

AVON PARK AIR FORCE RANGE

SENTINEL LANDSCAPE



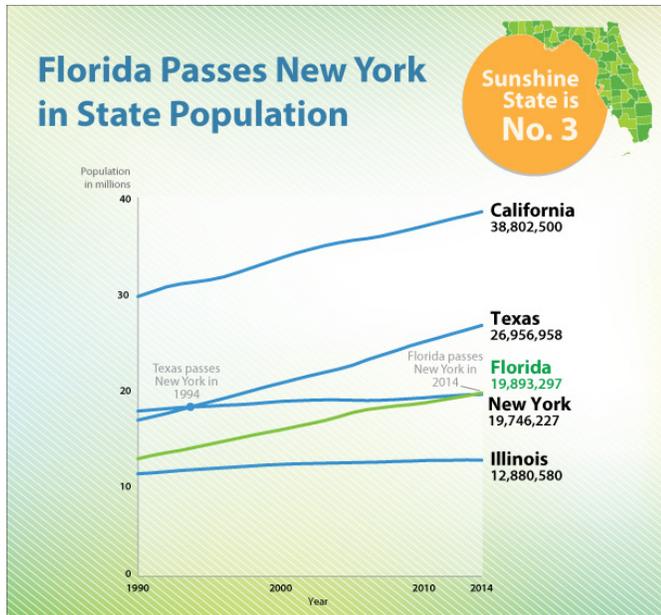
**CONSERVATION
GUIDE**



Tools and resources to assist Florida landowners

FLORIDA'S GROWTH RATE IS ON THE MOVE

Florida's private landowners play a vital role in promoting conservation and working lands to improve the quality of life in the Heartland—efforts that support economic, environmental, and recreational opportunities in the region. This guide is designed to assist willing landowners with preparing and executing a legacy plan that supports Florida's efforts to protect and conserve its open spaces and working lands.



Credit: United States Census Bureau

Agriculture in Florida is generating more than \$120 billion annually and supporting more than two million jobs every year. The need to protect open spaces and working lands, once common across the state, cannot be overstated. In addition, Florida's \$58.6 billion outdoor recreation industry provides 485,000 jobs and \$3.5 billion in state and local tax revenue each year. The importance of conservation is clear.

Potential Benefits of Land Conservation

Financial or Economic

- Continued or increased income
- Tax savings
- Increased property value
- Free technical assistance/cost sharing
- Economic viability of the state

Family or Social and Cultural

- Land legacy of agricultural and forest lands for future generations
- Peace of mind and elimination of uncertainty among heirs
- Opportunities for recreation
- Continued prosperity, health and quality of life for yourself and other Floridians
- Ensuring military readiness

Ecological or Environmental

- Protection of biological diversity (rare and important habitat for fish and wildlife)
- Contribution to clean air, flood control, and water purification
- Preserving the nation's food and fiber supply by preventing conversion to non-agricultural uses

WE are partnering for the future of the Florida Heartland to support our agriculture, while respecting our natural resources, and strengthening our national defense.



Voluntary Programs to Assist Your Personal Conservation Planning

Based on Land Use and Available Assistance

| | Agriculture | Forestry | Water Resources | Financial Assistance | Technical Assistance | Easement Options |
|---|-------------|----------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Florida Forest Service (FFS) | | | | | | |
| Rural and Family Lands Protection Program (RFLPP) | X | X | X | | | X |
| Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) | | | | | | |
| Florida Forever | X | X | X | | | X |
| Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) | | | | | | |
| Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site Program | | X | | X | X | |
| Landowner Assistance Program (LAP) | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| State Wildlife Grants Program (SWG) | | X | X | X | | |
| South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) | | | | | | |
| Dispersed Water Management Program (DWMP) | X | | X | X | | |
| United States Department of Defense (DOD) | | | | | | |
| Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program (REPI) | X | X | X | | | X |
| Legacy Resource Management Program | X | X | X | X | | X |
| United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) | | | | | | |
| Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund | | X | X | X | | X |
| Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (PFW) | | | | X | X | |
| United States Forest Service (USFS) | | | | | | |
| Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) | | X | | | X | |
| USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) | | | | | | |
| Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) | X | | X | X | X | |
| Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) | | X | | X | | |
| Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) | X | | | X | | |
| USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) | | | | | | |
| Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) | X | X | | X | X | |
| Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) | | | X | X | X | |
| Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQUIP) | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP) | | X | | X | | X |
| Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) | X | X | X | X | | X |
| Working Lands For Wildlife (WLFW) | X | X | | X | X | |
| Nongovernmental Programs (NGO) | | | | | | |
| Acres for America | X | X | | X | | X |

Contacts & More Information

Acres for America (NGO)

<https://www.nfwf.org/acresforamerica/>
202-857-0166

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (Federal)

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/fl/programs/>
352-338-9554

Central Florida Regional Planning Council (Regional)

<http://www.cfrpc.org/>
863-534-7130

Conservation Stewardship Program (Federal)

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/fl/programs/>
352-338-9500

Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (Federal)

<https://www.fws.gov/endangered/grants/>

Dispersed Water Management Program (State)

<https://www.sfwmd.gov/>
561-682-2928

Emergency Watershed Protection Program (Federal)

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/>
202-720-5795

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (Federal)

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/>
352-338-9500

Florida Forever (State)

<https://floridadep.gov/>
850-245-2118

Forest Stewardship Program (Federal)

<https://www.fs.fed.us/managing-land/private-land/>
484-888-0005

Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site Program (State)

<http://myfwc.com/>
850-921-1030

Healthy Forest Reserve Program (Federal)

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/easements/>
352-338-9500

Landowner Assistance Program (State)

<http://myfwc.com/>
863-648-3826

Legacy Resource Management Program (Federal)

<https://www.denix.osd.mil/legacy/home/>

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (Federal)

<https://www.fws.gov/northflorida/Partners/>
904-731-3096

Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program (Federal)

<http://www.repi.mil/>

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (Federal)

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/farmland/rcpp/>
352-338-9500

Rural and Family Lands Protection Program (State)

<https://www.freshfromflorida.com/>
850-681-5828

State Wildlife Grants Program (State)

<http://myfwc.com/>
850-617-9558

USDA Farm Service Agency (Federal)

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/>
352-379-4500

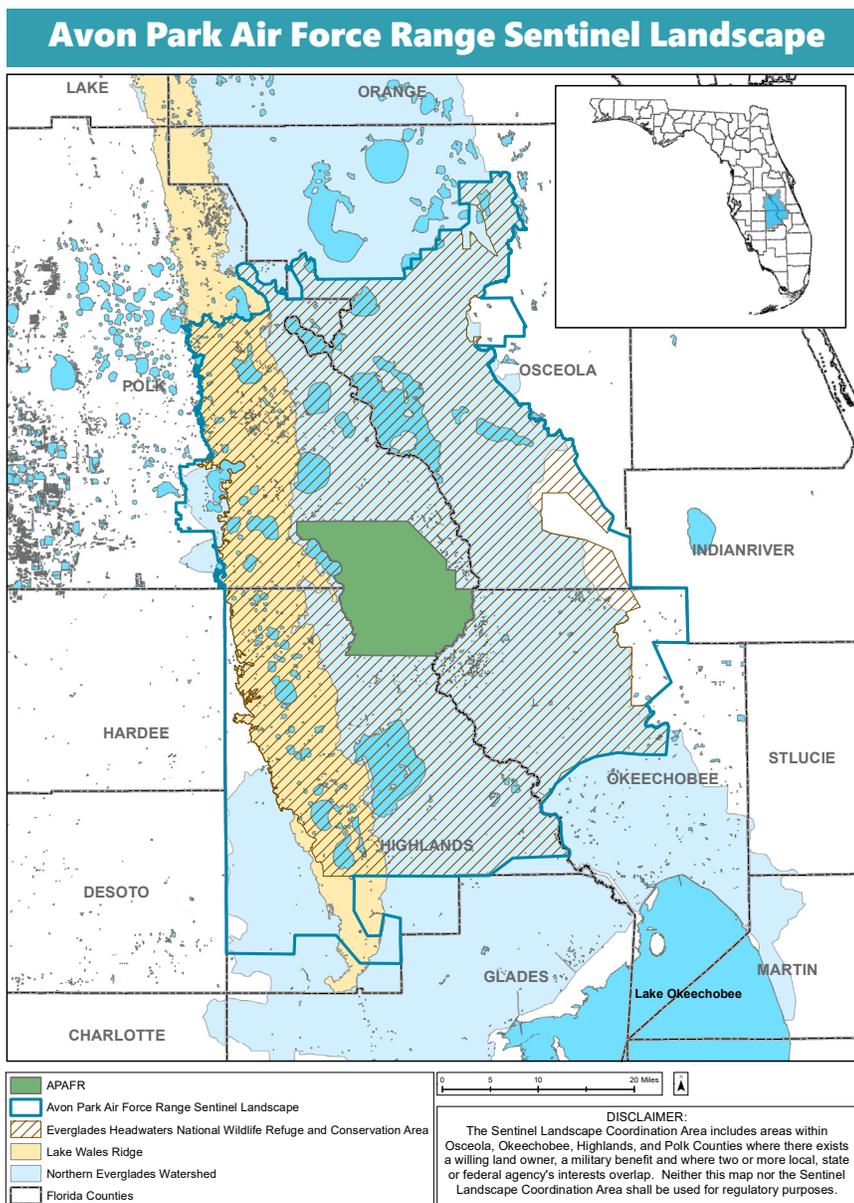
Working Lands For Wildlife (Federal)

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/national/home/>
202-690-2196

PROTECTING THE LAND

Federal, state, and local agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations, support willing landowners and working lands through various landowner assistance programs including the purchase of conservation easements. These efforts can have a positive impact on the military by buffering the Avon Park Air Force Range from incompatible development that could threaten the future of the military mission. Another benefit of these measures includes a decrease in stormwater runoff in the Northern Everglades and Lake Okeechobee, which will improve water quality while preserving habitat connectivity and maintaining the viability of regional agricultural production.

This is the Sentinel Landscape.



Common Questions

Are conservation easements permanent?

In most cases, yes. Most easements “run with the land”, meaning that not only the original owner but all owners that come after them are subject to the easement. A few conservation programs use temporary easements — but only permanent conservation easements qualify for income and estate tax benefits.

What rights and responsibilities does the landowner retain?

The landowner retains fee ownership of the land and all rights associated with the property not specifically relinquished in the conservation easement. Any use that does not conflict with the purpose and terms of the easement is permissible, including selling the land and bequeathing it by will. The landowner’s responsibilities include those specified in the easement agreement. The payment of property taxes is still a responsibility of the landowner, but a reduction in that amount is one of the possible tax benefits that are available.

In addition to spanning much of the Kissimmee River and the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area, the Sentinel Landscape also includes a large portion of the Lake Wales Ridge. This region of Florida hosts plant and animal species found nowhere else in the world, along with diverse and imperiled wildlife habitat.

WORKING LANDS COMPLEMENT NATIONAL SECURITY

Florida's 20 major military installations are key to the state's economic success, yet they continue to face urban development in areas close to and distant from military installations, known as encroachment, threatening testing and training. Protecting rural agricultural and undeveloped lands is a shared goal linking landowners, the military, and economic pursuits.

The Sentinel Landscape Partnership seeks to unite stakeholders toward a core mission — strengthening rural economies through protecting working lands. Agriculture, conservation, and defense can work together to grow and strengthen the state's economy while benefiting the public as a whole.



The Sentinel Landscape's Role

In July 2016, Central Florida's Avon Park Air Force Range received the Sentinel Landscape designation through the United States' Department of Agriculture (USDA), Interior (DOI), and Defense (DOD). This designation supports the Range's 2010 Joint Land Use Study and Florida's goal to be the most military-friendly state in the country. The Sentinel Landscape Partnership provides an opportunity for the three departments to build effective working relationships with the shared common goals of sustainable defense, natural resources, and agriculture.

Avon Park Air Force Range is the Air Force's largest primary air-to-ground training range east of the Mississippi River. The Range is used to meet the training needs of the Air Force, as well as all branches of the Armed Services, and a variety of other state and federal agencies. As such, the Sentinel Landscape identifies important land in Central Florida necessary for continued military training, agricultural production, and natural resource protection.

The Landowner's Role

Landowners interested in pursuing options provided in this guide will want to assess their priorities, talk it over with family members, and develop a plan prior to implementing their long-term conservation goals. In addition to the agencies and programs provided in this guide, landowners may want to consider talking to others who have experience with applications for conservation easements. These might include local extension agents, family tax advisors and financial planners, local foresters, and neighboring landowners.

Landowners will find that programs focused on conservation easements support the long-term use of their land for agriculture and recreation, while protecting it from future development and supporting heirs' ability to keep the land intact. Additionally, property tax exemptions and conservation tax assessments are other benefits landowners can enjoy through the use of conservation easements.