



# State Technical Committee Meeting

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Florida NRCS

June 22, 2022

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.



# Housekeeping

- **Introductions**

- Please enter your Name, Title, Organization/Agency in the chat

- **Questions/Comments**

- Enter question/comment in chat
- Raise hand to make a verbal comment

- **Mute**

- Please keep yourself muted so that we can hear presenters and attendees

- **Agenda and Meeting Minutes**

- Posted on Florida NRCS website <https://tinyurl.com/4rmvtb4j> or search “NRCS Florida State Technical Committee” in favorite search browser.

- **This meeting is being recorded.**

# Agenda

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Welcome and Opening Remarks

*Juan Hernandez, State Conservationist*

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Financial Assistance Program Updates

*Amber Till, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs*

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Ecological Sciences Update

*Nathan Fikkert, State Resource Conservationist*

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Partnerships & Initiatives Update

*Denise Liggett, Management Analyst*

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Local Working Group Activities

*Kaylee Pate, Association of Florida Conservation District*

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Conservation Easements Update and Discussion

*Roney Gutierrez, Assistant State Conservationist for Easements*

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Partner Reports, General Discussion, Questions

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Closing Remarks

*Juan Hernandez*

# Welcome and Opening Remarks

*Juan Hernandez, State Conservationist*

# Financial Assistance Programs Updates

*Amber Till, Assistant State Conservationist for  
Programs*

# Florida NRCS

## Fiscal Year 2022 Funding Levels To-Date

Financial Assistance Program	Number of Contracts	Acres Treated	Obligations
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	381	117,653	\$ 17,225,271
EQIP Conservation Incentives Contracts (EQIP-CIC)	24	20,831	\$ 3,962,576
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	137	130,304	\$ 8,429,462
<b>Totals</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>268,789</b>	<b>\$ 29,617,309</b>



# Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Funding Categories	Obligations
National Initiatives	\$ 4,962,598
State Initiatives	\$ 2,401,357
Local Priorities	\$ 9,861,316
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$ 17,225,271</b>



# Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

## National Initiatives

Funding Pools	Obligations
FY2022 Joint Chiefs Cogongrass	\$ 74,850
FY2022 Longleaf Pine Initiative	\$ 2,552,991
FY2022 WLFW Gopher Tortoise	\$ 2,334,757
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 4,962,598</b>





# Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

## State Initiatives

Funding Pools	Obligations
FY2022 Beginning Farmer Rancher	\$ 203,529
FY2022 Socially Disadvantaged Farmer Rancher	\$ 195,753
FY2022 Climate Smart Ag and Forestry	\$ 363,220
FY2022 Conservation Planning Activities	\$ 1,949
FY2022 Forestry	\$ 551,046
FY2022 Florida WLFW - Bobwhite Quail	\$ 377,981
FY2022 On-Farm Energy	\$ 48,739
FY2022 Seasonal High Tunnel	\$ 159,631
FY2022 Strikeforce	\$ 351,164
FY2022 Strikeforce Native American	\$ 148,345
FY2022 Urban Farming	TBD
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$ 2,401,357</b>



# Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

## Urban Agricultural Initiative

**Urban Agriculture** - when land is managed for food and/or fiber production within a landscape predominated by residential, commercial, industrial, and transportation uses.

### **Why Urban Farming?**

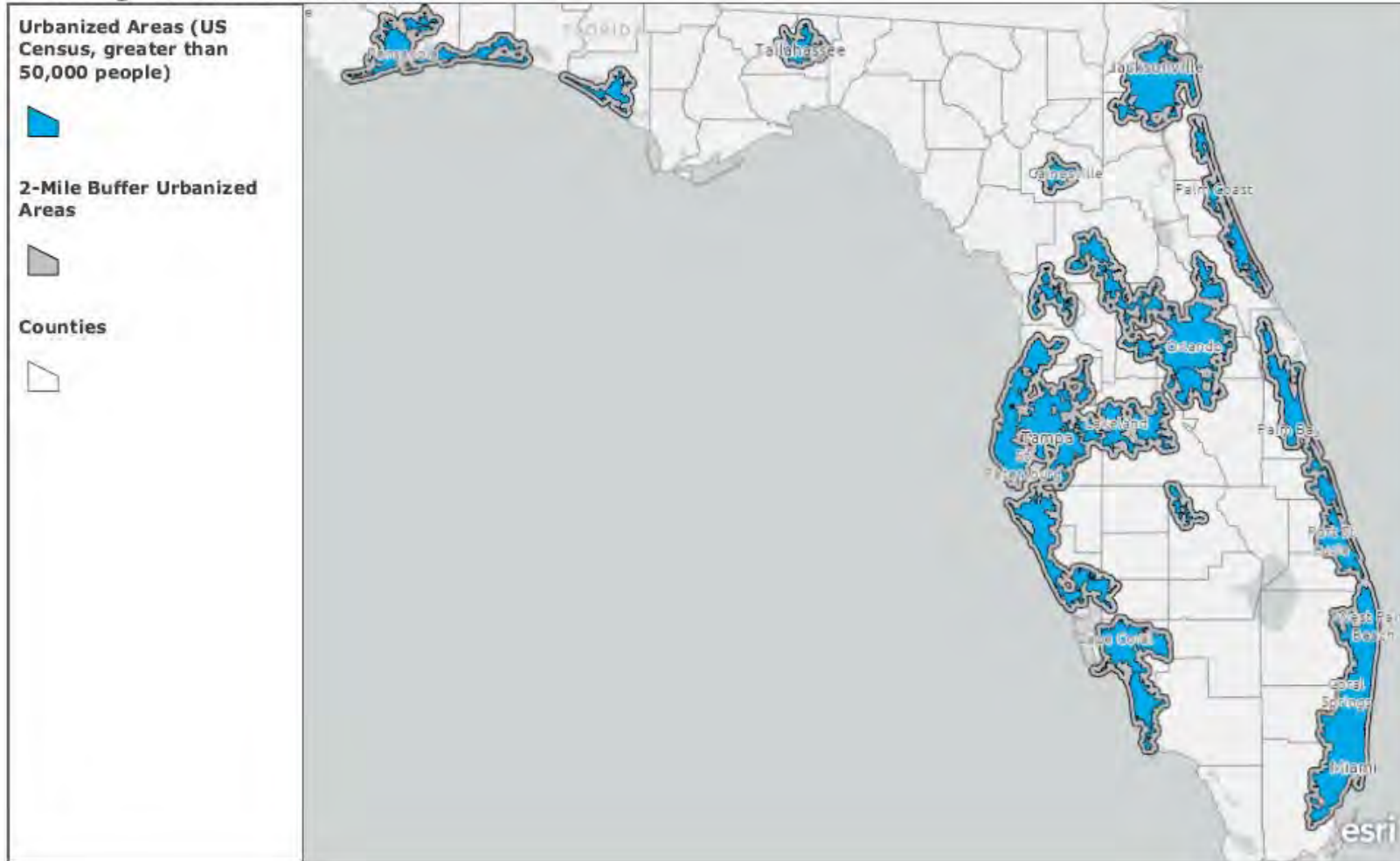
NRCS serves all agriculture – large to small, conventional to organic, rural to urban. As American agriculture continues to grow in new directions, NRCS conservation assistance is growing along with it.

**Signup Deadline: May 13, 2022 (received 31 applications)**

**Funding Decisions: June 21, 2022**

# Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

## Urban Agriculture Initiative





# Questions?

# Ecological Sciences Updates

*Nathan Fikkert, State Resource Conservationist*

# Conservation Practice Standard and guidance document review process

- The 2018 Farm Bill required that all NRCS conservation practice standards (CPS) be reviewed at a national level and reviewed/adopted by the states.
- At the national level CPSs are updated and put through the federal register process.
- Once the federal register process is complete NRCS releases the standards for the state to review.
- At the State level NRCS can make the CPS more "strict" than the national CPS but cannot make it more lenient.

# CPS and guidance document review process continued

- NRCS FL has determined that the top 15 most applied CPS in the state will be sent to all members of the STAC.
- NRCS Field and Area office staff will have the same time and opportunity for review.
- STAC members will have 30 days to provide comments and feedback on the CPS and associated documents.
- Once the 30 days is up the designated technical lead for that practice will compile comments and evaluate if they can or should be incorporated.
- Once review is finalized and updates are made the documents are loaded onto Section 4 of the Field Office Technical Guide.

# Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership

- Project Proposals are developed through a collaborative process between NRCS, Forest Service and partners.
- Proposal application period is currently open until August 5, 2022.
- NRCS and Forest Service will evaluate proposals and announce selected projects in late fall of 2022.
- Priorities include but are not limited to:
  - Reduction of Wildfire risk
  - Increase forest workforce capacity
  - Benefits to historically underserved communities and climate mitigation and adaptation efforts
- For more information see the NRCS FL website:
- <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/fl/newsroom/releases/?cid=NRCSEPRD1936225>





Questions?

# Partnerships & Initiatives Update

*Denise Liggett, Management Analyst*



## New Partnership Staff:

Hilary Barnhart - Acting Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships & Initiatives

Denise Liggett – Management Analyst

Cynthia Portalatin - Public Affairs Specialist

Rochelle Urquhart - Outreach Specialist

# State Conservation Innovation Grants – Announcement



- FY2023 priorities:
  - Urban Agriculture
  - Climate Resilience
  - Soil Health
  - Grazing
- Total Funding Available: \$900,000
- Individual Project Funding Range: \$25,000 - \$250,000
- Notice of Funding Opportunity posted April 2022.
- Application Deadline August 31<sup>st</sup>
- Recordings of Webinars located on the NRCS FL Website.

