

The **Commander's Guide** to the Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability

“SERPPAS has been and continues to be a testament to the importance of building relationships, identifying common goals and working together across national defense, natural resource, and community interests for the benefit of all.”

—2022 SERPPAS Principal Co-Chairs: Mr. Richard Kidd, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Environment and Energy Resilience and Ms. Callie DeHaven, Director of State Lands (Florida)

The Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS) is a unique six state partnership. State and federal agencies, along with non-governmental organizations, work together to sustain military readiness through the conservation of natural resources, protection of working lands, and resilience of communities across the region. Because this issue of long-term sustainability crosses geographic and organizational boundaries, SERPPAS works collaboratively to accomplish this mission.

STATES	FEDERAL AGENCIES
Alabama	Office of the Secretary of Defense
Florida	Military Service Departments (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps)
Georgia	US Army Corps of Engineers
Mississippi	US Forest Service
North Carolina	US Fish and Wildlife Service
South Carolina	USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service
*State involvement includes State agencies with responsibilities for natural resources, working lands and military affairs	US Environmental Protection Agency
	US Geological Survey
	National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration

Overall Goals



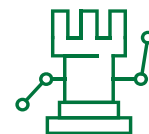
Minimize encroachment threats (ie. incompatible development and climate change impacts) with decisions that are beneficial to the military mission, community well-being, rural economics and environmental requirements.



Increase partnerships to improve outcomes for military readiness, natural resource conservation, resilience of communities and the economy, and quality of life in the Southeast region.



Leverage the immense scientific information generated by the partners and utilize GIS resources and maps to identify overlapping and compatible partner priorities.



Develop policy initiatives and promote innovative projects that support the SERPPAS mission.



History

In 2005, state environmental and natural resource officials partnered with the Department of Defense and other federal agencies to form SERPPAS. Rapid urbanization in the Southeast resulted in the loss of farms, forests, important wildlife habitats and fisheries. It also congested airspace and caused increased activity in coastal waters. Encroachment threats, including incompatible development and climate change impacts, have affected military installations' ranges and training routes, and continues to present challenges to the sustainability of national defense and natural and economic resources throughout the Southeast region. SERPPAS develops and enhances partnerships to minimize encroachment, develop policies, and promote projects and solutions that benefit the military mission, communities, and the environment. The below equation illustrates how collaborative partnerships can enhance mission accomplishment.

**Effective Partnerships + Data Rich GIS-based Maps =
Mutual & Multiple Benefits for Partners**



SERPPAS Solutions

North Carolina Wind Energy Legislation

- **Problem:** In North Carolina, proposed wind energy towers posed a significant threat to the military mission.
- **Solution:** SERPPAS DoD Co-Chair collaborated with the SERPPAS partners to insert DoD into the NC permitting and siting process for wind energy.

Red-Cockaded Woodpecker (RCW) Translocations

- **Problem:** Endangered Species Act requirements to protect the RCW imposed significant training restrictions at military installations in the Southeast, and installations had become unintentional refuges due to land use changes and habitat loss outside the installations.
- **Solution:** To compliment and expand on the RCW recovery effort on military installations and other public lands, SERPPAS partners funded biologists to translocate RCW populations, resulting in the successful increase of RCW populations overall, helping the military manage the species for success and also continue their training.

Rise of the Longleaf Pine

- **Problem:** Disturbances across the Southeast region significantly reduced the amount of longleaf pine ecosystem. This also decreased forest land that buffered military installations and endangered species habitats that offered potential to minimize training restrictions.
- **Solution:** SERPPAS helped initiate the first-ever range-wide conservation plan for longleaf pine. Now the forest is growing, and with it, the capacity to buffer military installations and ease training restrictions.

PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE

There are two levels of engagement in SERPPAS: Principals and Steering Committee Members. The Principals include senior leadership from the Department of Defense, each Military Service, and Federal and State working lands and natural resource agencies in the six partner states. The Steering Committee members are appointed by each Principal. Work groups, made up of SERPPAS agency staff, other interested agencies and non-governmental organizations, are organized around the focus areas within the SERPPAS Strategic Plan.

ROLES

Principals identify priorities, develop strategies, make decisions and provide guidance to the Steering Committee. Steering Committee members develop and implement projects that address the Principals' priorities, serve as representatives and liaisons for their Principal and communicate and disseminate information from SERPPAS activities within their organizations/agency. Members of the Steering Committee serve on project work groups responsible for the 'on the ground' work of SERPPAS.

LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

SERPPAS is co-chaired by a Principal representing the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Sustainment) and a Principal representing one of the state partners. The State Principal co-chair will serve on a rotating basis. Each Principal co-chair will nominate a representative from their organization/agency to co-chair the Steering Committee.

MEETING SCHEDULE

The Steering Committee meets twice a year, in the fall and spring. At these meetings members share information, receive project updates and advance the work group efforts guided by the Strategic Plan. The Principals meet annually to build and maintain relationships across the region, receive progress updates and identify opportunities to achieve strategic goals. The Principal's meeting typically includes a tour of a local military installation. Principals may identify a need for an annual focus area meeting to advance the efforts of a specific work group.

