



2026 SERPPAS STRATEGIC PLAN

Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability





The Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS),

established in 2005, is an innovative partnership among leaders from the Department of War (DOW), the Military Services, six states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina), and the Federal natural resource, wildlife, ocean, and working lands agencies in the Southeast.

SERPPAS brings together interagency and cross-sector partners in a collaborative forum to identify challenges and implement solutions where and when the interests of military readiness, conservation, working lands, and local communities intersect. For the last two decades, SERPPAS has a proven track record of providing coordinated regional leadership, promoting integrated mission-compatible land use outcomes, and enabling policy alignment across jurisdictions and scales.

SERPPAS Mission: *To seize opportunities and solve problems that sustain and advance compatible landscapes essential to military readiness and provide mutual and multiple benefits to all the partners, the region, and the nation.*

SERPPAS Vision: *A sustainable Southeast where SERPPAS partners effectively collaborate to ensure the long-term viability of national defense operations alongside resilient working lands, abundant natural resources, and thriving communities and economies.*

SERPPAS VALUES

The SERPPAS values come from a book entitled *Getting to YES* (Fisher, Ury, & Patton), which discusses collaborative negotiation to resolve conflicts, solve problems, and find solutions that are better for all sides. A summary of those values is below and was used to draft the SERPPAS Charter in 2005:

- + Separate the people from the problem; be hard on the problem, soft on the people
- + Focus on interests, not positions
- + Invent options for mutual gain
- + Insist on using objective criteria
- + Develop your BATNA: Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement

Applying these values positions SERPPAS partners to *Getting to YES* when implementing the SERPPAS mission and vision.



Why SERPPAS? Supporting Our Nation’s Warfighters and the Defense Mission Landscape

The DOW relies on realistic training, weapons testing, and mission operations to prepare service members for the complexities of combat and to ensure national security. To support these activities, DOW manages nearly 27 million acres of land, water, and airspace across the U.S. and its territories. These landscapes serve as outdoor classrooms and mission-critical ranges, supporting robust and resilient military installations and allowing warfighters to train in environments that replicate real-world conditions.

The SERPPAS region is a vital component of our nation’s national security readiness. Approximately 118 military installations spanning more than 2.3 million acres are located within the six SERPPAS states. These installations are embedded within a broader patchwork of natural and working lands—wetlands, coasts, forests, farms, and open spaces—under federal, state, and private ownership. These shared landscapes serve a dual purpose: enabling national defense while also supporting the natural and cultural character of the Southeast. However, rising population pressures, increasing urbanization, and worsening natural hazards are placing these landscapes and the missions they support at risk. These trends not only threaten DOW’s ability to train and test effectively but also jeopardize the long-term vitality of surrounding rural economies and natural resources.

Preserving compatible land uses around military installations is essential to avoiding land use conflicts, sustaining military readiness, and protecting the environmental and economic values these landscapes provide. Meeting these regional challenges and promoting landscape-scale solutions requires broad collaboration, and DOW cannot do it alone. Through SERPPAS, we strengthen regional partnerships, protect operational capabilities, and advance mission readiness to secure the defense landscape for generations to come.

SERPPAS PROVIDES A REGIONAL, COLLABORATIVE PLATFORM THAT ADVANCES ITS GOALS BY:

- + Uniting military, government, and NGO partners to address shared challenges with mutually beneficial, cross-boundary solutions.
- + Building trusted relationships among leaders and stakeholders at all levels to enable effective collaboration.
- + Aligning priorities and investments to protect compatible working and natural lands, sustain wildlife corridors, and strengthen rural economies.
- + Supporting large landscape conservation that prioritizes military readiness through initiatives like the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership, America’s Longleaf Restoration Initiative, and the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative.
- + Providing a regional forum to share data, apply best practices, and generate innovative ideas.
- + Implementing targeted projects outside installations to reduce encroachment, enhance installation resilience, and support mission readiness.

