

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT  
AMONG**

**The United States Department of Defense  
Eglin Air Armament Center  
The United States Forest Service  
The United States Fish and Wildlife Service  
The Florida Department of Environmental Protection  
The Florida Department of Community Affairs  
The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services  
The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission  
The Northwest Florida Water Management District  
The Nature Conservancy, Florida Chapter  
Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners**

**To Conserve the Northwest Florida Greenway  
From Apalachicola National Forest to Eglin Air Force Base**

This Memorandum of Agreement (hereinafter referred to as the "Agreement") is made by and between: the United States Department of Defense, Eglin Air Armament Center, on behalf of the Joint Gulf Range Complex Flag Officer Steering Committee; the United States Forest Service; the United States Fish and Wildlife Service; the Florida Department of Environmental Protection; the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission; the Florida Department of Community Affairs; the Northwest Florida Water Management District; The Nature Conservancy, Florida Chapter, Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners (hereafter sometimes referred to collectively as the "Parties.")

**BACKGROUND**

Northwest Florida has been identified by The Nature Conservancy as a national "hot spot" due to the region's remarkable assemblage of plants and animals and the threats posed by incompatible development and habitat fragmentation. This area is also host to five Air Force and Navy installations and is critically important to maintenance of our nation's military readiness. Together with the Joint Gulf Range Complex, these installations represent the largest military test and training complex supporting the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps in the United States. Both the natural resources and the military presence contribute substantially to the economy of the region and the State of Florida.

Incompatible development and the loss of open natural lands in northwest Florida could hinder the military's testing and training capabilities and threaten the region's rich natural environment. Development encroachment could restrict the military's use of low-

level flyways. Habitat fragmentation and loss could threaten the region's rich environment and jeopardize the long-term survival of the several threatened and endangered plant and wildlife species in the region.

Protection of the Northwest Florida Greenway (Appendix A map) presents the Parties with an opportunity to act now to forestall incompatible development through acquisition of conservation easements and other appropriate real property interests in the corridor stretching from the Apalachicola National Forest to Eglin Air Force Base. Acquisition and management of land in the Greenway would prevent development encroachment on military operations, protect the region's important biodiversity and water resources, link protected areas, provide recreational opportunities for a growing population and help support the economic health of the region.

## **STATEMENT OF MUTUAL BENEFIT AND INTEREST**

The Parties represent a variety of interests and have missions and goals that overlap substantially.

The U.S. Department of Defense desires to: (a) limit incompatible land use in the vicinity of military installations that would be incompatible with the military mission of the installations, military operating areas and military training routes; and (b) preserve habitat in the vicinity of an installation so as to eliminate or relieve current or future environmental restrictions on military testing, training, or operations. Members of the Joint Gulf Range Complex (JGRC), represented by Eglin Air Armament Center, desire to sustain military access to critical air, land, and water test and training resources across Northwest Florida and to restrain incompatible land use that could affect the ability of the military organizations to successfully conduct their respective JGRC missions.

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service desires to work with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service desires to fulfill this mission by working in cooperation with agencies, individuals, non-profit organizations and other entities.

The U.S. Forest Service desires to support acquisition and management initiatives to deal more effectively with fire and fuels build up, invasive species, loss and fragmentation of open spaces, and unmanaged recreation as they relate to the adjoining Apalachicola National Forest and the Florida National Scenic Trail corridor.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection desires to sustain biodiversity, protect water resources, link protected natural areas, and provide outdoor recreation opportunities to a growing population of residents and tourists.

The Florida Department of Community Affairs desires to improve the quality of life for the citizens of Florida and provide opportunities for families to participate in

recreational activities through the acquisition of community-based projects, urban open space, and parks and greenways.

The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry, desires to protect and manage Florida's forest resources through a stewardship ethic assuring these natural resources will be restored, conserved and maintained so as to provide sustainable forest management, sound resource protection, and maximum responsible public access for recreational opportunities now and for future generations.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission desires to conserve resources important for the protection of fish and wildlife, link conservation areas, and provide resource-based public outdoor recreation.

The Northwest Florida Water Management District desires to conserve and protect water resources, including aquifer recharge area, wetlands, springs, lakes and streams, while providing public access, general public recreation and restoration and protection of habitats in their natural state and condition.

The Nature Conservancy desires to preserve the plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the diversity of life in northwest Florida by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. The Nature Conservancy will work with partners to preserve and manage high priority conservation areas and functioning natural systems across the ecoregion.

