

GEORGIA SENTINEL LANDSCAPE

est. 2018



The Georgia Sentinel Landscape is home to several of the nation’s most important military installations and ranges, including Fort Benning, Fort Stewart, Hunter Army Airfield, Townsend Bombing Range, Fort Gordon, Robins Air Force Base, Marine Corps Logistics Base-Albany, Moody Air Force Base, and Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay. Together, these defense facilities support heavy armor maneuver areas, unimpeded air-to-ground ranges, live-fire training facilities, low-level flight routes, and ballistic missile submarine fleets, which are a key component of the nuclear triad identified in the National Defense Strategy. The military accounts for a significant portion of the state’s economy, with an annual economic impact of over \$13 billion. The Georgia Sentinel Landscape also encompasses a high concentration of prime timber land and large swaths of longleaf pine forests. Compared to other tree species, longleaf pines have a greater resilience to climate-related threats that are currently impacting communities within the Georgia Sentinel Landscape such as wildfire, hurricanes, and drought. Georgia Sentinel Landscape partners are committed to strengthening military readiness by supporting agricultural communities, sustaining working forests, promoting coastal resiliency, and improving water quality.

GOPHER TORTOISE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

A central goal of the Georgia Sentinel Landscape is to conserve longleaf pine forests. Despite once blanketing the Southeast, longleaf pine forests have steadily disappeared in the region due to development, clear-cutting, and other factors. Today, only three percent of the original 90 million acres of longleaf pine remain intact. The degradation of this ecosystem threatens the gopher tortoise, an imperiled species whose burrows provide habitat for an additional 360 species. The Georgia Department

Figure 1: Georgia Sentinel Landscape Map

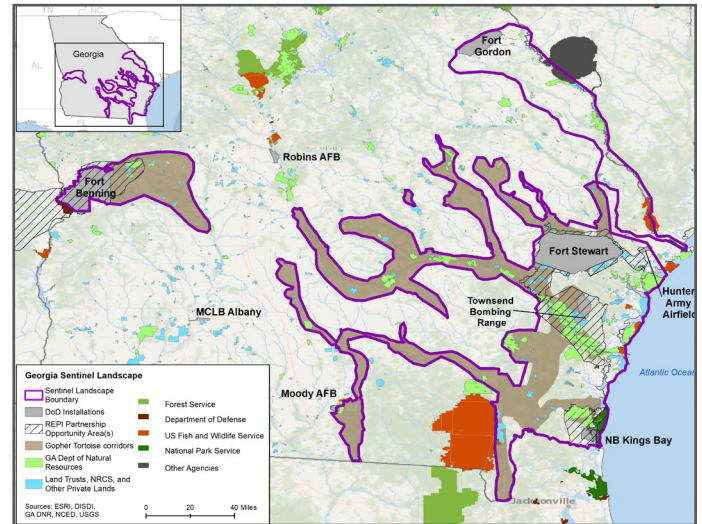


Table 1: Georgia Sentinel Landscape Footprint Details (from year established through fiscal year 2020)

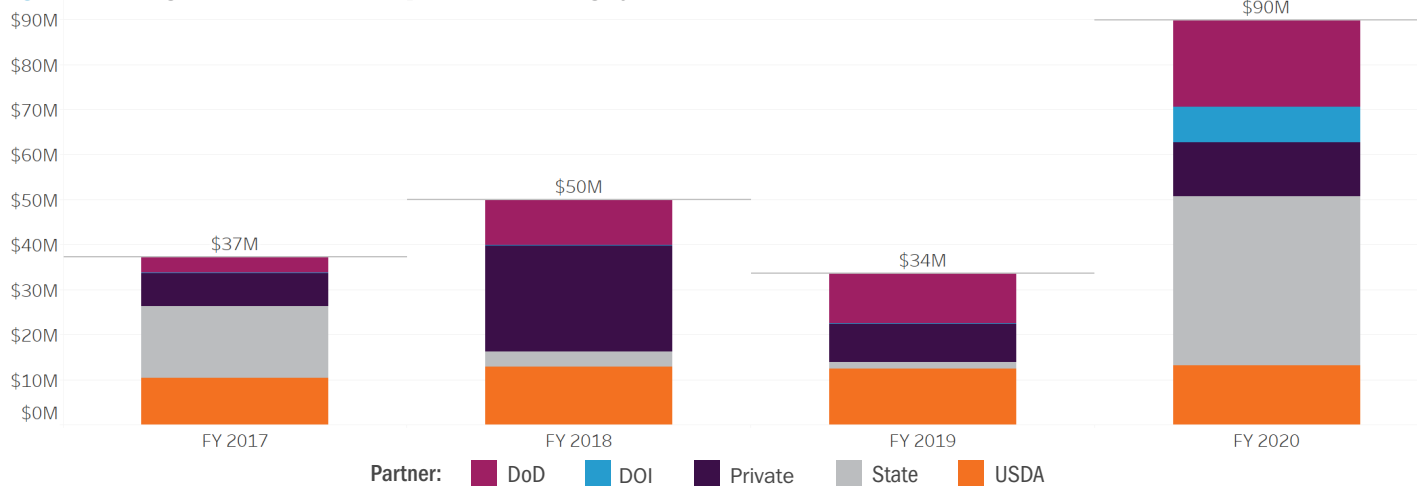
Total Protected Acres ¹	151,035
Total Enrolled Acres ²	405,970
Active Base Area	615,290
Total Sentinel Landscape Area	6,318,263