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/fl/programs/financial/cig/>

# Regional Conservation Partnership Program

- The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners.
- Four core principles:
  - Impact
  - Partner Contributions
  - Innovation
  - Partnerships and Management
- Call for proposals deadline was April 2022
  - FL received 2 proposals for Classic RCPP
  - Proposal evaluation team review completed
  - National award notification expected August 2022
- Website: [tinyurl.com/bdej2fea](https://tinyurl.com/bdej2fea) or search “NRCS RCPP How to Apply”
- Contact [Denise.Liggett@usda.gov](mailto:Denise.Liggett@usda.gov)



# Local Working Group (LWG) Overview

- What is the intent of the LWG?
  - Provide recommendations on local natural resource priorities and criteria for NRCS conservation activities and programs.
  - Usually chaired by the local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)
- LWG responsibilities include:
  - Public involvement and the conservation needs assessment led by the Soil and Water Conservation Districts
  - Hold public meetings (LWG) to develop a local conservation action plan
  - LWG recommendations are submitted to the State Technical Committee

# Local Working Group (LWG) Process

**July:** NRCS releases LWG Questionnaire



**September:** meeting details are posted to AFCD and NRCS website



**October-November:** LWGs meet and submit questionnaires to NRCS



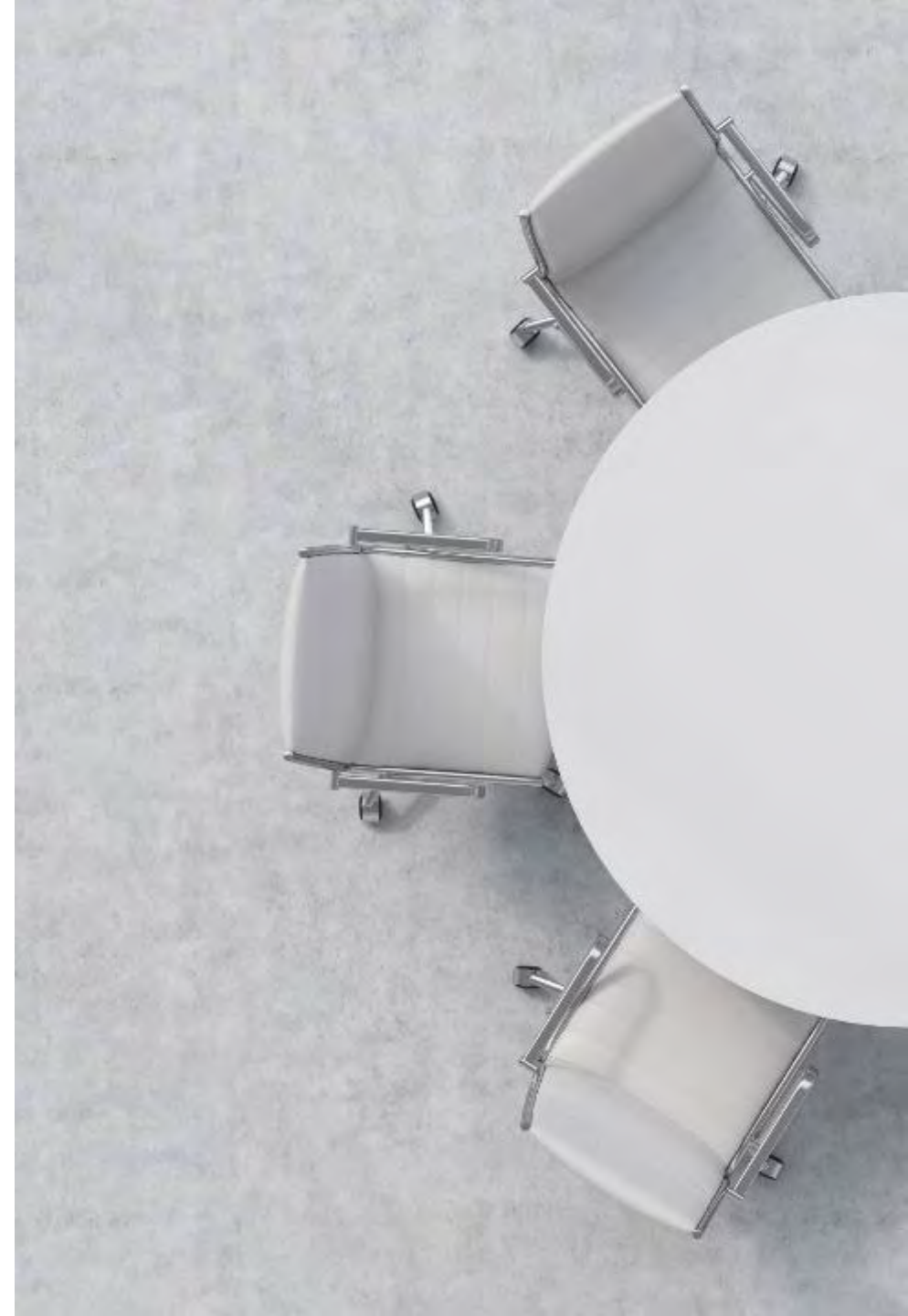
**January State Technical Committee:** NRCS reports summary of LWG responses



**June State Technical Committee:** NRCS reports final decisions

# LWG Summary Report

- Based on lessons learned and input gathered from the State Technical Committee, LWGs and NRCS staff, the following are the actions NRCS FL will take to incorporate LWG feedback at the local level:
  - Each NRCS field office (FO) will have a funding pool they can use to address local priorities and resource concerns.
  - FOs will review the LWG recommendations on an annual basis.
  - FOs will develop ranking criteria for the individual funding pool that take into consideration recommendations from the LWGs.





# LWG Priority Recommendations by Service Center

- LWG priorities submitted will help inform ranking criteria for local funding pools
- See full list of LWG recommendations by Service Center by visiting: Website: <https://tinyurl.com/4693pxka> or search “NRCS Florida Local Working Groups”

## Local Working Group Priorities by NRCS Service Center

### AREA 1

NRCS Service Center	Top Priorities Selected	Votes							
Jay	cropland	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	grazing	x	x	x	x	x	x		
	invasive plants	x	x						
	water conservation	x	x	x	x				
	soil health	x							
	brush & herbaceous weed control	x							
	forestry	x	x						
Crestview	cropland	x							
	water conservation	x							
	brush & herbaceous weed control	x							
DeFuniak Springs	water conservation	x							
	invasive plants	x							
	forestry	x							
Bonifay	invasive plants	x	x						
	grazing	x	x						
	forestry	x	x						
	feral hogs	x	x						

# Association of Florida Conservation District (AFCD) Agreement Review

- Develop and execute a plan to gather LWG recommendations
- Organize LWG meetings
- Post LWG program information in advance of meetings
- Create online questionnaire and disseminate
- Compile survey results and provide report to NRCS
- Recommendations for next fiscal year





Questions?

# Local Working Group Activities

*Kaylee Pate, Association of Florida Conservation Districts*



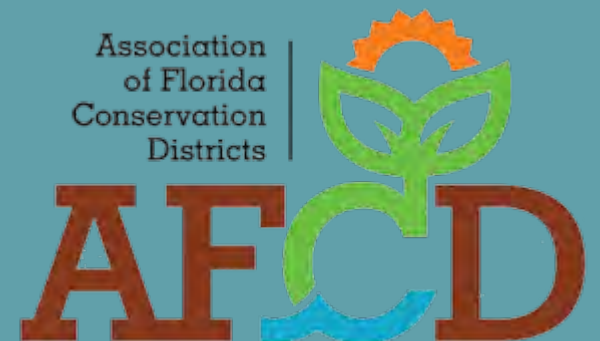
# Recommendations

- Facilitate a Local Work Group training session to go over the purpose and importance of the Local Work Group and what the roles of AFCD/NRCS and the SWCD's are as part of the LWG.
- Asking the District to designate a single point of contact from their board for the planning purposes of the Local Work Group will improve communication between AFCD/NRCS and the SWCD's.
- For a more structured and uniformed Local Work Group meeting, we plan to follow a set Agenda for each individual meeting.
- By providing a fillable advertising template to be used for advertising Local Work Groups at the local level, we hope will help increase participation.



# Upcoming dates

- July 26- Local Work Group Training Session and Introductory Packet Release  
10:00am-11:30am via Zoom. (Link will be sent out soon)
- August 12- Local Work Group Meeting dates due to AFCD
- October 1- Local Work Group Meetings begin



# Questions?



# Conservation Easement Updates and Discussion

*Roney Gutierrez, Assistant State Conservationist  
for Easements*



# NRCS FLORIDA EASEMENTS

- **Agricultural Land Easements:**

- NRCS provides financial assistance to eligible partners for purchasing Agricultural Easements to keep land in agriculture and protect grazing uses.
- Eligible partners include Indian tribes, state and local governments & non-governmental organizations that have farmland or grassland protection programs.

- **Wetland Reserve Easements:**

- NRCS provides technical and financial assistance directly to private landowners and Indian tribes to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands through the purchase of a wetland reserve easement.

- **Regional Conservation Partnership Program:**

- RCPP is now a standalone program with its own funding
- Provides financial assistance through Partnership agreements
- Funds Agricultural, Wetland, Forestland & Other Conservation Easement type acquisition / restoration.



# NRCS FLORIDA EASEMENTS

- FY2022 ACEP WRE Allocation: \$19,935,190
  - \$14,635,190 for Enrollment & Restoration
    - 4 WRE applications approved for funding
  - \$5,300,000 for Stewardship
    - Management of nearly 200,000 acres of WRE/WRP easements
- FY2022-2023 ACEP WRE Enrollment
  - 11 WRE applications needing \$41,176,436
  - FY 2023 WRE Rollover Applications
  - FY 2023 WRE Easement Compensation – 80% rate
  - FY 2023 Ranking Approval

07.10.2013 12:54

# **NRCS FLORIDA EASEMENTS**

- ACEP ALE Funding and Applications:
  - FY2022 State Allocation: \$5,000,000
  - Prior Year Re-Allocation: \$3,000,000
  - 2 of 3 ALE proposals approved
    - \$8,000,000 NRCS funding
    - \$8,000,000 Partner Match funding
  - FY 2023 Ranking Approval
- RCPP Easements
  - FB2014: 5 HFRP enrolled easements pending acquisition.
  - FB2018: 3 RCPP projects approved pending enrollment



Questions or Comments  
on Ranking Worksheets?