The Board of County Commissioners of Okaloosa County desires to retain and improve the quality of life for its citizens, not only by protecting our natural resources and providing recreational activities, but also by supporting and fueling the economic engine that Eglin Air Force Base and its mission provide.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Memorandum of Agreement is to support the acquisition of appropriate real property interests and the consequent protection and management of a land and air space corridor in the Northwest Florida Greenway.

The Northwest Florida Greenway is a conceptual plan to help the Parties identify and prioritize land acquisition and conservation opportunities that will protect the land and air space corridor. It is not intended to affect any governmental planning or regulatory decisions. The Parties will work with local governments and other interested citizens in refining the boundaries of the corridor.

Real property interests will be acquired only from willing sellers. Landowners are not required to participate in this effort and may have their property removed from consideration. Private landowners will also be encouraged to participate through a

variety of federal incentive programs that include long-term commitments to conservation management.

## **GOALS**

The goals for the Northwest Florida Greenway are to:

(1) Promote the sustainability of the military mission in northwest Florida to meet national defense testing and training requirements required to implement the Joint Gulf Range Complex Strategic Plan developed by the Air Force, Navy, Marines and Army.

(2) Protect, restore and manage lands that will sustain the high biodiversity of the region, link protected natural areas, preserve water resources and provide compatible resource-based recreation.

(3) Strengthen the regional economy by sustaining the mission capabilities of the military installations for the sake of national security and enhancing tourism and outdoor recreation in the region.

To achieve these goals within the Northwest Florida Greenway, the Parties will, subject to each Party's legal authorities, regulations, policies, programmatic priorities and availability of funding:

- Enhance communication and coordination among participants and other interested parties to identify opportunities for collaborative action to further acquisition of appropriate real property interests.
- Encourage federal, state, regional, local and private funding to acquire, protect, restore and manage lands.
- Encourage public/private partnerships among governmental agencies, community and non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, corporations, and private landowners to leverage resources and achieve land conservation results on a large landscape scale.
- Promote the education of interested private individual and corporate landowners on conservation land management.
- Collect ecological field data to develop Geographic Information System (GIS) analyses to identify the most ecologically important areas in need of protection that may also serve to protect military test and training missions.
- Promote the establishment of landscape corridors and buffers between and adjacent to public and private conservation lands.

- Promote establishment of a corridor for the Florida National Scenic Trail extending from the Apalachicola National Forest to Eglin Air Force Base.
- Work to increase recovery potential for federal and state threatened and endangered species and reduce the need to list additional species.
- Work to achieve landscape-level conservation of fish, wildlife, plants, migratory birds and their habitats through partnerships with interested organizations and individuals.
- Seek to sustain a healthy environment for the public and conserve their ability to enjoy the outdoors and its natural resources for future generations.
- Promote the sustainability of the military mission in the region through acquisition of buffer areas.
- Manage acquired lands in a manner that will protect the natural resources for which they were acquired and that will be consistent with the missions of the Parties.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

To the extent allowed by their authorities, regulations, policies, programmatic priorities and funding, the Parties will undertake actions as outlined below to protect the Northwest Florida Greenway.

The U.S. Department of Defense recognizes the importance of the stated purpose of the Northwest Florida Greenway and shall endeavor to support the acquisition of restrictive land use easements or other appropriate real estate interests within the Greenway.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), shall (i) endeavor to contribute funding to support the recovery of imperiled species within the Northwest Florida Greenway, and (ii) will work with private landowners, non-profit organizations, local government officials, and state agency representatives to develop conservation agreements, prepare grant applications and provide technical support for various federal and state grant programs used to conserve, enhance, and restore native fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats.

The National Forests in Florida will continue efforts to create a corridor extending from the Apalachicola National Forest to Eglin Air Force Base whereby the Florida National Scenic Trail may be constructed and utilized by the public.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) will provide leadership to advance the cause of protecting the Northwest Florida Greenway. The

DEP will provide funding and staff expertise for the acquisition of fee-simple or less-than-fee conservation easement interest in lands within the Northwest Florida Greenway through partnerships with federal, state, regional and local agencies, non-profit organizations and other parties.

The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry (DOACS/DOF) may provide available funding for acquisition or lease projects within the Greenway that are consistent with DOACS/DOF acquisition goals and objectives. The DOF stands ready to take a lead management role on those lands acquired within the Greenway identified as suitable state forest lands.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC) will aid in providing the expertise to review and analyze project areas proposed for public protection within the Northwest Florida Greenway. The FWCC will also consider providing funding for projects within the Greenway that are consistent with FWCC's acquisition goals and objectives.

The Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA), through the Florida Communities Trust Program, will provide grant funding to eligible local governments for acquisition of community-based projects, urban open space, and parks and greenways. The DCA will inform local governments of its Florida Communities Trust Program and will provide technical assistance on the development and submittal of applications to the program.