Living and Breathing Partnership

SERPPAS has existed for almost two decades, due to its success in building effective relationships and promoting regional efforts. SERPPAS' flexibility and ability to continue to stay abreast on the issues that matter to the partners has contributed to its longevity. SERPPAS treats its strategic plan as a living document, continuously learning and understanding emerging partner concerns. SERPPAS' focus on sharing information to keep partners educated and updated on threats to the region will help ensure the future for all the partners, the region, and the nation.

SERPPAS Strategic Plan: Focus Areas & Mission Benefit

Guided by SERPPAS priorities, the Principals guide the development of a Strategic Plan as a framework for identifying and implementing collaborative and cooperative solutions across the region. The Strategic Plan includes focus areas that address issues of mutual concern among the SERPPAS partners. Each focus area has a dedicated work group made up of Steering Committee members and other partner organization representatives. The 2021+ Strategic Plan currently includes five focus areas:

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.
- **Benefit?** 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.



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DoD is proud to support the growth of the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership and add Camp Bullis, Northwest Florida, and Southern Indiana to the list of designated sentinel landscapes. These new landscape designations will leverage DoD funding and programs to protect the missions at 14 key DoD installations and ranges, protecting essential testing and training operations, enhancing resilience to climate change, and preserving our nation’s natural resources and working lands.”

—Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Real Property
Ron Tickle – February 2022

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.
- ▶ **Benefit?** These efforts promote and support ecosystem restoration, 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.

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At Fort Benning, prescribed fire has been used since the mid-1950s for various purposes, including fuels reduction to reduce the severity of wildfires caused by military training. In this study we evaluated a 30-year record of wildfire, prescribed fire and drought at Fort Benning, a 74 000-hectare military training installation in west-central Georgia, USA. Annual wildfire incidence declined sharply from 1982 to 2012 as prescribed fire hectares increased. Multiple regression models including both prescribed fire and drought (assessed using the Keetch–Byram Drought Index; KBDI) explained 80 percent and 54 percent of the variation in annual wildfire incidence and aerial extent, respectively.

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This strategy provides a mechanism by which Department of Defense Installations in the unlisted range of the gopher tortoise can volunteer to implement conservation actions for the gopher tortoise that can be used to offset impacts to the gopher tortoise if the species becomes listed in the future. The strategy defines conservation credits for the gopher tortoise and specifies how those credits can be created and used by military installations.”

— The Department of Defense Gopher Tortoise Conservation and Crediting Strategy developed by DoD, US FWS, and State Wildlife Agencies in AL, FL, GA and SC.

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.
- ▶ **Benefit?** 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.

Current- and previous-year prescribed fire were strongly inversely related to current-year wildfire, suggesting that the cumulative area burned by prescription is important in explaining current-year wildfire incidence. Wildfire activity overall (both incidence and aerial extent) was highest during drought years when cumulative prescribed fire hectares were low. Our results suggest some inevitability of wildfire during drought, but also provide evidence for the positive effects of sustained landscape-scale prescribed fire in reducing wildfire activity over time.”

— Addington, Robert N., et al. “Relationships among Wildfire, Prescribed Fire, and Drought in a Fire-Prone Landscape in the South-Eastern United States.” *International Journal of Wildland Fire*, vol. 24, no. 6, 2015, p. 778., doi:10.1071/wf14187.

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.
- ▶ **Benefit?** 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.



“ The Department of Defense (DOD) has identified climate change as a critical national security issue and threat multiplier (DOD 2014a) and top management challenge (DOD 2020a). Climate change will continue to amplify operational demands on the force, degrade installations and infrastructure, increase health risks to our service members, and could require modifications to existing and planned equipment. Extreme weather events are already costing the Department billions of dollars and are degrading mission capabilities. These effects and costs are likely to increase as climate change accelerates. Not adapting to climate change will be even more consequential with failure measured in terms of lost military capability, weakened alliances, enfeebled international stature, degraded infrastructure, and missed opportunities for technical innovation and economic growth.

— Department of Defense Climate Adaptation Plan
September 2021

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.
- ▶ **Benefit?** 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.



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Permit Requirements. —A person applying for a permit for a proposed wind energy facility or proposed wind energy facility expansion shall include all of the following in an application for the permit: Documentation that the applicant has either (i) submitted Federal Aviation Administration Form 7460-1 for the turbines associated with the proposed wind energy facility or proposed wind energy facility expansion or (ii) initiated an informal review by the Department of Defense Siting Clearinghouse of the proposed wind energy facility or proposed wind energy facility expansion. If the applicant has submitted Federal Aviation Administration Form 7460-1 in order to fulfill the requirements of this subdivision, the applicant shall provide any determination reached by the Federal Aviation Administration at the time the application is submitted to the Department. If the Federal Aviation Administration has not made a determination at the time the application is submitted to the Department, the application shall include a description of the status of the applicant’s engagement with the Federal Aviation Administration and the Department of Defense Siting Clearinghouse.”

— North Carolina General Statutes Chapter 143 Article 21



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Page 2: Longleaf Pine by Albert Herring

Page 4: Fire by Cpl. Justin X Toledo, U.S Marine Corps

Page 6: Soldier Walking by Airman 1st Class Joshua Magbanua, U.S Air Force

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