

# AVON PARK AIR FORCE RANGE SENTINEL LANDSCAPE

Florida | est. 2016

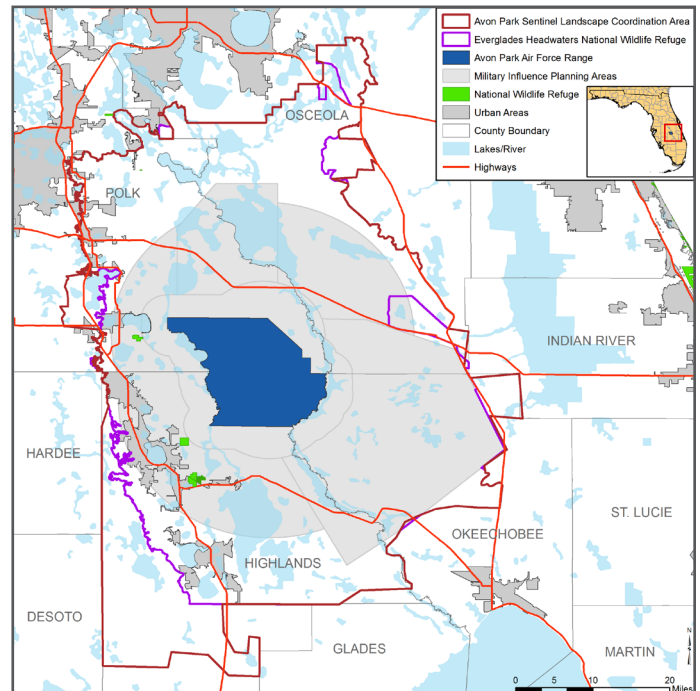


The APAFR Sentinel Landscape encompasses nearly 1.5 million acres of land in south central Florida and is anchored by the Air Force's largest primary air-to-ground training range east of the Mississippi River. The installation's restricted airspace and operating area, including a 106,000-acre bombing and gunnery range, provide training infrastructure that is used by the U.S. Air Force, Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and state and local law enforcement.

Designated in 2016, the APAFR Sentinel Landscape has quickly become an example of how Sentinel Landscapes can enhance coordination between federal agencies. In 2018, partners created the first joint REPI-NRCS easement by merging Air Force easement language with NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program's requirements. Under the easement, DoD matched \$1.6 million in REPI funds with \$740,000 in NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) funds to acquire 1,600 acres of ranch lands within Avon Park's highest-priority Military Influence Planning Area. This groundbreaking project eliminated redundancies in government spending, strengthened the installation's air mission, and protected central Florida's water resources.

Outside of the APAFR is the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area. The Refuge is a high priority area for the DOI and is known as an excellent destination for hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, birding, and outdoor

**Figure 1:** APAFR Sentinel Landscape Boundary



**Table 2:** APAFR Sentinel Landscape Footprint Details (acres)

<b>Total Protected Acres:<sup>14</sup></b>	32,259.8
<b>Total Enrolled Acres:<sup>15</sup></b>	156,542.6
<b>Active Base Area:</b>	108,213.6
<b>Total Sentinel Landscape Area:</b>	1,443,560.0

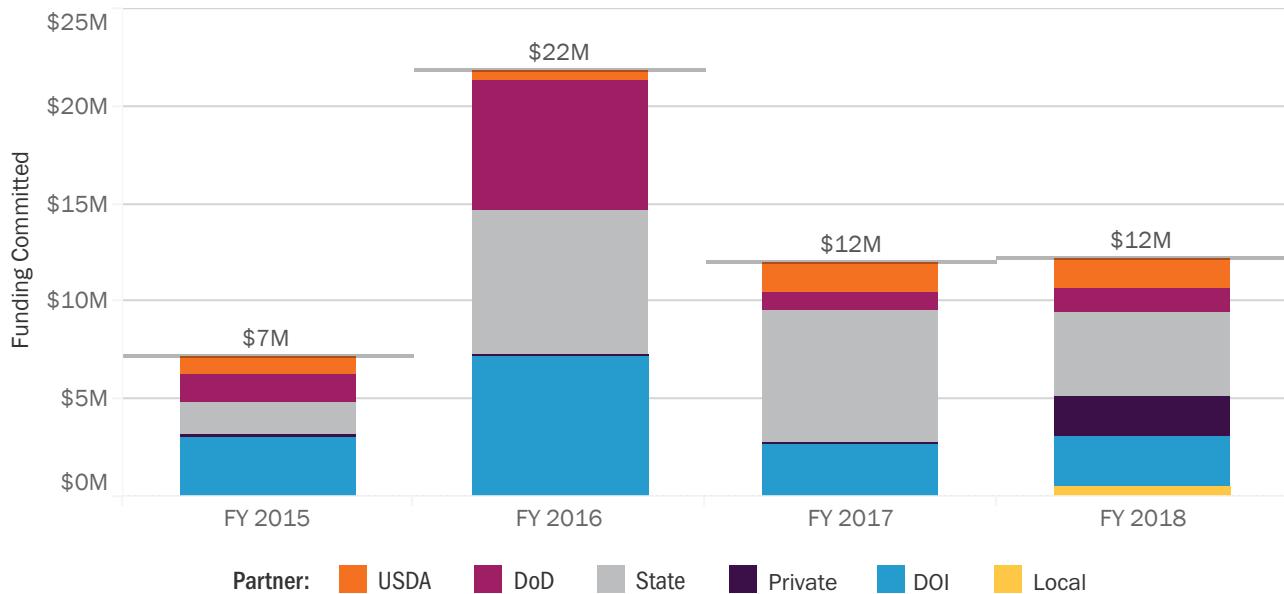
**Table 1:** APAFR Sentinel Landscape Total Funding by Partner in Millions

Partner	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
USDA	\$0.9	\$0.6	\$1.5	\$1.6
DoD	\$1.5	\$6.6	\$1.0	\$1.2
State	\$1.6	\$7.4	\$6.7	\$4.3
Private	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$2.0
DOI	\$3.1	\$7.2	\$2.7	\$2.6
Local	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.5

<sup>14</sup> Represents total acres protected through projects administered by sentinel landscape partners since FY 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Represents total acres enrolled in state and federal conservation programs since FY 2015.

**Figure 2:** APAFR Sentinel Landscape Total Funding by Partner



*The Everglades "After the Storm" (Photo by: Brian Call, NPS)*

educational opportunities. The sentinel landscape partners are committed to supporting the Everglades by improving the water quality, quantity, and storage capacity in the upper Everglades watershed. In pursuit of this objective, partners have enrolled 8,700 acres within the sentinel landscape in NRCS' Wetland Reserve Program and Wetlands Reserve Easements and 1,064 acres in South Florida Water Management District's Dispersed Water Management Program.

Private agricultural lands are interspersed among the Sentinel Landscape's military and refuge lands. To date, the Florida Forest Service's Rural and Family Lands Protection Program has conserved over 22,000 acres of working lands within the landscape's footprint. In an effort to protect more of these

properties and keep them compatible with the military's training mission, NRCS's State Technical Committee has opted to give parcels within the APAFR Sentinel Landscape priority consideration in its Agricultural Land Easement Program. In effect, this decision will lead NRCS to increase its existing 15,200 acres in easements within the sentinel landscape.

**Table 13:** APAFR Sentinel Landscape Goals and Progress

Goal	Progress
<b>Goal #1</b> Increase opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and other passive recreation activities within the sentinel landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ USFWS collaborated with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to establish the 1460-acre Hatchineha Unit of the Everglades Headwaters Wildlife Management Area for the 2018-19 hunting season.</li> <li>★ Sentinel landscape partners Florida Department of Environmental Protection and USFWS acquired 4,000 acres of land and are currently working with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to offer hunting opportunities for the public on the properties.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal #2</b> Improve the water quality, water quantity, and water storage capacity of the upper Everglades watershed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ 8,700 acres within the Sentinel Landscape and Northern Everglades Watershed that are in the MIPA-Military Influence Planning Area are enrolled in the NRCS' Wetland Reserve Program and Wetlands Reserve Easements.</li> <li>★ 1,064 acres of permanently protected land are enrolled in the South Florida Water Management District's Dispersed Water Management Program.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal #3</b> Increase the vitality of agricultural activities by reducing the pressure of land use conversion on working landowners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Florida's Forest Services' Rural and Family Lands Protection Program has permanently protected 22,549 acres of working lands within the sentinel landscape (18,900 of which are in the MIPA-Military Influence Planning Area) through conservation easements.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal #4</b> Prevent or avoid incompatible land uses near APAFR through innovation and partnerships. Protect annual dispatch of over 14,000 sorties and over 200 ground training events	Sentinel landscape partners coordinated with the Polk County Property Appraiser to publish a disclaimer on Polk County's website that outlined the risks posed by low level aircraft and training noise on properties within a three mile radius of the APAFR.



Staff Sgt. Cody McNorton and Senior Airman Joseph Flynn call in information during exercise Atlantic Strike at Avon Park Air Force Range, Fla. Atlantic Strike is a coalition air-to-ground training exercise that simulates a deployed environment. Sergeant McNorton and Airman Flynn are members of the 14th Air Support Operations Squadron. (Photo by: U.S. Air Force, Senior Airman Amber Williams)