Partnership Governance and Plan Implementation

SERPPAS is a collaborative group of state and federal agencies organized in a structure to encourage open communication, build effective working relationships, and identify and act on opportunities for mutual gain for all partners.

Principal members are the senior leadership of participating state and federal agencies responsible for identifying



priorities, developing strategies, making decisions, and providing overall leadership and direction on efforts undertaken by the partnership. In addition, the Principals act as the primary champions for SERPPAS-led efforts within their respective agencies. SERPPAS is co-chaired by one Principal representing the DOW’s Office of the Secretary of War and one Principal representing one of the state partners on a rotating basis. The Principals meet once a year to build and maintain relationships, guide the partnership, and advance regional leadership and collaboration.

Steering Committee members are staff-level representatives from the participating state and federal agencies appointed by the Principal. The Steering Committee leads the development of projects and efforts supported by the SERPPAS Principals, communicates about SERPPAS within their agency, and represents the Principals’ interests in the work groups. The Steering Committee meets twice a year to share agency-specific information, identify opportunities to address shared challenges or advance priorities, and support the work group efforts to implement the SERPPAS Strategic Plan. Additionally, state representatives of the Steering Committee engage in a State Forum to increase connections across the states, identify regional priorities among the states, and encourage state engagement in the partnership.

Work groups are established around topical focus areas determined by the partnership to engage various partners in developing and implementing objectives that will help achieve the partnership’s goals. Work group members include SERPPAS agency representatives and subject matter experts from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities, or any partner interested in or working in the focus area. Work groups meet regularly to share information, elevate challenges, compile resources, and promote successful practices or strategies in support of the goals.

Informed by the SERPPAS Principals, the **SERPPAS Strategic Plan** serves as a framework for identifying and implementing collaborative and cooperative solutions to various challenges affecting national defense, natural resources, working lands, and community resilience in the Southeast region. The plan outlines a set of goals and objectives to help the Principals, Steering Committee, and work groups advance the partnership’s mission in the next three to five years.





Partnership Goals

Strengthen Military Readiness and Installation Resilience

Military readiness is increasingly at risk due to encroachment pressures such as population growth, commercial and residential development, and intensifying natural hazards including wildfires, hurricanes, flooding, drought, and extreme heat. These threats are particularly acute in the Southeast where installations face the highest wildfire frequency and are most vulnerable to severe weather impacts, which disrupt operations and strain land management. The scale at which these challenges occur requires coordination and collaboration beyond the jurisdiction or capacity of any one partner. Strengthening military readiness and installation resilience requires coordination with partners to align land use, resource protection, and resilience priorities, and reduce exposures to natural hazards through regional adaptation, integrated planning, and risk mitigation.

Safeguard Compatible Lands and Land Uses

Military operations depend on the surrounding landscapes to fulfill training and testing operations and requirements. Farms, forests, wetlands, and open spaces provide essential buffers that reduce noise and light pollution, reduce threats from natural hazards, maintain access to the electromagnetic spectrum, and protect training routes. However, activities that hinder the military's ability to train, operate, or maintain its readiness, such as commercial or residential development in rural areas (incompatible land uses), are increasing across the Southeast, resulting in the loss of agricultural and natural lands. This growing encroachment threatens military readiness, ecological integrity, and the rural economies of the region. As major economic drivers for surrounding communities, military installations have both the incentive and responsibility to support compatible lands and land uses that support the long-term sustainability of their operations while strengthening regional economies and ecological resilience. To safeguard compatible lands and land uses, partners need to prioritize conservation, land protection, and land management practices that preserve working lands and open spaces near military installations.

