

Title: A Strategic Plan for Sustaining Military Readiness through Conservation Partnerships in Florida

Tom Hooctor, Ph.D. • Michael Volk, PLA

Abstract

The state of Florida has an extensive array of unique and fragile natural resources, which are important to protect not only for the intrinsic value they possess, but also for the vital ecosystem services they provide to citizens throughout the state. Within Florida, the United States Air Force controls 626,759 acres of land, many of which are undeveloped, and subject to federal mandates for natural resource protection such as the 1973 Endangered Species Act. At the same time, development pressure is increasing throughout the state, creating land use and development encroachment issues adjacent to Air Force properties. The Air Force is actively engaged in mitigating these issues by working with communities, NGOs and agencies to identify opportunities to buffer bases and mitigate natural resource impacts from Air Force activities on bases, which can be used to help maintain mission flexibility. This study focuses on a statewide assessment of natural resource conservation priorities around Air Force installations in Florida, including opportunities to mitigate impacts to focal species on Air Force properties, to increase natural buffers around installations to help reduce encroachment risks from adjacent development, and to increase opportunities for conservation partnerships and use of existing or potential conservation programs. In addition to identifying conservation opportunities for specific Air Force installations, this project aims to form a cohesive and coordinated approach to conservation across Air Force installations throughout the state, identifying conservation priorities relevant to multiple installations, as well as opportunities to increase conservation partnerships between installations. Preliminary results indicate that there are ample opportunities to coordinate and cooperate in protecting conservation and military training and readiness priorities in the regional landscapes surrounding Air Force bases across Florida.

<http://conservation.dcp.ufl.edu/>