# Partner Reports

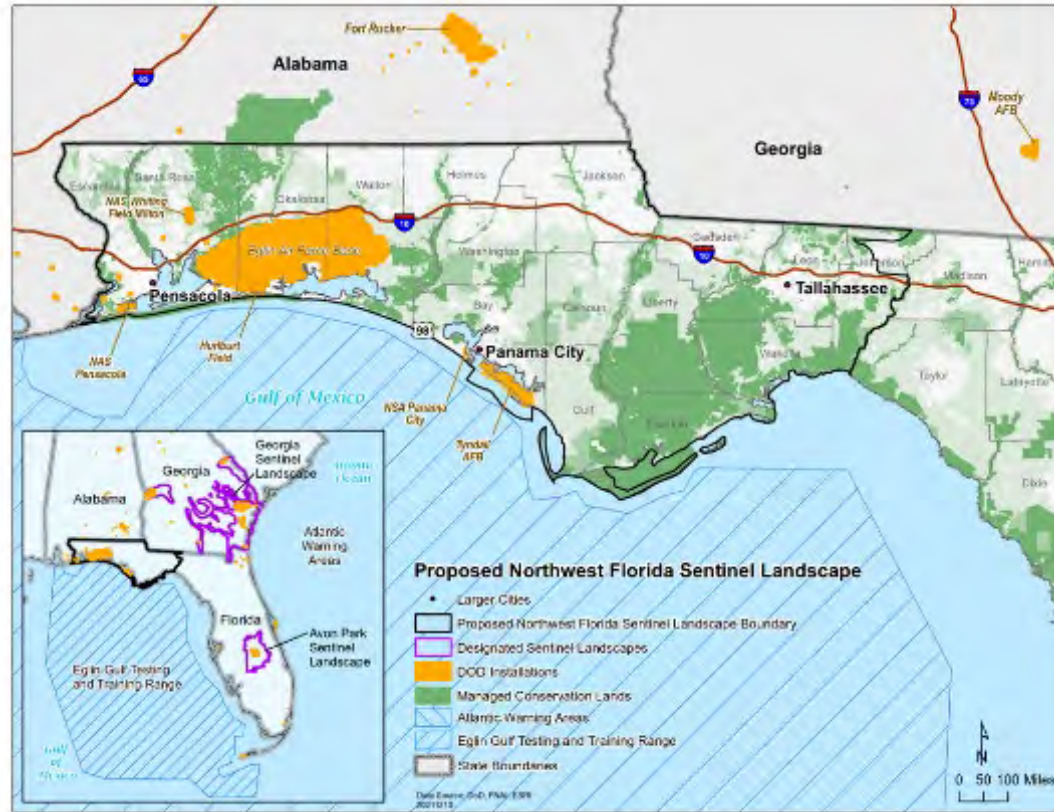
# Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape

*Kent Wimmer, AICP Coordinator*

[northwestflorida@sentinellandscapes.org](mailto:northwestflorida@sentinellandscapes.org)

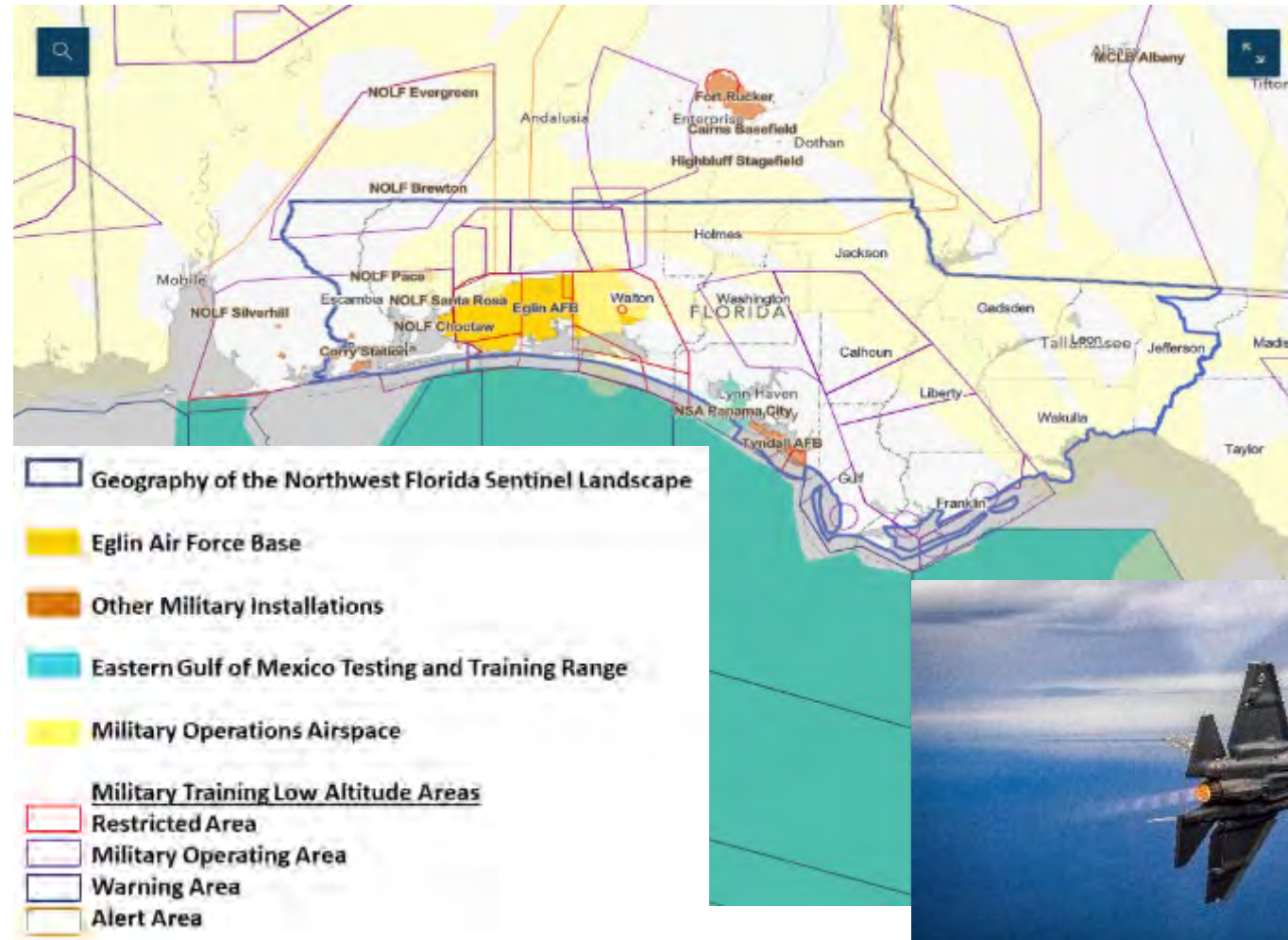
[kwimmer@defenders.org](mailto:kwimmer@defenders.org)

# Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape



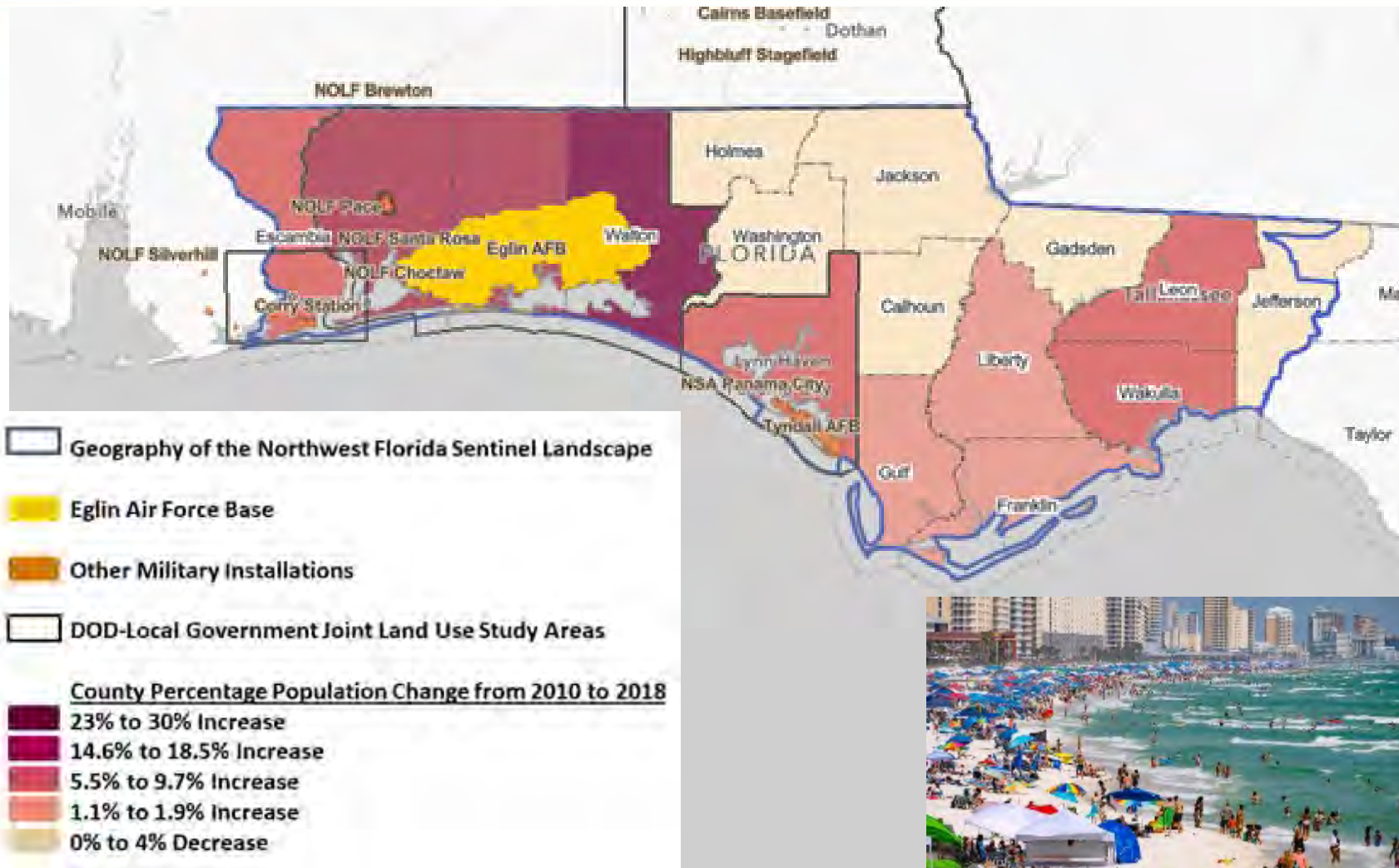
Visit the [NWFLS Resources page](https://sentinellandscapes.org/landscapes/northwest-florida) to access our factsheets, story map and web map application. <https://sentinellandscapes.org/landscapes/northwest-florida>