Advance Regulatory Efficiency and Consistency

Military installations often overlap with important habitats for federally listed and at-risk species, requiring DOW to balance mission readiness with environmental stewardship. Many are also adjacent to coastal resources, which often have complex and overlapping regulatory jurisdictions, making the implementation of nature-based solutions difficult. Environmental regulations, which set important protective standards, can restrict training activities, especially when military lands become isolated due to surrounding development and degraded ecosystems. Fragmented landscapes and poor land management off-base make on-base habitats more critical and more regulated, complicating military operations. To advance regulatory efficiency and consistency, partners need to proactively invest in installation resilience and conservation projects and develop innovative tools and approaches that protect the mission and align with species recovery, habitat sustainability, and coastal resilience goals.



SERPPAS Work Groups & Objectives

Work groups are established around topical focus areas to engage diverse partners and develop and implement objectives that will help achieve partnership goals. Work groups have dedicated subject matter experts as leads and coordinate regularly occurring meetings to discuss projects, share lessons learned, facilitate dialogue, and solicit input on partnership activities. The SERPPAS Work Groups may also form objective-based sub-work groups to address a specific question, complete a certain task, or produce a specific product as identified by the SERPPAS Principals or Steering Committee.

Southeast Sentinel Landscapes

Sentinel landscapes are areas where conservation, working lands, and national defense interests converge. As part of the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership, designated sentinel landscapes are supported by the DOW's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program as well as complementary natural resource and conservation programs administered by the Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Forest Service (USFS) and the Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Coordination among these programs provides military installations and other sentinel landscape partners with essential tools to protect irreplaceable training areas supporting our warfighters. The SERPPAS Sentinel Landscape Work Group, more specifically, includes designated landscapes where local partners are working collaboratively to strengthen military readiness, conserve natural resources, bolster agricultural and forestry economies, increase public access to outdoor recreation, and enhance landscape resilience across the Southeast. The SERPPAS Sentinel Landscapes Work Group connects current and future designated sentinel landscapes to address shared challenges, share learned lessons, and promote landscape-scale efforts across sentinel landscapes in the Southeast.

OBJECTIVES:

- + Coordinate with the Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC) on promoting Compatible Land Use Planning efforts in the Southeast.
- + Accelerate conservation of working lands through advocacy and support of greater funding for existing programs that acquire conservation easements over working landscapes.
- + Encourage implementation of landowner engagement and outreach efforts across the sentinel landscapes to promote greater awareness of state and federal programs for landowners that advance sustainable land use practices and promote greater land conservation around military installations and ranges.
- + Expand coordination and collaboration between all SERPPAS work groups to better integrate actions that complement and support regional efforts across the sentinel landscapes on Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need (RSGCN), State Wildlife Action Plans, and wildlife corridors.
- + 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.
- + Use the SERPPAS network to share information, resources, and lessons learned from the designated Sentinel Landscapes to demonstrate the value and purpose of these partnerships supporting national defense.



Natural Resources Management

The DOW works with federal, state, and other partners to manage 27 million acres of military lands, ensuring military readiness, sustainable natural resource management, and environmental protection are achieved. Healthy, natural landscapes provide realistic training environments for warfighters while preserving critical lands, plants, animals, air, and water. These efforts contribute to resilient, connected landscapes beyond installation boundaries, benefiting both military readiness and broader conservation goals. The SERPPAS Natural Resources Management Work Group connects DOW and partners to drive innovative strategies that increase flexibility for addressing impacts on military missions while achieving complementary natural resource management goals at a regional scale.

OBJECTIVES:

- + Identify opportunities to streamline regulatory compliance, enhance military mission readiness, and accelerate partner plans (e.g. State Wildlife Action Plans, Installation Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans (INRMPs)) through analysis and application of federal environmental laws including the Sikes Act, Endangered Species Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.
- + Identify funding opportunities that will advance the implementation of programs that provide direct benefits to military installations and adjacent landscapes by conserving, managing, and supporting the recovery of imperiled species. This could include making targeted investments in focal species, habitats or ecosystems and developing habitat and multi-species crediting strategies that demonstrate return and incentivize future investment.
- + Identify opportunities to proactively conserve at-risk species populations or habitats that are important to SERPPAS in a manner that would preclude the need to federally list a species (e.g. conservation agreements).
- + Develop recommendations to create or improve functional corridors for wildlife and landscape resilience that support larger conservation goals and prioritize military encroachment concerns using existing geospatial information and emerging tools, such as the SERPPAS Good Map and the Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS) Blueprint.
- + Identify opportunities to strengthen sustainable forest and natural resource markets that incentivize private land stewardship, enhance ecosystem and habitat resilience, and maintain open space critical to military readiness.

