutions Regulatory Best Practices Sub Work Group has explored the regulatory process for living shorelines to understand and share recommendations for applicants and policymakers to advance successful projects in the Southeast. This panel will contribute to the ongoing conversation from various perspectives about advancing education, capacity, coordination, and innovation for successful coastal nature-based projects supporting the DOD mission.

Principal Engagement:

- **Education and awareness have been the major outcomes of this sub-work group. Is there an additional role for SERPPAS in addressing these regulatory challenges? If so, what is it?**
- **What other types of nature-based solutions projects, either current or anticipated, might present regulatory hurdles or processes that could inform and benefit from a future focus of the sub-work group?**

1120 – 1200 Looking Forward: 2024 SERPPAS Strategic Plan

Moderator: Ms. Addie Thornton, SERPPAS Coordinator

Mr. Bruce Beard, Associate Director, Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute

Dr. Michelle Covi, Coastal Resilience DOD Liaison, UGA Marine Extension & Georgia Sea Grant

Ms. Jenn Fawcett, Extension Associate, NC State University Extension Forestry

Ms. Lindy McDowell, Natural Resources, Biologist, U.S. Army Environmental Command

Purpose: The input received from the Principals in 2023 informed a revision of the SERPPAS Strategic Plan, and a new 2024 SERPPAS Strategic Plan was provided in the briefing packet for review and endorsement by the Principals. In this session each work group lead will present their top priorities for the next year that advances the new objectives and encourages work group collaboration. The work group leads will also foreshadow some challenges they are facing. The Principals will be provided time to comment on the new plan, endorse actions, provide ideas or ask questions.



Principals Engagement: We look forward to hearing about what parts of the plan excite the Principals or are of particular importance to them or their agency, which helps inform the work group efforts. The work group leads will be happy to answer questions and receive input on their priorities that best reflect the priorities of the Principals.

1200 – 1250 Removing Institutional Barriers For SERPPAS Success

Moderator: Mr. Ryan Orndorff, Director, Environmental Planning and Conservation, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Environmental Management & Restoration)

Purpose: SERPPAS has set a precedent as an action-oriented partnership that finds ways to address challenges to get good work done through coordination, collaboration, and innovation. These challenges can cause delays, create barriers, or prevent good projects, in line with the SERPPAS mission, from being accomplished. Two that we've discussed today include the Exceptional Events process and the permitting challenges related to nature-based solutions projects. Two additional barriers were acknowledged by the SERPPAS work group leads and are listed below. In this session, we hope to engage the Principals on these barriers by soliciting ideas for solutions and endorsing a path forward in line with the historic accomplishments of SERPPAS.

1. Unprecedented volume of funding is consistently generating challenges for members in each workgroup area in the timely receipt and implementation of projects, due to things like limited manpower for processing, questions over match and co-mingling of certain funds, and the timing and release of funds.
2. Similar issues and bottlenecks have been identified in providing Conservation Compliance for NEPA, ESA, CWA, and others, especially in pursuing larger, landscape scale projects including multi-states, multi-military services and multi-agencies.

Principals Engagement:

- **How has your agency experienced these challenges?**
- **What actions might the SERPPAS partnership take to address these challenges?**

1250 - 1300 Closing Remarks

SERPPAS Principal Co-Chairs

Lunch is served immediately after for those who opted-in.

