

# NORTHWEST FLORIDA SENTINEL LANDSCAPE

Florida | est. 2022



Situated in Florida’s panhandle, the unique coastal geography of the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape contains rural and agricultural lands, iconic longleaf pine forests, threatened and endangered species habitat, and nine key Department of Defense facilities: Eglin Air Force Base (AFB), Tyndall AFB, Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola, NAS Whiting Field, Naval Support Activity Panama City, Eglin Gulf Test and Training Range, Hurlburt Field, Saufley Field, and Corry Station. These nine Department of Defense installations and ranges are integral to military training, weapons testing, special operations, joint cyber warfare and aviation pilot training for Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.

In addition to high priority military operations areas and restricted airspace, the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape also contains the Apalachicola National Forest, Blackwater River State Forest, St. Marks and St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuges, and the congressionally designated Florida National Scenic Trail, which provide public recreation opportunities and habitat for threatened and endangered species such as the red cockaded woodpecker, gopher tortoise, and frosted flatwoods salamander. These natural areas where partners are already working provide momentum for collaboration in unprotected natural areas within the landscape to meet mutual goals.

In order to improve regional resilience and sustainability, retain working agriculture and forestry lands, protect natural resources and endangered species, and sustain the military mission, local, regional, state, and federal partners came together in 2022 to form the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape.

## PROTECTING COMPATIBLE WORKING LANDS THROUGH COLLABORATION AND LANDOWNER RECOGNITION

The partners of the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape recognize the importance of preserving working agriculture and

Figure 1: Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape Map

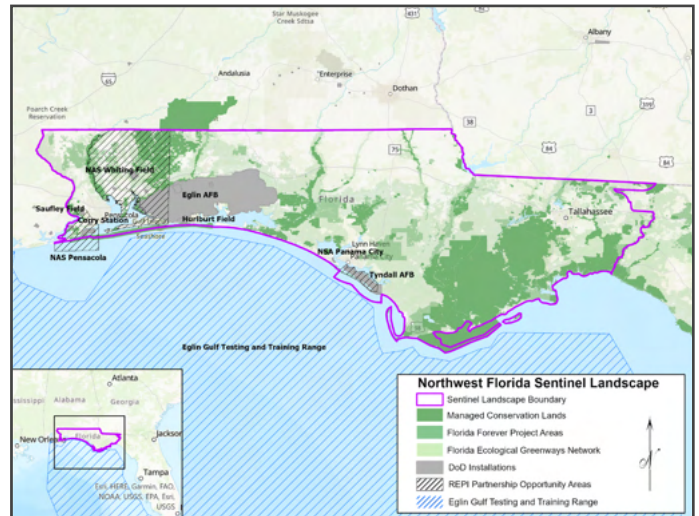


Table 1: Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape Footprint Details (from year established through fiscal year 2020)

Total Protected Acres <sup>1</sup>	0
Total Enrolled Acres <sup>2</sup>	0
Active Base Area	510,918
<b>Total Sentinel Landscape Area</b>	<b>7,689,813</b>

forestry lands within their landscape, not just as areas that are compatible with the military mission, but also as lands that preserve the resilience of the entire landscape and provide financial health and sustainability to the local residents. For this reason, one of the primary goals of the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape is to retain these working agricultural lands in their current state by accelerating outreach, technical assistance, and financial incentive efforts while being responsive to the diverse needs and motivations of working landowners.

By working collaboratively with partners and stakeholders to identify innovative solutions and opportunities, the Northwest

<sup>1</sup> Protected acres are recognized as land acquisitions—fee simple or easement—that have completed the due diligence and closing actions necessary to obtain a real estate interest.

<sup>2</sup> Land is considered enrolled if the property owner voluntarily participates in a federal or state land-management program that provides financial or technical assistance to promote sustainable agricultural practices, restore imperiled species and their habitat, or preserve critical natural resources; or if a landowner or an organization receives a federal or state grant to conduct a conservation project on said property.



*U.S. Army soldiers from the 46th Engineer Battalion moved tree debris into piles on Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida. After Hurricane Michael swept the area in 2018, multiple major commands mobilized relief assets in an effort to restore operations after the hurricane caused catastrophic damage to the base and surrounding communities (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Sean Carnes).*

Florida Sentinel Landscape hopes to establish a formal landowner recognition program to acknowledge the significant contributions of local landowners to the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape goals and objectives.

## IMPROVING RESILIENCE IN A COASTAL LANDSCAPE

As a coastal landscape, the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape faces increasing climate-related risks such as coastal erosion, flooding, and extreme storms, which can exacerbate existing natural resource and encroachment concerns. For example, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s conservative one-foot sea-level rise inundation model predicts that approximately 1.2 million acres of the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape are likely to experience flooding. Additionally, this region of Florida frequently experiences the impacts of extreme weather, such as Hurricane Michael in 2018, which was one of the strongest hurricanes to make landfall in continental United States in recorded history.

To increase the landscape’s resiliency, mitigate coastal risks, and better adapt to the changing climate, the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape partners and stakeholders are working towards conserving and restoring habitat and water resources with an emphasis on listed species recovery, prescribed fire, and water quality and quantity. The landscape partners will focus on supporting longleaf pine restoration, native grassland restoration, hydrological restoration, listed species recovery, at risk species conservation, invasive species control, prescribed burning, and stormwater capture and water re-use infrastructure projects to enhance the resilience of the landscape as a whole.

### Key Partners

- ★ U.S. Department of Agriculture – Forest Service
- ★ U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service
- ★ U.S. Department of Defense
- ★ U.S. Air Force – Air Force Civil Engineer Center, Eglin Air Force Base, Hurlburt Field, Tyndall Air Force Base
- ★ U.S. Navy – Naval Air Station Pensacola, Whiting Field, Naval Support Activity Panama City
- ★ U.S. Department of the Interior – Fish and Wildlife Service
- ★ Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services – Florida Forest Service
- ★ Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services – Office of Agricultural Water Policy
- ★ Department of Economic Opportunity – Bureau of Community Planning and Growth
- ★ Department of Environmental Protection – Division of State Lands
- ★ Enterprise Florida
- ★ Florida Defense Support Task Force
- ★ Florida Defense Alliance
- ★ Emerald Coast Regional Council
- ★ Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- ★ Northwest Florida Water Management District
- ★ Florida A&M University-Florida State University College of Engineering – Resilient Infrastructure and Disaster Response Center
- ★ Suwannee River Water Management District
- ★ Apalachicola Regional Stewardship Alliance
- ★ Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Program
- ★ Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership
- ★ Mid-Bay Bridge Authority
- ★ Northwest Florida Base-Community Working Group
- ★ Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program
- ★ Regional Recreation Economy Alliance
- ★ Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy
- ★ Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability
- ★ Strategic Conservation Assessment of Gulf Coast Landscapes
- ★ Tri-County Defense Support Initiative
- ★ West Florida Defense Alliance
- ★ Audubon Society Chapters: Francis M. Weston, Choctawhatchee, Bay County and Apalachee
- ★ Conservation Florida
- ★ Defenders of Wildlife
- ★ Florida Natural Areas Inventory
- ★ Florida Trail Association
- ★ Florida Wildlife Federation
- ★ National Wildlife Federation
- ★ Tall Timbers Research Station and Land Trust
- ★ The Conservation Fund
- ★ The Longleaf Alliance
- ★ The Nature Conservancy
- ★ Trust for Public Land
- ★ American Forest Foundation
- ★ Florida Forestry Association
- ★ Nokuse Plantation & E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center
- ★ Resource Management Service, LLC