Wildland Fire

Fire is a natural and necessary process for maintaining healthy ecosystems, many of which serve as vital landscapes for military testing and training in the Southeast. Additionally, active military training and testing are sources of routine ignitions on installation training lands and test ranges. When applied in a controlled manner on and surrounding military installations, prescribed fire is a primary land management tool for maintaining accessibility, operational capability, and installation resilience. It reduces the buildup of flammable vegetation, lowering the risk of catastrophic wildfires that threaten communities, critical military facilities, and mission capabilities. Prescribed fire also sustains the habitats that depend on fire for survival, including many at-risk, threatened, and endangered species. The SERPPAS Wildland Fire Work Group brings partners together to carry out a Comprehensive Prescribed Fire Strategy that increases coordination, collaboration, and implementation of prescribed fire across the region. This proactive, landscape-scale approach is critical to strengthening military readiness while safeguarding the Southeast's biodiversity, resilience, and defense mission landscape.



OBJECTIVES:

- + Identify, encourage, and support efforts to quantify and prioritize the use of prescribed fire to achieve desired conditions.
- + Identify needs and opportunities to provide funding, capacity, and other support for prescribed burning in SERPPAS priority areas.
- + Encourage new and share successful models of burn teams, Prescribed Burn Associations, and other collaborative burn groups.
- + Increase burning across boundaries and sharing of personnel and equipment.
- + Increase engagement with landowners, communities, and contractors by supporting programs that provide prescribed burning experience, training, and education.
- + 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.
- + 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.
- + Support efforts that identify and seek to overcome gaps in knowledge, training, and information needs relevant to prescribed burn practitioners, policy makers, and partners.
- + Leverage collaborative fire management partnerships and the research and development community to integrate research and emerging tools into fire operations that serve to enhance safety, effective fire planning, and protection of public health and mission-critical values.

Coastal Resilience & Regional Adaptation

Coastal areas in the Southeast offer unique training and testing opportunities, provide critical access to the ocean for military operations, and are becoming increasingly vulnerable to coastal hazards due to rising sea levels, frequent and intense storms, and shoreline erosion. Other challenges, such as drought, flooding, and extreme temperatures, connect across watersheds from inland to the coast throughout the region. These hazards are amplified when incompatible land uses, such as urbanization, are rapidly spreading across the landscape. To address these interconnected threats, the Coastal Resilience & Regional Adaptation Work Group (CRRAWG) fosters collaboration among partners to build capacity, develop plans, share resources, and implement projects that increase resilience across the defense landscape. By advancing regional solutions, CRRAWG helps safeguard critical infrastructure, sustain operational capabilities, and ensure long-term access to mission-essential coastal environments.



OBJECTIVES:

- + Advance partnerships and capacity for joint installation and community planning to strengthen military readiness and resilience to natural hazards and address resource management challenges.
- + Explore how weather-related events and changing environmental conditions are influencing threats to military readiness and identify opportunities to collaborate across the SERPPAS network.
- + Assist in the improvement and use of geospatial tools that can advance military readiness and community resilience planning and actions.
- + Support the development, implementation, and evaluation of nature-based solutions for installation resilience projects benefiting military missions and communities in the southeast.
- + Facilitate the advancement of regulatory efficiency and consistency for community-based projects that benefit military installations and missions.
- + Advance the goals of the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative (SASMI) and the Marsh Forward Plan.