

NORTHWEST FLORIDA GREENWAY

MEMORANDUM OF PARTNERSHIP

Among
Department of Defense,
State of Florida, and
the Florida Chapter of The Nature Conservancy
To
Conserve Environmentally Significant Lands and
Limit Incompatible Development in Northwest Florida

WHEREAS, Section 2684a of Title 10, United States Code, (Pub. L. 107-314, 116 STAT. 2705) authorizes the Secretary of Defense or the Secretary of a military department to enter into agreements with eligible entities (a State, political subdivisions of a State, or private entity whose principal mission is the conservation, restoration or preservation of land and natural resources) for the purpose of preserving habitat to relieve, prevent or eliminate restrictions elsewhere that inhibit military testing, operations or training or for the purpose of limiting incompatible development in the vicinity of military installations; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Forever Program, Florida Laws Chapter 99-247, authorizes the State of Florida to acquire environmentally significant lands through acquisitions financed by bonds issued under the Florida Forever Act, Section 259.105, Florida Statutes, and administered by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, under the Florida Forever Trust Fund, Section 259.105(1), Florida Statutes; and

WHEREAS, The Nature Conservancy, a private, non-profit, charitable corporation, has as its stated mission to preserve plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive; and

WHEREAS, Northwest Florida is one of six biological centers of diversity, or “hot spots” in the Nation due to the region’s extensive biodiversity and the risk incompatible development poses to it; and

WHEREAS, Northwest Florida is host to five Air Force and Navy installations; is critically important to maintenance of our nation’s military readiness; and, together with the Joint Gulf Range Complex, represents the largest military test and training complex supporting the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps in the United States; and

WHEREAS, unconstrained incompatible development could restrict the use of low-level flyways and hinder realistic military testing and training; and

WHEREAS, habitat fragmentation and loss could threaten the region's rich natural environment and jeopardize the long-term survival of many threatened and endangered plant and wildlife species; and

WHEREAS, failure to conserve landscape-scale open space could lead to the listing of additional species as threatened or endangered, and to the designation of critical habitat for such species, thus placing additional burden on federal land managers; and

WHEREAS, preservation of a corridor of land and airspace from the Apalachicola National Forest to Eglin Air Force Base would serve to:

- Promote the sustainability of the military mission in northwest Florida to meet national defense testing, operational and training requirements; and
- Protect lands that will sustain the high biodiversity of the region, link protected natural areas, preserve water resources and provide recreation; and
- Strengthen the regional economy by sustaining the mission capabilities of the military in the region and enhancing recreation and tourism;

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the above, the Parties hereby pledge to work together to develop and implement such measures as may be necessary to protect a land and airspace corridor extending from Apalachicola National Forest to Eglin Air Force Base, referred to herein as the Northwest Florida Greenway, from incompatible development that could threaten the region's rich biodiversity or limit the military's ability to ensure the preparedness of the Nation's armed forces. To this end, the Parties hereto agree to develop and execute, within 180 days, a Memorandum of Agreement that shall outline the roles and responsibilities of these and other interested parties to support a Northwest Florida Greenway the purposes and goals of which shall be consistent with the above-stated objectives, as shall be specified further in the Memorandum of Agreement.

JEB BUSH
GOVERNOR

CHARLIE CRIST
ATTORNEY GENERAL

TOM GALLAGHER
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

CHARLES H. BRONSON
COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE

RAYMOND F. DUBOIS
DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY
OF DEFENSE FOR
INSTALLATIONS AND
ENVIRONMENT

VICTORIA J. TSCHINKEL
FLORIDA STATE DIRECTOR
THE NATURE CONSERVANCY