2018 | 2020

SERPPAS STRATEGIC PLAN

Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability
This Strategic Plan for the Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS) for 2018-2020 describes a set of objectives that will help the partnership advance its mission across the region. The plan will serve as a framework for identifying and implementing collaborative and cooperative solutions to challenges affecting national defense, natural resources and economic sustainability, and the quality of life in the Southeast region. It is organized by focus areas that have established work groups collaborating together on priority actions to accomplish these objectives.

Sentinel Landscapes in the Southeast

**WHY?** Increased population growth and development, inadequate planning 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 established the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership as a nationwide collaboration dedicated to promoting conservation, working lands, and national defense readiness. The SERPPAS Sentinel Landscapes Work Group connects currently designated partnerships in the Southeast 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 in the Southeast, and serves as a regional coordinating body between currently designated and future Sentinel Landscapes partnerships. **BENEFIT?** Sentinel Landscapes benefit the military mission 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.

Objectives

1. Develop a shareable composite mission footprint map of the Southeast to better understand the DoD priority areas across the region, and to identify where new Sentinel Landscapes partnerships would be most valuable.

2. Focus on promoting private landowner interests and explore ways to increase the number and type of compatible land use tools to offer landowners to conserve working lands.

3. Leverage the ‘Power of SERPPAS’ to attract both financial and non-financial support to increase 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. 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.

Threatened, Endangered and At-Risk Species

**WHY?** Military installations provide habitat for significant populations of federally-listed and at-risk species. These species can and do adversely impact training and testing on military installations due to Endangered Species Act (ESA) requirements. At-Risk species are defined as those species which have been proposed for listing by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), designated as candidate species by the Service or which the Service has been petitioned to list under the ESA. **HOW?** The SERPPAS Threatened, Endangered, and At-Risk 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 impacts to both listed species and military missions. These approaches include conservation agreements, mitigation credit strategies, and projects to increase status information of at-risk species to inform Species Status Assessments conducted by the USFWS to inform listing decisions.
**BENEFIT?** These efforts will 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; increase regulatory predictability for military services, other federal agencies, and private landowners who engage in proactive conservation; and provide a process for DoD and other partners to share species data that will inform regulatory decisions.

**Objectives**

1. Develop and implement programs to conserve at-risk and listed species through habitat and multi-species crediting strategies and other conservation efforts that provide direct benefits to military installations (both on and off installations).

2. Support Species Status Assessments for those species, like the gopher tortoise and red-cockaded woodpecker that have high potential to impact training and testing on military installations.

3. Based on determined mutual need, emphasize and enable efforts to increase, enhance and sustain ecosystems through the conservation and restoration of lands in priority landscapes that can be managed to provide habitat for priority species and that will contribute to a larger conservation goal.

4. Increase targeted habitat management for isolated wetlands to benefit at-risk species.

5. Develop and implement approaches to “avoid and minimize” impacts to at-risk species from emerging developments such as utility scale solar facilities.

**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. The Southeast 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. The strategy recommends leveraging numerous funding sources, organizations, and networks, and identifies existing tools and models to maximize efficiency and success.

**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 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 to reduce the severity of wildfires 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 create natural buffers to DoD facilities, infrastructure and assets; and decreasing liability claims and fire costs from surrounding communities.

**Objectives**

1. Use a spatial analysis to identify and prioritize areas for prescribed fire treatments considering the missions and objectives of SERPPAS, then review existing programs and identify opportunities to provide additional funding and capacity support in those areas, as needed.

2. Encourage and support full-time prescribed burners and/or burn teams within Sentinel Landscapes and other SERPPAS priority areas whose primary responsibilities would be to conduct prescribed burns and associated fuels reduction work.

3. Increase interagency cooperation in order to burn across boundaries, and to share personnel, equipment, and resources on fires within SERPPAS priority areas.

4. Continue to engage landowners and consultants through workshops and “Learn and Burn” field days within SERPPAS priority areas that provide prescribed burning experience and education regarding topics such as smoke management practices, burning for wildlife, liability, and financial and technical assistance opportunities.

5. Encourage and support the development, dissemination, and utilization of new relevant fire science and tools that foster collaboration among scientists and natural resource managers, promote cooperative conservation, and support keeping areas in attainment with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).
Coastal Resilience and Regional Adaptation

WHY? The Southeast is facing various changes, ranging from increased flooding, storm surge, coastal erosion, and extreme temperature and precipitation variations, to the effects of increased coastal population, urban sprawl and developmental pressures on coastal industries and activities. These challenges pose and opportunity for military installations, communities and organizations/agencies in the Southeast to consider the need for actions to improve resiliency. HOW? Identifying the most significant risks and vulnerabilities due to these challenges, especially those that impact coastal military installations and communities in the region, will help determine how SERPPAS can effectively engage to minimize these risks. This could include evaluating historically effective SERPPAS programs (species at risk, compatible land use, etc) and develop additional tools to assist with coastal resilience. BENEFIT? Regional coordination on these issues can further enhance military installation mission sustainment; minimize the potential for new coastal species placement on the endangered species list and/or critical habitat designated in the vicinity of military installations; prioritize watershed protection for increased water supply resilience to installations and surrounding communities; increase the geographical effectiveness of protecting military installations and communities to coastal and severe weather events; and increase collaboration and shared knowledge among natural resource agencies and the military, resulting in increased resilience for installations on the coast and elsewhere in the region.

Objectives
1. Seek input from military services on baseline conditions and most significant risks to the natural and built environment that threaten mission sustainment at bases and ranges in the SERPPAS region, with emphasis on those in coastal areas.
2. Set up a SERPPAS engagement process to discuss and understand the identified risks and relate them to the most significant risks that face natural resource conservation and working lands; engage federal, state, and academic subject matter experts to develop environmentally-suitable and economically-effective solutions to them.
3. Provide information on knowledge, tools and methods to better manage risk, especially in regards to risks to the ability to utilize military lands for their intended purpose.
4. Consider the development and implementation of value-adding, consensus-driven SERPPAS initiatives and provide tools to assess and mitigate risks which are related to SERPPAS mission and objectives. Specifically establish a collaborative program to work with coastal and marine stakeholders to protect and sustain military-compatible shoreline and marine space, the coastal economy and natural resources.

Energy Development and Siting

WHY? Due to rapidly advancing renewable energy technologies, the Southeast is becoming increasingly viable to locate wind, solar and other forms of energy infrastructure. Many of these technologies, if placed in a certain proximity to the military mission, can severely interfere with low flight paths and various military radars, among other things, important to military testing and training. HOW? The SERPPAS Energy Work Group is working with each of the SERPPAS states to develop a mechanism for early notification to DoD of proposed energy projects, creating solutions that are mutually beneficial. BENEFIT? This coordination across the region will establish state processes that ensure DoD is included in energy project planning; allow DoD to address and mitigate project impacts when necessary to protect the military mission; and build effective working relationships between states, other federal agencies, the DoD Siting Clearinghouse, installations and other stakeholders.

Objectives
1. Promote and develop State-level siting processes for each SERPPAS State; share existing and proposed military-compatible energy siting legislation and ordinances with state, county, and military officials in the SERPPAS region to encourage consistent siting standards and review processes.
2. Encourage States and military installations to explore and pursue opportunities that will help them understand where their areas of concern are specifically related to wind/energy development.
3. Develop publicly-accessible State-level and a regional military mission footprint maps for States, wind energy developers and other members of the industry to identify areas of military operations or ecological concerns based on SERPPAS priorities.