

Update on the *The Florida Strategic Plan for Sustaining Military Readiness through Conservation Partnerships*

October 2015

Partners including the U.S. Air Force, Peninsular Florida LCC, US Fish and Wildlife Service, University of Florida, Florida Natural Areas Inventory, The Nature Conservancy, and the National Wildlife Refuge Association are continuing development of *The Florida Strategic Plan for Sustaining Military Readiness through Conservation Partnerships*, which was previously introduced in the March 2015 edition of the PFLCC newsletter.

Initiated in early 2015, the goal of the *Strategic Plan* is to identify a regional natural resources management approach to help minimize encroachment threats to Air Force missions, while identifying partner-leveraged conservation opportunities throughout the state of Florida. This builds upon existing partnerships that already exist between the PFLCC, Air Force, and various other federal, state and non-governmental conservation organizations, as well as existing data and work such as the Critical Lands and Waters Identification Project (CLIP) and the Cooperative Conservation Blueprint. The intent is for the current *Strategic Plan* to be a pilot project, which may be expanded to include other regions and partnerships in the future. This is in keeping with the Air Force's expressed interest in being a conservation partner at the regional and state levels, and in having Air Force conservation priorities included as part of regional and state conservation efforts.

During the summer of 2015 the project team met with natural resource and community planning staff at Air Force installations throughout Florida to discuss conservation priorities for individual bases, as well as mission concerns related to natural resource constraints and encroachment. In mid-October a preliminary draft of the *Strategic Plan* was completed, which incorporates data and information obtained during these visits, other relevant plans and documents such as the installation-specific Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans, and additional data and analyses conducted by the team. Currently under review by Air Force and Fish and Wildlife Service staff, this plan identifies recommendations regarding future partnership opportunities, conservation mechanisms and programs, as well as draft GIS-based conservation priorities around the major Air Force installations in Florida. Lists of focal species relevant to each Air Force installation have been compiled, along with focal areas around each installation. These focal areas will be the basis for more detailed analyses of conservation priorities pertinent to each base, including opportunities for buffering to reduce encroachment risks and mitigation of on-base natural resource constraints. In November the team will provide an additional update at the PFLCC steering committee meeting. Following additional input from the Air Force installations, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and other members of the team, the *Strategic Plan* will be distributed to the PFLCC partners in Spring 2016.