# Supporting Military Readiness

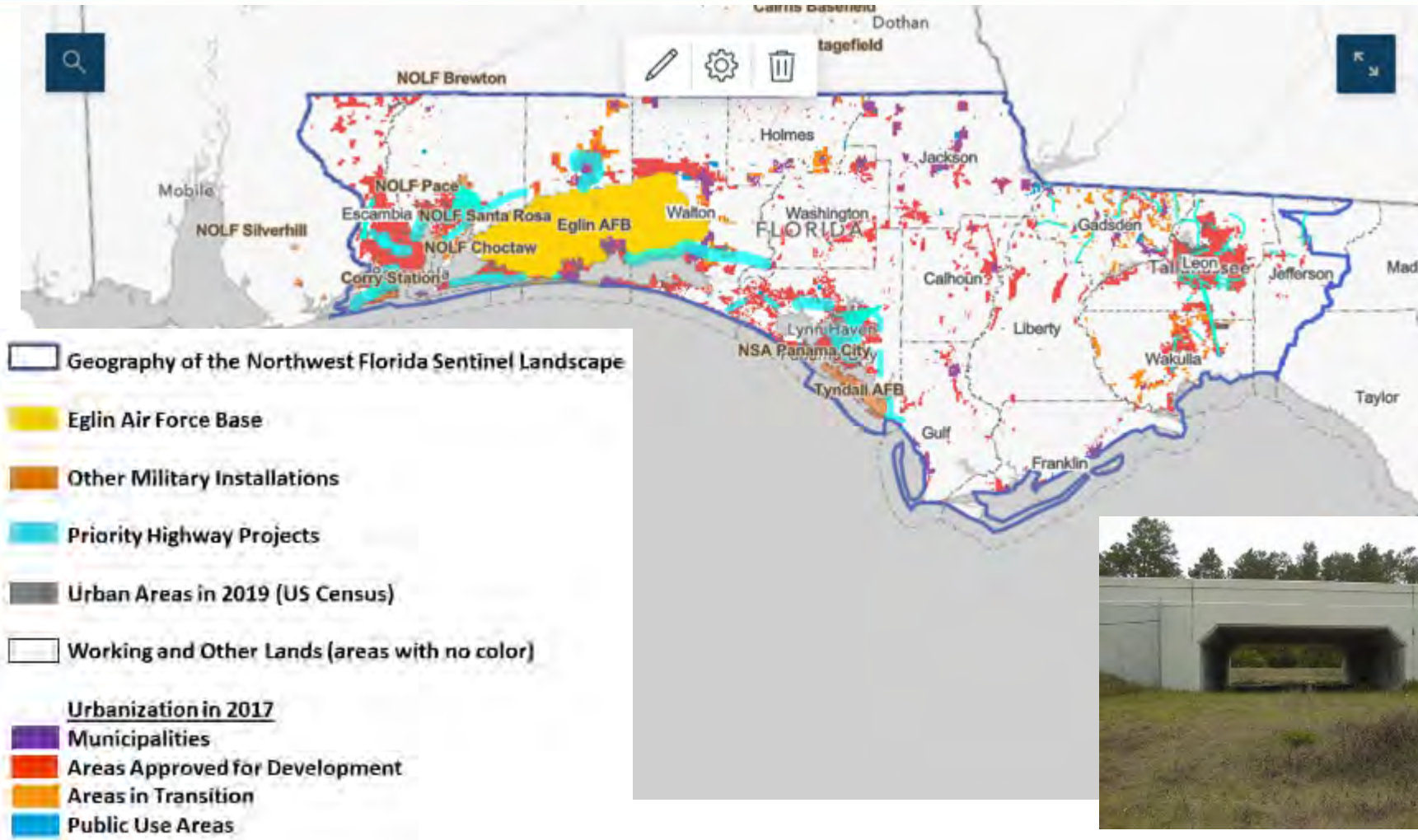




# Challenges Facing Northwest Florida Population Growth

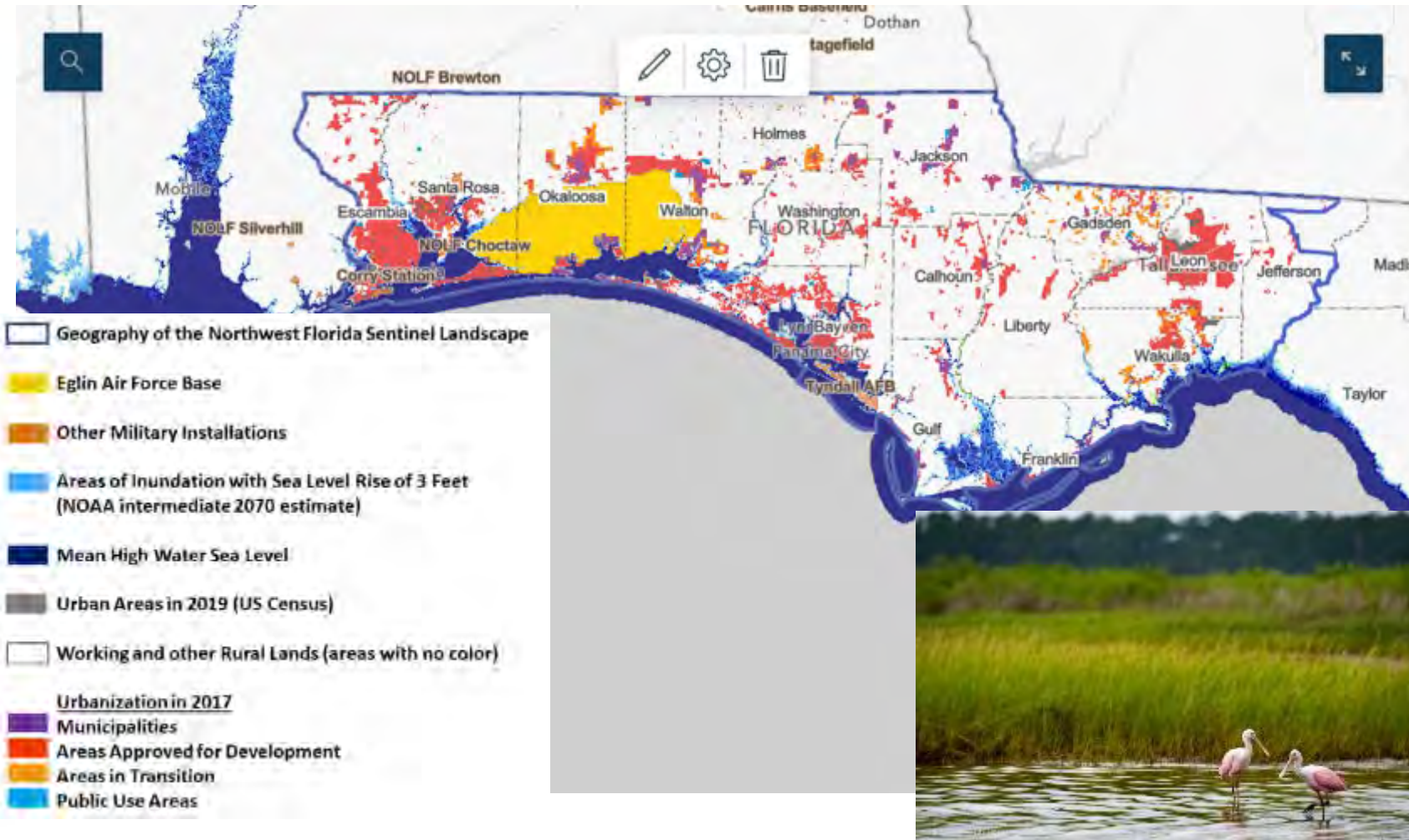


# Challenges Facing Northwest Florida Transportation Systems for a Growing Population

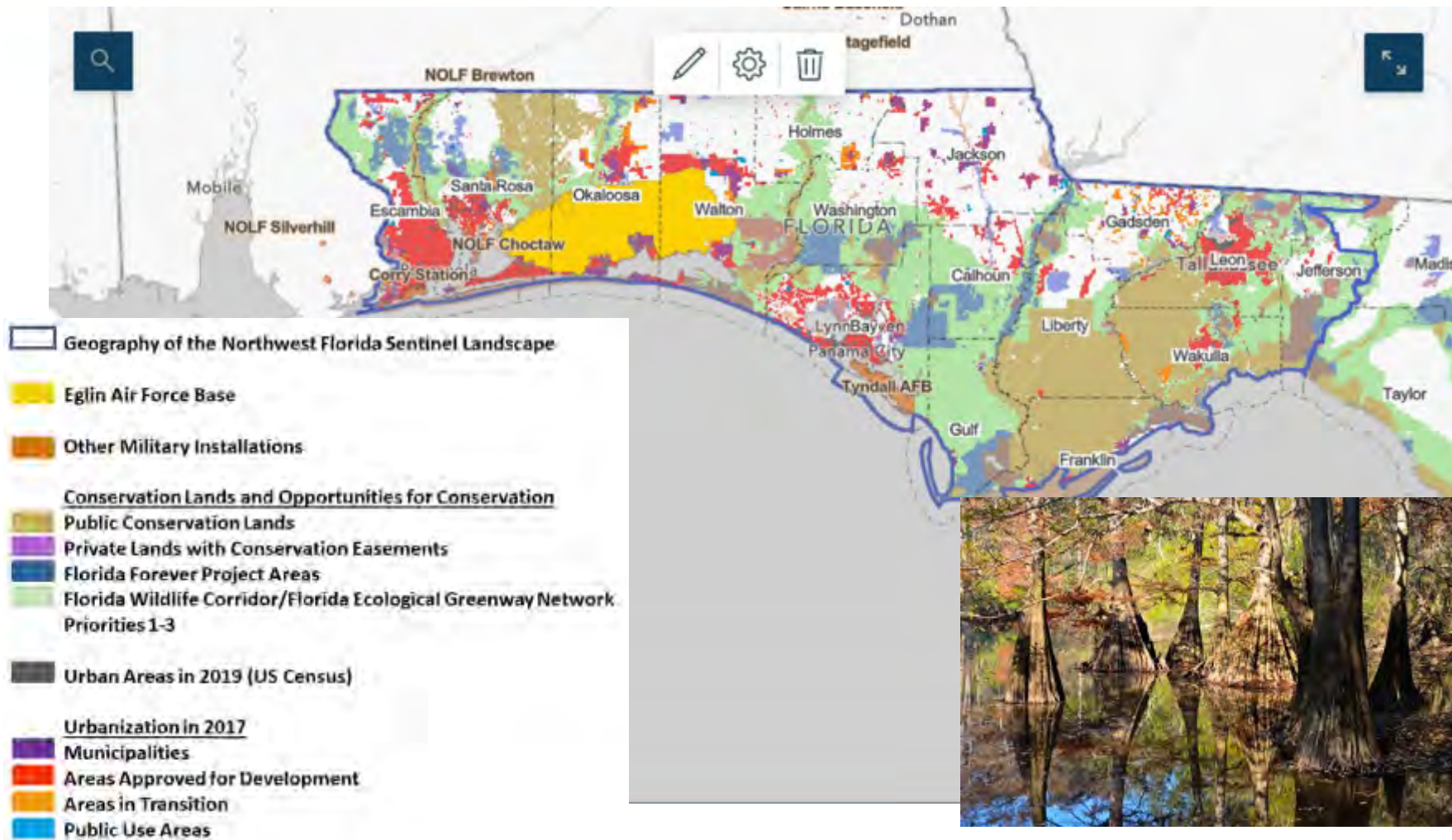


# Challenges Facing Northwest Florida

## Climate Change and Sea Level Rise



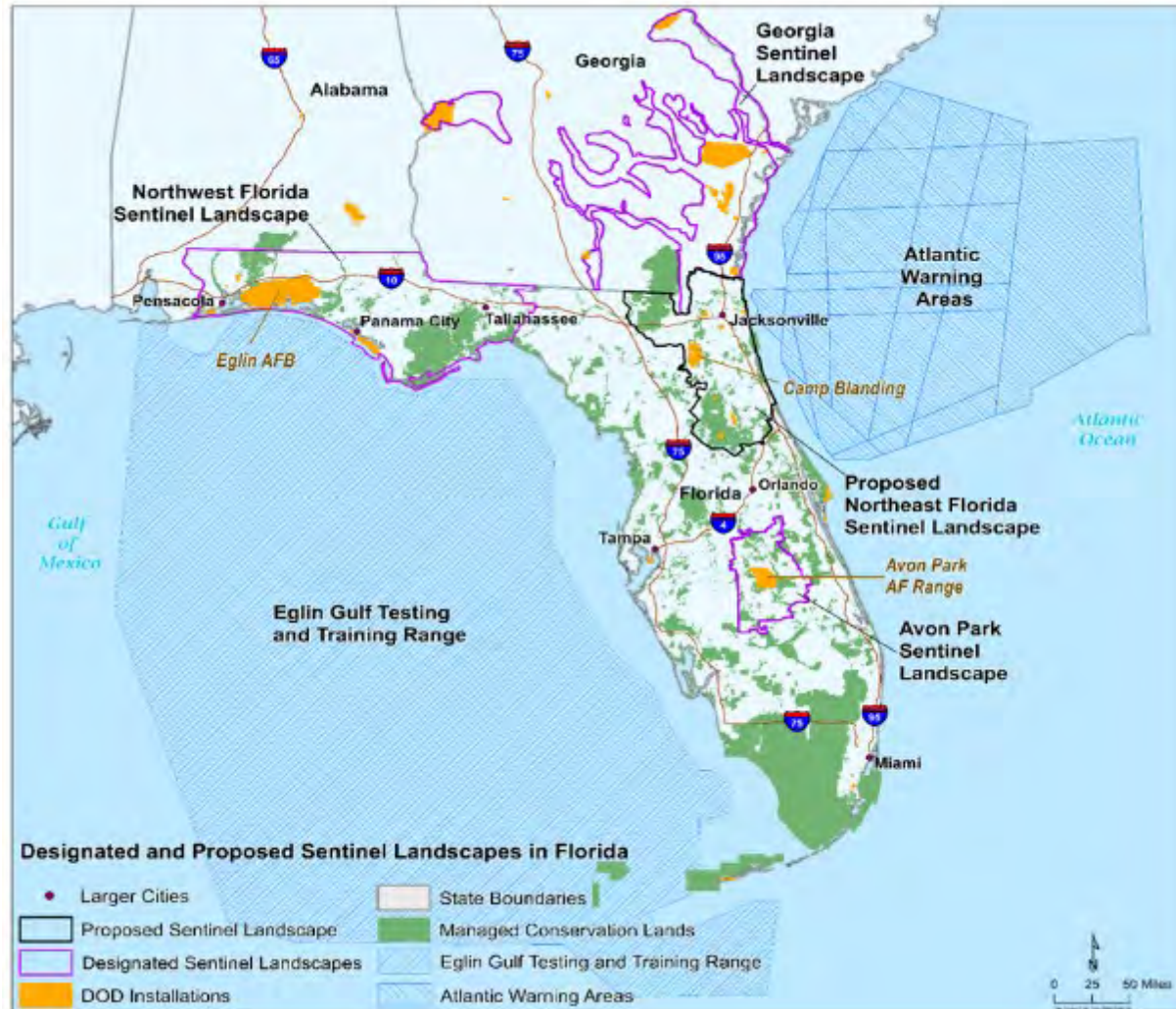
# Conservation Lands and Opportunities for Conservation



## Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape Work Groups

- **Private Lands Stewardship**
- **Natural Systems**
- **Climate Resiliency**

# Sentinel Landscapes in Florida MOU



# For More Information Contact

**Kent Wimmer, Coordinator**

**[kwimmer@defenders.org](mailto:kwimmer@defenders.org) / (850) 528-5261**

**David Wolfe**

**Private Lands Stewardship Coordinator**

**[northwestflorida@sentinellandscapes.org](mailto:northwestflorida@sentinellandscapes.org)**

**(850) 556-8775**

# Avon Park Sentinel Landscape

*Jennifer Codo-Salisbury, Deputy Director  
Central Florida Regional Planning Council  
Avon Park Sentinel Landscape Partnership*



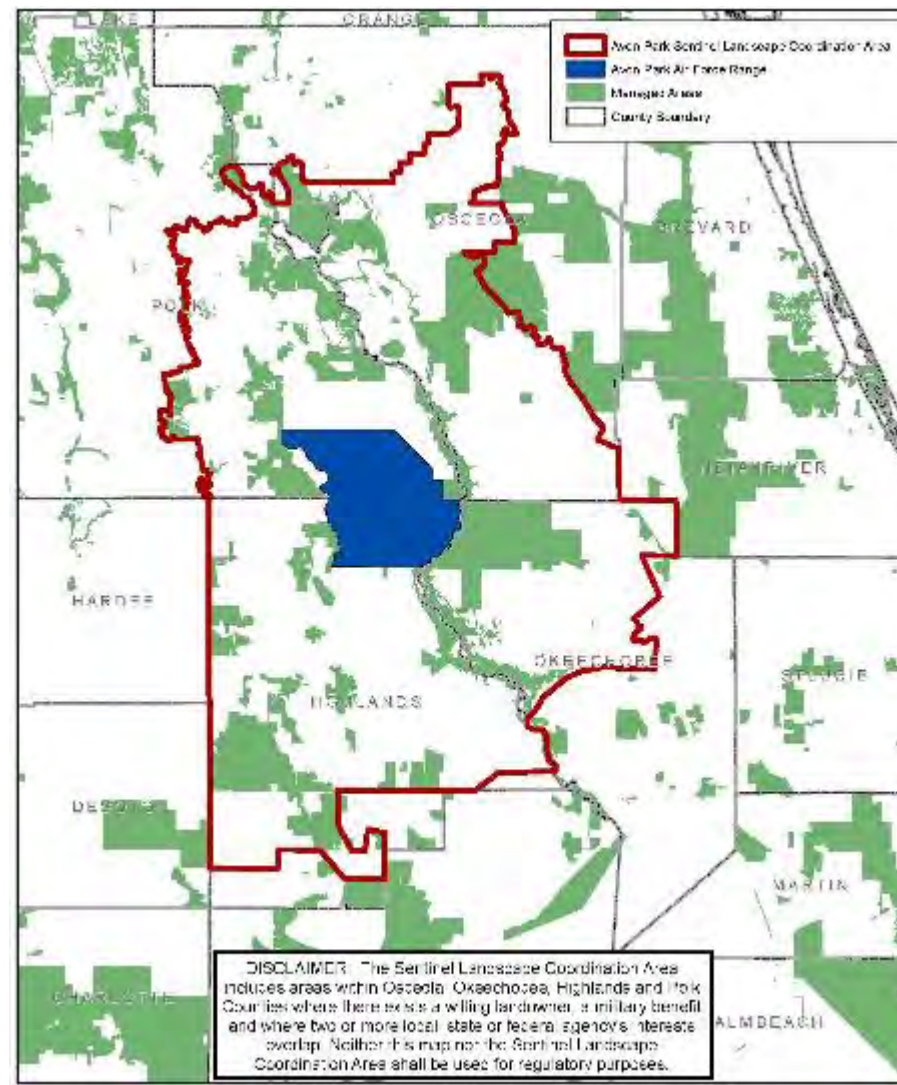
# Central Florida Regional Planning Council



Avon Park  
Air Force Range



# Avon Park Sentinel Landscape



## Ongoing

- Priority Action Plan **implementation**
  - Continued **coordination**
- Additional landowner workshops for **conservation opportunities**
  - PR efforts and advertisements (videos)
  - Easier & faster delivery of **conservation programs**
- Identification of alternative/incentive-based conservation opportunities





Tuesday, June 7, 2022  
Sebring, Florida

➤ 70 Attendees

➤ 6 Counties Represented

➤ 14 Agencies Presented

**LAX**  
2022

LANDOWNER ASSISTANCE EXPO





**Tuesday June 7, 2022**

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

**Bert J. Harris Jr. Agricultural Center Auditorium**  
4509 George Boulevard  
Sebring, FL 33875



Register at [CFRPC.org](http://CFRPC.org)  
or contact April DaSilva for more information: 863-534-7130 ext. 129 or [adasilva@cfrpc.org](mailto:adasilva@cfrpc.org)

Landowners, regardless of acreage, in DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Okeechobee, Osceola and Polk Counties are invited to participate in conversations related to technical assistance, cost-share opportunities, conservation easements, and the financial implications of each program. Outreach representatives will be on hand to provide brief overviews of local, State, Federal and non-governmental programs and receive feedback from attendees.



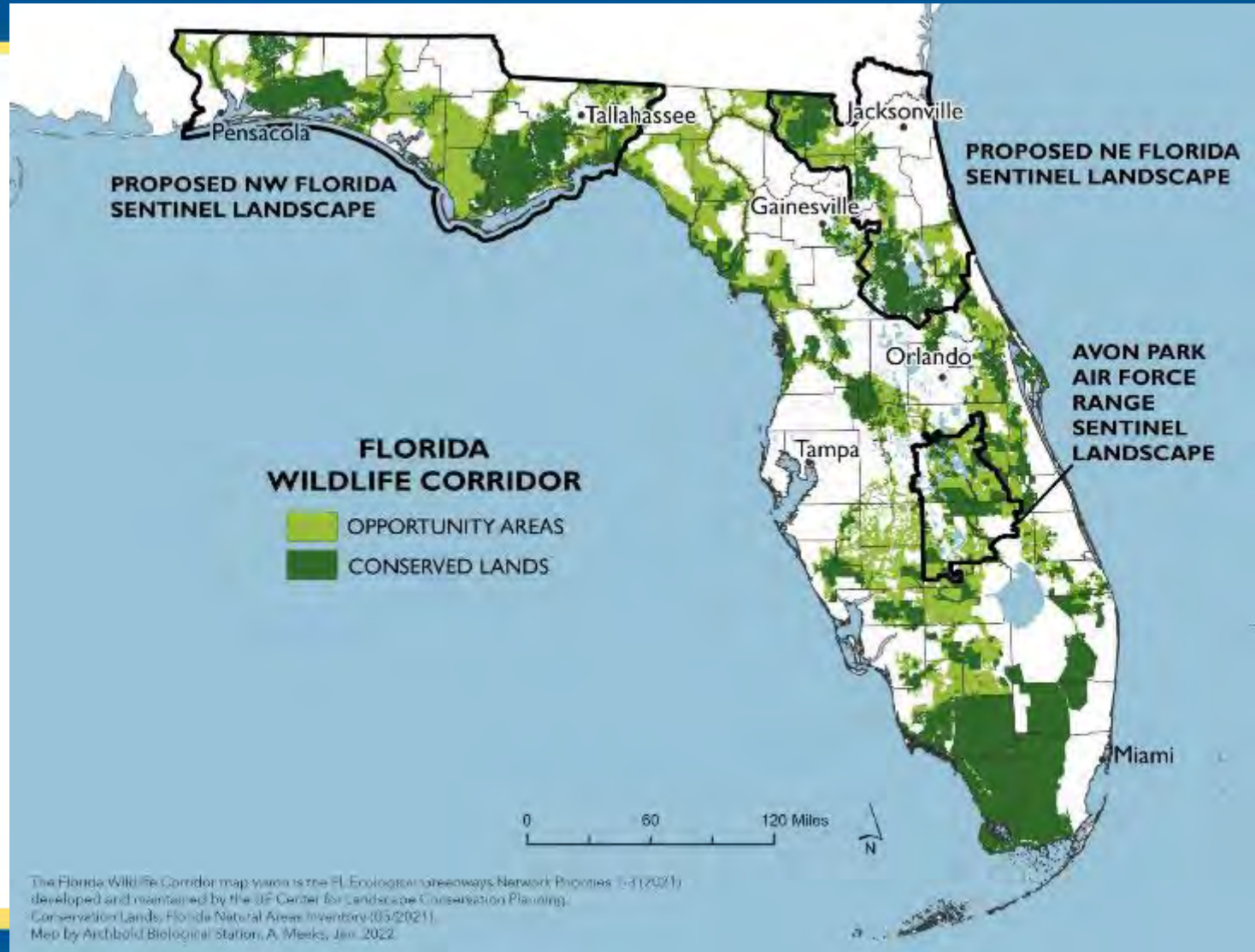
Lunch provided by Highlands Soil & Water Conservation District

Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, income, or family status. Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services (free of charge) should contact the CFRPC Title VI/Nondiscrimination Coordinator, Brenda Torres, 863-534-7130, ext. 109(voice), or via Florida Relay Service 711, or by email: [btorres@cfrpc.org](mailto:btorres@cfrpc.org).

# Topics Discussed & Presented

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS	Florida Wildlife Corridor	Land Management/Prescribed Burning	Extension Services
Landowner Assistance Program	Fish and Wildlife Program	Land Stewardship Management	Conservation Easements - Private Landowner Perspective
Mitigation Banks: Wetlands, Gopher tortoises, etc.	Conservation Easement Programs and Resources	Agricultural Water Policies	Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI)
	Conservation Easement Law Implications	Rural and Family Lands Program	

# Florida Wildlife Corridor



# Florida Wildlife Corridor

## **Data collected and analyzed included:**

- Building permits
- Zoning changes
- Land suitability
- Generalized future land use
- Existing infrastructure relevant to future development

**Coordination with** State agencies, non-profit organizations, and landowners to identify Opportunity Areas potentially available for acquisition, voluntary conservation easements, or those requiring coordination to support new development or redevelopment projects.





# AVON PARK AIR FORCE RANGE COMPATIBLE USE PLAN

A **cooperative land use planning study** involving a military installation and surrounding communities to promote **compatible community growth** and **support the military training mission**.





# CFRPC Resiliency Manager



**Sheila McNamara**



## Contact Information

**Jennifer Codo-Salisbury, MPA, AICP**  
Central Florida Regional Planning Council  
[jcodosalisbury@cfrpc.org](mailto:jcodosalisbury@cfrpc.org)

**Charles E. "Buck" MacLaughlin**  
Avon Park Air Force Range  
[Charles.MacLaughlin.1@us.af.mil](mailto:Charles.MacLaughlin.1@us.af.mil)

[sentinellandscapes.org](http://sentinellandscapes.org)



# Quail Forever Updates

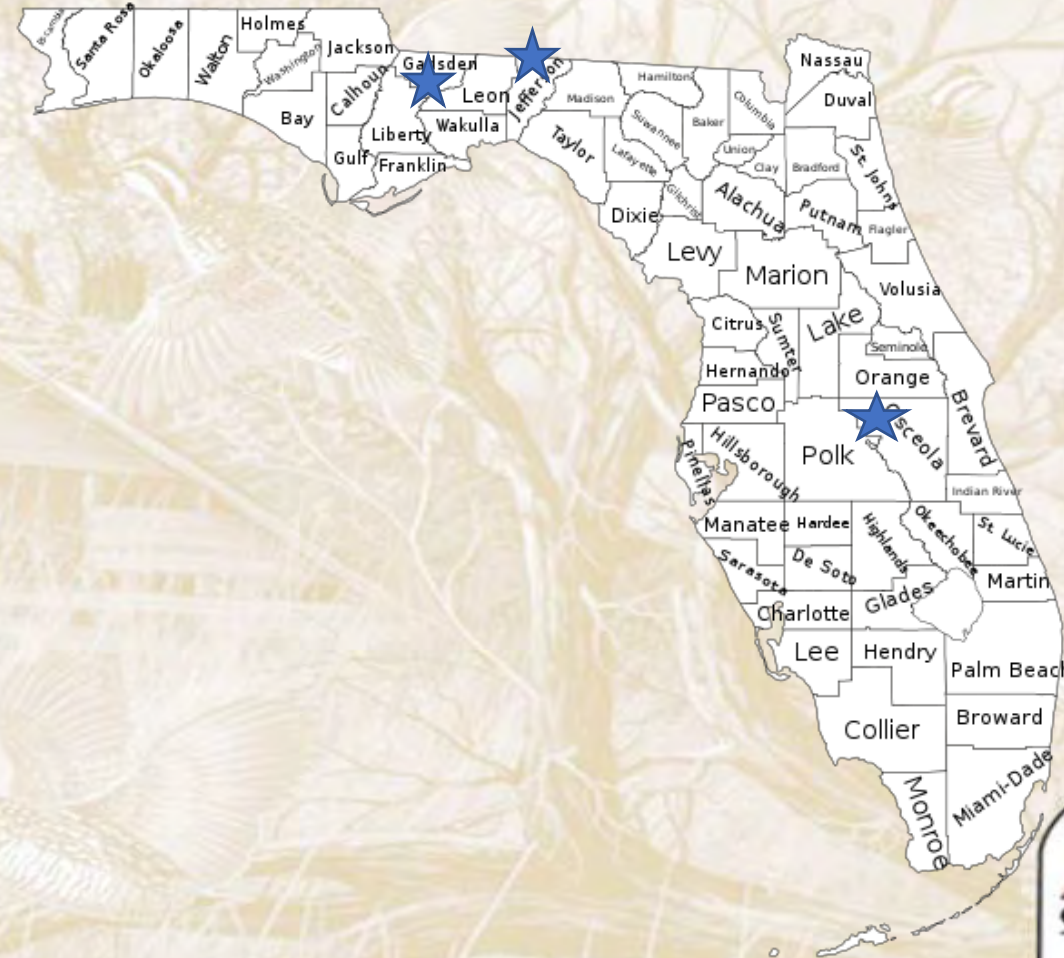
*Jess McGuire*

*Working Lands for Wildlife Bobwhite Program Coordinator*

*Quail Forever and Pheasants Forever*

# Quail Forever Staff in Florida

- Nicole Itzkowitz, Farm Bill Biologist Stationed in Kissimmee, FL, covering Osceola, Orange, Brevard, Seminole, Lake and Sumter counties [nitzkowitz@quailforever.org](mailto:nitzkowitz@quailforever.org) or 203-885-4489
- TBD, Farm Bill Biologist Stationed in Quincy, FL
  - Audrey Hawk, Education and Outreach Coordinator (GA/FL) Stationed in Thomasville, GA [ahawk@pheasantsforever.org](mailto:ahawk@pheasantsforever.org)
- Kenny Barker, Regional Field Representative (AL/FL/GA/SC) [kbarker@quailforever.org](mailto:kbarker@quailforever.org) or 850-251-0638



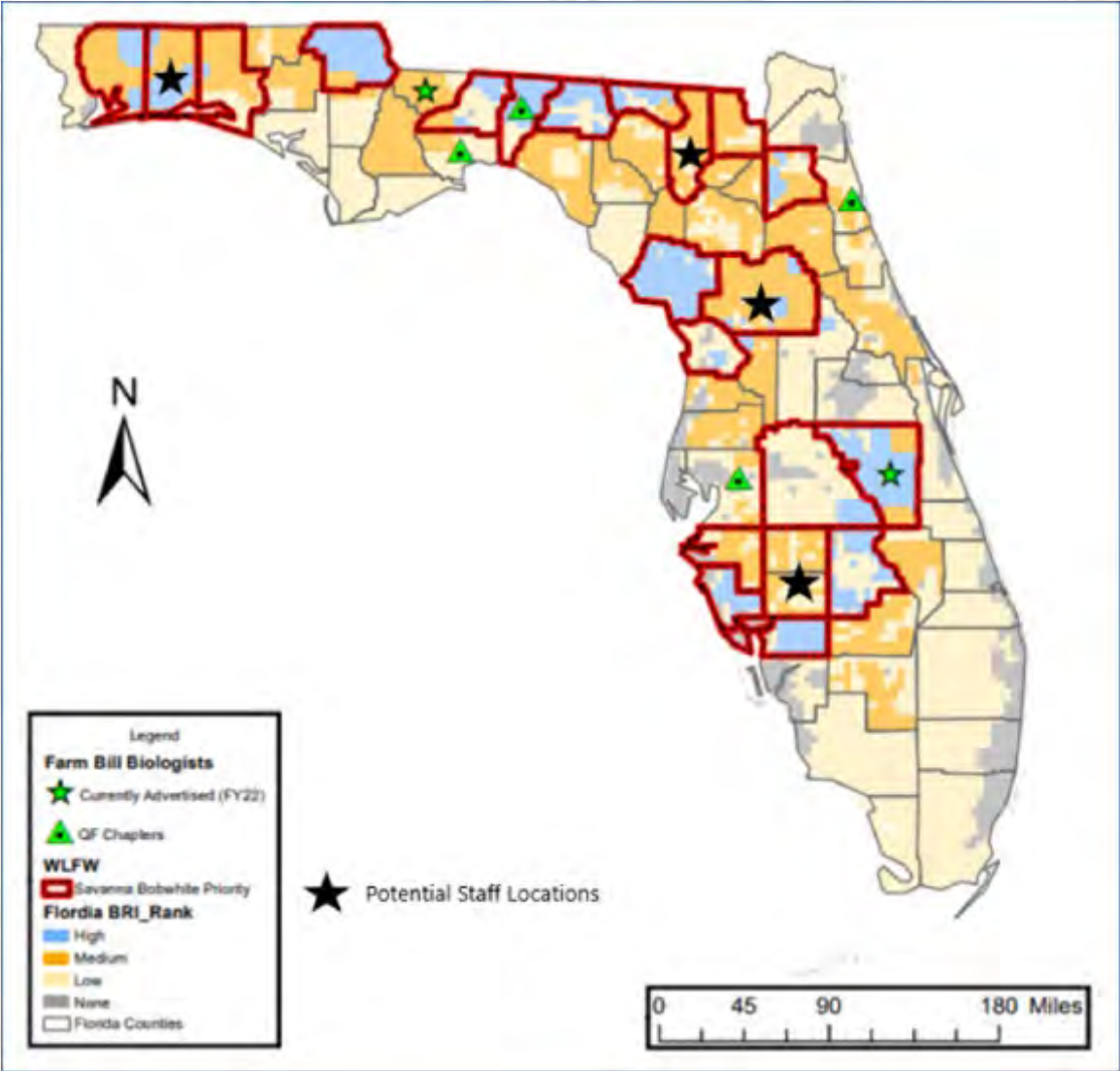
# Our Biologists



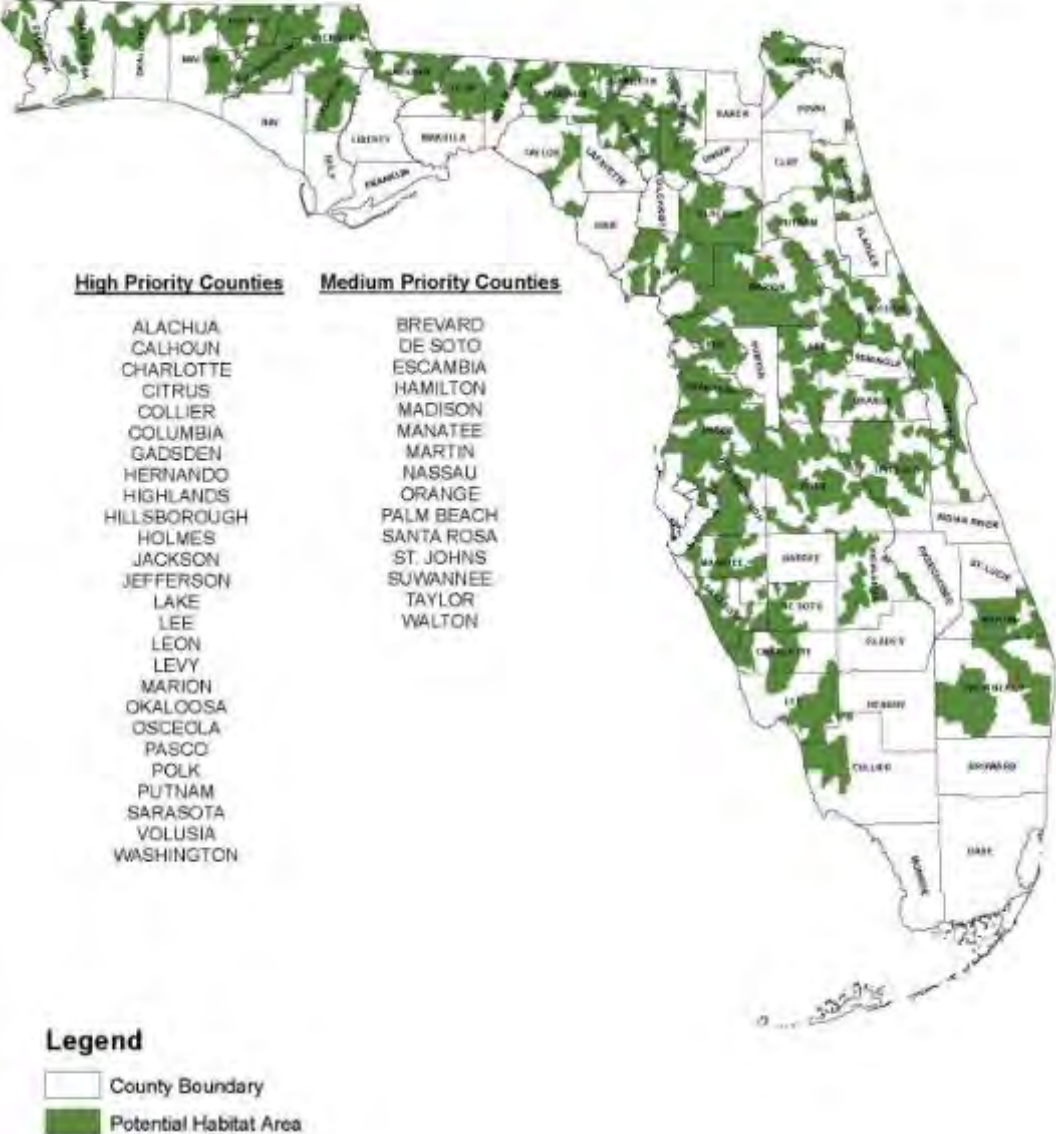
- With funding and support from NRCS and Florida Quail Forever Chapters, we work to promote, accelerate enrollment, coordinate and implement the conservation provisions of the Federal Farm Bill and other related wildlife conservation programs.
- Provide technical assistance and guidance to private landowners interested in improving the health of their land for wildlife, clean water, and other important natural resources.
- Assist federal and state government agencies, non-governmental organizations and other entities on the implementation of USDA Conservation Programs.
- Coordinate the implementation and application of biological sciences within the conservation programs in cooperation with the local NRCS District Conservationist, QF Biologists, and others.
- Complete contracts, applications and other required documentation for the conservation programs requiring biological expertise in cooperation with the listed partners and NRCS District Conservationists.
- Communicate Program requirements, completes site visits to discuss goals and determine need, and develop contracts/plans for program participants for the USDA Conservation Programs and other local and state programs.
- Performs other duties as assigned: Education and Outreach events, etc.