of Natural Resources (DNR) recognized that listing the gopher tortoise under the Endangered Species Act would impose challenges on the state’s economy and constrain military testing and training activities. In response, the agency partnered with the U.S. Department of Defense’s Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program, U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and multiple non-profits to develop the Gopher Tortoise Initiative in 2015. The goal of the initiative is to protect 65 of the 122 viable gopher tortoise

¹ 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.

² 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.

Figure 2: Georgia Sentinel Landscape Total Funding by Partner



populations on 100,000 acres of habitat throughout the state. If this target is met, the Initiative partners have concluded that the species should not need further regulatory protection in Georgia. To date, partners have protected 54 viable gopher tortoise populations. With most of the targeted habitat extending across the Georgia Sentinel Landscape, the partnership has become a natural vehicle through which Gopher Tortoise Initiative projects are coordinated.

ENHANCING ECOSYSTEMS THROUGH PRESCRIBED BURNS

In addition to providing opportunities to advance species recovery efforts, longleaf pine ecosystems provide ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, erosion control, and water supply purification and flow regulation. This makes the protection of these forests essential in accomplishing the Georgia Sentinel Landscape’s goals of protecting these historical forests and enhancing the area’s resilience to climate change. With funding and technical assistance from USDA NRCS, REPI, The Longleaf Alliance, Georgia Forestry Commission, and Georgia DNR, the Georgia Sentinel Landscape is piloting a program to reach previously untapped but interested

landowners and provide them with the tools and resources needed to conduct sustainable forest management practices on their land.

This program uses a website called Woodscamp, which is advertised on social media sites to draw in landowners that might not be engaged through classic outreach efforts, such as younger or absentee landowners. Free of charge, Woodscamp provides a real time assessment of the owner’s property based on their goals and interests, informs them of potential programs they may be interested in, and determines whether or not the land is eligible for a free visit from a forest professional.

A second component of the project involved outfitting two prescribed burn trailers to complement one already being used by the Georgia Forestry Commission. These trailers contain all of the equipment, signage, and instructional material necessary for landowners to conduct prescribed burns. By making these trailers available to the public, interested landowners no longer need to overcome the hurdle of the cost of the equipment needed to conduct prescribed burns—an activity essential to the healthy management of longleaf pine forests.

Key Partners

- ★ National Parks Conservation Association
- ★ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency
- ★ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
- ★ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service
- ★ U.S. Department of Defense, Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration
- ★ U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service
- ★ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service
- ★ Coastal Georgia Regional Commission
- ★ Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- ★ Georgia Forestry Commission
- ★ Middle Georgia Regional Commission
- ★ Fort Benning
- ★ Fort Gordon
- ★ Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield
- ★ Marine Corps Logistics Base Albany
- ★ Moody Air Force Base
- ★ Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay
- ★ Robins Air Force Base
- ★ Townsend Bombing Range
- ★ American Forest Foundation
- ★ Athens Land Trust
- ★ Ducks Unlimited
- ★ Georgia Conservancy
- ★ Georgia-Alabama Land Trust
- ★ Longleaf Alliance
- ★ National Wild Turkey Federation
- ★ Open Space Institute
- ★ The Conservation Fund
- ★ The Nature Conservancy
- ★ U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities