

EAST MISSISSIPPI SENTINEL LANDSCAPE

MISSISSIPPI | Est. 2026



The East Mississippi Sentinel Landscape (EMSL) encompasses 6.5 million acres across east-central Mississippi, representing nearly 22 percent of the state's land area. The landscape is anchored by Naval Air Station Meridian (NASMER) and supported by Columbus Air Force Base (CAFB), two nationally significant pilot training installations that rely on the region's extensive rural geography, Military Operations Areas (MOAs), and Military Training Routes (MTRs) to train Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and allied aviators. More than 91 percent of the landscape is privately owned, making partnerships with landowners, the forestry industry, agricultural producers, and conservation organizations essential to sustaining both military readiness and Mississippi's rural economy.

Population growth, incompatible development, infrastructure expansion, working lands conversion, declining forest markets, invasive species, altered fire regimes, and increasing demands on water and energy infrastructure threaten the landscape's long-term military mission compatibility. These pressures reduce the availability of open space needed for low-level tactical flight training while degrading forests, watersheds, wildlife habitat, and other natural resources that support resilient working lands. The EMSL unites Federal, state, local, nonprofit, academic, industry, and private landowner partners to address these shared challenges through voluntary conservation, sustainable forestry and agriculture, prescribed fire, habitat restoration, watershed protection, and compatible land-use planning.

The landscape includes nationally significant longleaf pine ecosystems, Black Prairie grasslands, bottomland hardwood forests, the Tombigbee, Buttahatchee, Upper Pearl, and Chickasawhay watersheds, and habitat supporting numerous threatened and endangered species. By coordinating conservation investments across these working landscapes, the EMSL protects natural resources, strengthens rural communities, and sustains the nationally critical pilot training missions at NASMER and CAFB.

Landscape Goals



Protect military readiness by conserving compatible working lands and reducing encroachment across MOAs and MTRs.



Restore and enhance forests, watersheds, and priority habitats to improve ecosystem resilience, conserve biodiversity, and protect threatened and endangered species.



Strengthen working farms and forests through sustainable management, voluntary conservation, and market-driven economic opportunities.



Build enduring partnerships that coordinate funding, planning, science, and implementation to achieve landscape-scale conservation outcomes.



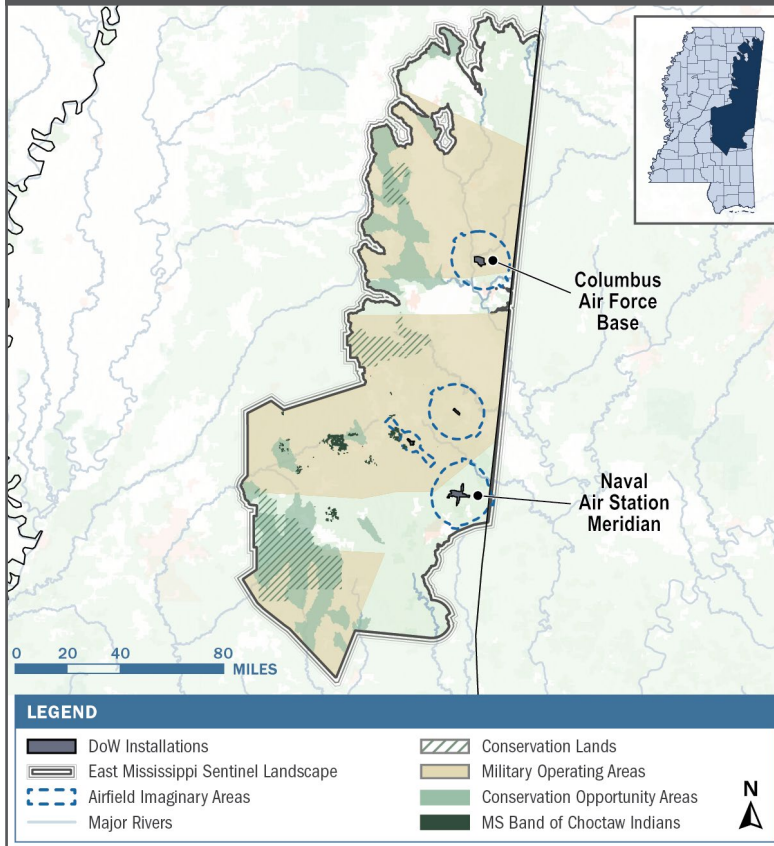
A U.S. Navy T-45 Goshawk training aircraft approaches for landing at Naval Air Station Meridian, where student naval aviators conduct advanced jet training before transitioning to fleet aircraft. (Photo courtesy of Naval Air Station Meridian)

LANDSCAPE DETAIL

Total Sentinel Landscape Area: **6,522,806** acres

Active Base Area Acres:
15,985

East Mississippi Sentinel Landscape Map



Key Partners

- ▶ America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative
- ▶ Department of War
- ▶ Ducks Unlimited
- ▶ East Mississippi Business Development Corporation
- ▶ Governor's Office of Military Affairs
- ▶ Kemper County Board of Supervisors
- ▶ Lauderdale County Board of Supervisors
- ▶ Lowndes County Board of Supervisors
- ▶ Meridian Airport Authority
- ▶ Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce
- ▶ Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality
- ▶ Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks
- ▶ Mississippi Development Authority
- ▶ Mississippi Forestry Association
- ▶ Mississippi Forestry Commission
- ▶ Mississippi Longleaf Implementation Team
- ▶ Mississippi Secretary of State
- ▶ Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission
- ▶ Mississippi State University
- ▶ Mississippi State University Extension Service
- ▶ National Bobwhite & Grasslands Initiative
- ▶ Tennessee Valley Authority
- ▶ The Nature Conservancy
- ▶ United States Department of Agriculture
- ▶ United States Department of Interior
- ▶ Wildlife Mississippi



A prescribed burn restores fire-adapted forests, reduces hazardous fuels, and helps prevent catastrophic wildfires. (Photo credit: Mississippi Forestry Commission)



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