The Northwest Florida Water Management District (District) will acquire and manage its lands within the Northwest Florida Greenway that meet its water resource protection mission. The District, individually as well as through cooperative partnerships with federal and state agencies, local governments and non-profit organizations, will acquire fee and less-than-fee interests in lands.

The Nature Conservancy (Conservancy), in keeping with its commitment to science-based, tangible conservation results, will identify the key native species and habitats needing long-term protection within the Northwest Florida Greenway. The Conservancy will work to enhance the viability of this biologically rich region by implementing one or more of the following strategies: leveraging public and private funds for fee simple and less-than-fee land acquisition strategies, compatible economic development efforts, conservation management plans, military base buffering and community-based conservation strategies, or other strategies as appropriate.

The Board of County Commissioners of Okaloosa County will provide leadership in securing resources for establishment of the Northwest Florida Greenway. Okaloosa will assist with the establishment and leverage of partnerships for establishing and protecting the Greenway with federal, state, regional and local agencies, non-profit organizations and other parties.

The Parties will meet at least annually to provide a status report of actions taken to further the goals of this agreement and to set priorities for the coming year. The DEP will take responsibility for making meeting arrangements.

## **AMENDMENTS AND REVIEW**

This Agreement shall be reviewed annually and can be amended by mutual written consent, signed and dated, by all of the Parties.

New Parties to this Agreement may be added by written agreement of the current participants.

This Agreement shall remain in effect until the Northwest Florida Greenway project is completed unless otherwise amended.

Any party may terminate its participation in this Agreement by giving the other Parties written notice 30 days prior to the termination.

## **OTHER PROVISIONS**

Any Party's implementation of provisions of this Agreement is contingent upon consistency with that Party's authorities and is subject to the availability of funds and any required approval by that Party's governing body.

The Parties agree that this Agreement is neither a fiscal nor a funds obligation document. To the extent permitted by each Party's authorities, regulations, policies, programmatic priorities and funding, the Parties each shall provide personnel support for the Northwest Florida Greenway from within their own agencies or organizations, and shall fund their own participation in Northwest Florida Greenway acquisitions. Nothing in this Agreement shall be interpreted to require any obligation or payment of funds in violation of the Anti-Deficiency Act (31 U.S.C. 1341 and 1517) or any other applicable statute or regulation.

Nothing in this Agreement shall obligate the parties to obligate or transfer any funds. Specific work projects or activities that involve the transfer of funds, services, or property among various agencies and offices of the Parties will require separate execution of separate agreements and be contingent upon the availability of appropriated funds. Such activities must be independently authorized by appropriate statutory authority. This Agreement does not provide such authority. Negotiation, execution, and administration of each such agreement must comply with all applicable statutes and regulations.

The Department of Defense enters into this Agreement, and may be authorized to contribute funding support for specific real property acquisitions, in accordance with one

or more of the following authorities: 10 U.S.C. 2684a; 10 U.S.C. 2694; 10 U.S.C. 2672; 10 U.S.C. 2672a; and 16 U.S.C. 670c-1.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service enters into this Agreement pursuant to its authorities under 16 U.S.C 661 et seq. and 16 U.S.C. 742f.

Any information furnished to the federal parties under this instrument is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (5U.S.C.)

This Agreement in no way restricts the Parties from participating in similar activities with other public or private agencies, organizations and individuals.

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**Charles H. Bronson**  
**Commissioner**  
**Florida Department of**  
**Agriculture and Consumer**  
**Services**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Colleen M. Castille**  
**Secretary**  
**Florida Department of**  
**Environmental Protection**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Thaddeus L. Cohen, AIA**  
**Secretary**  
**Florida Department of**  
**Community Affairs**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Kenneth D. Haddad**  
**Executive Director**  
**Florida Fish and Wildlife**  
**Conservation Commission**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Douglas E. Barr**  
**Executive Director**  
**Northwest Florida Water**  
**Management District**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Sam D. Hamilton**  
**Regional Director**  
**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**  
**Southeast Region**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Victoria J. Tschinkel**  
**State Director**  
**The Nature Conservancy**  
**Florida Chapter**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Elaine Tucker**  
**Chair**  
**Okaloosa County Board of**  
**County Commissioners**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Marsha Kearney**  
**Forest Supervisor**  
**National Forests in Florida**  
**United States Forest Service**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Robert W. Chedister, MGen**  
**USAF Commander**  
**Air Armament Center**  
**On Behalf of the Joint Gulf Range**  
**Complex Flag Officer Steering Committee**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_