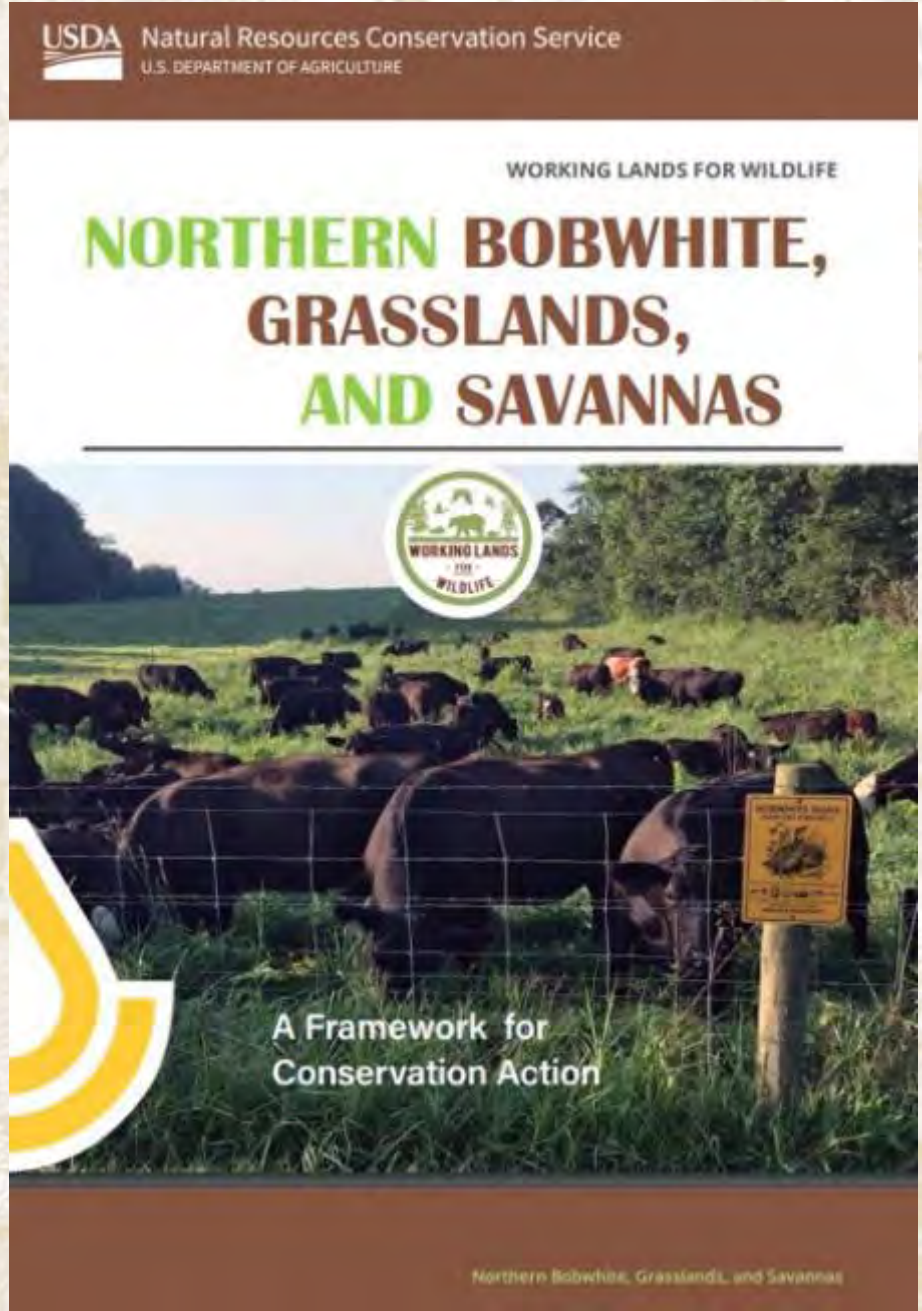


# WLFW-NOBO Focal Areas



# WLFW Bobwhite Quail Potential Habitat Area





# U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Updates

*Chad Allison*

*Partners for Fish and Wildlife / Coastal Program Coordinator*

*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*





# U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Voluntary Habitat Conservation and Restoration Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (PFW) and Coastal Program (CP) Update to State Technical Committee June 22, 2022



[www.fws.gov/partners/](http://www.fws.gov/partners/)



[www.fws.gov/coastal/](http://www.fws.gov/coastal/)



## FL PFW Strategic Plan finalized Jan 2022

- 4 Work Areas
  - Panhandle
  - North Florida
  - Central Florida
  - South Florida
- 7 Focus Areas
  - Upland Longleaf Pine
  - River, Stream, and Riparian
  - Upland Pine and Sandhill
  - Scrub
  - Central Florida Ridges
  - Dry Prairie
  - Florida Panther

## FL CP Strategic Plan finalized Mar 2022

- 5 Work Areas
  - Florida Panhandle
  - Northeast Florida
  - Tampa Bay/Big Bend
  - East Central Florida
  - South Florida
- 9 Focus Areas
  - Florida Panhandle
  - Apalachicola
  - Big Bend
  - Central Springs
  - Northeast Coast
  - Indian River Lagoon
  - Tampa and Sarasota Bays
  - Lake Wales Ridge
  - Charlotte Harbor
  - Everglades and Pine Rocklands



**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
*Florida's Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW)*  
*and Coastal Program (CP) Boundaries*





- Both programs work with willing partners to conserve, manage, and restore habitat by providing technical and financial assistance to landowners and producers complimenting Farm Bill conservation programs **with an emphasis on listed species recovery and the avoidance of additional species listings.**
- The latest version of the [At-Risk Species Finder](#), a tool that provides the public and state partners a way to find At-Risk species and help inform management decisions, was recently released. This finder also provides opportunities to explore other information on these species and to promote collaborative pro-active conservation.
- **PFW covers private lands** (non-federal or state) / **CP covers public and private lands.**
- PFW projects have a minimum 10-year commitment ensuring work is maintained.
- CP can provide both technical and financial assistance for third-party land acquisitions to protect habitat.

**Chad Allison, Partners for Fish and Wildlife/Coastal Program Coordinator**  
**904.731.3096 (chad\_allison@fws.gov)**

# General Discussion and Questions

*All*

# Email Updates

- Sign up at: <https://www.fl.nrcs.usda.gov/>
- Receive news releases, technical resources, funding opportunity announcements and more



The screenshot shows the website for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Florida. The header includes the USDA logo, the text "Natural Resources Conservation Service Florida", and "United States Department of Agriculture". Navigation links for "About Us", "National Centers", and "State Websites" are present. A search bar and a "Browse By Audience" link are also visible. The main content area features a featured article titled "A Grassland of Special Significance" with a large image of a grassland and a water drop icon. To the right, there is a "Popular Topics" section with links to "Conservation Planning", "Financial Assistance", "Easement Programs", "Plant Materials Program", and "Field Office Technical Guide". At the bottom right, there is a social media bar with icons for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Email, followed by a "Sign up for email updates" form with a "Go" button. A large green arrow points to the sign-up form.

fl.nrcs.usda.gov

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Florida  
United States Department of Agriculture

About Us | National Centers | State Websites

Topics | Programs | Newsroom | Contact Us

Browse By Audience | A-Z Index | Help

**A Grassland of Special Significance**  
Learn how local and state partners with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service have permanently protected a pristine sandhill grassland ecosystem in north-central Florida from rapidly advancing development.

**Popular Topics**

- > Conservation Planning
- > Financial Assistance
- > Easement Programs
- > Plant Materials Program
- > Field Office Technical Guide

1 / 5

A Natural Treasure: Florida's Sandhills & Grassland

Sign up for email updates:  Go

# Closing Remarks

*Juan Hernandez*

*State Conservationist*

# *THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!*

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