



Creating Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMAs) to Effectively Reduce Re-infestation on Four (4) Military Bases and Surrounding Lands in Florida (Phase I)

Project # 09-437

Background:

Eglin Air Force Base (AFB) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) have cooperated in Florida for over a decade on successful cross-boundary partnerships with support from the Department of Defense (DoD) Legacy Resource Management Program, as well as many supporting military installations, public agencies, and private landowners. These partnerships, such as the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP) have proven to be instrumental in recovery and protection efforts assisting with prevention of future listing on DoD and other partner lands. In addition, countless restoration projects and land protection efforts have resulted directly from GCPEP. TNC also has a history of working with our military partners in several other Florida landscapes including Camp Blanding Joint Training Center, Avon Park Air Force Range (AFR) and Key West Naval Air Station (NAS).

Invasive non-native species have been identified by all of these DoD installations in their Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans as both ecological and economic threats to the natural communities and native species that they manage. Statewide, invasive species are a recognized threat and TNC has worked with several agencies and organizations to form the Florida Invasive Species Partnership (FISP). FISP assists with addressing this threat by collaborating with all stakeholders and by fostering the development of Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMA) in Florida.

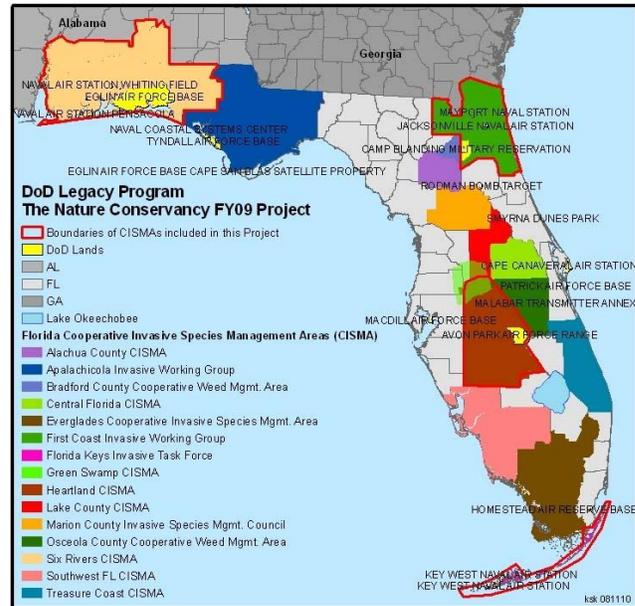
Objective:

The overall objective of this effort was to strengthen, sustain and create four CISMAs to address the critical threat from invasive species on four Florida military bases and surrounding lands. Strong CISMAs would have plans to prioritize their efforts, would include many agencies and organization and would use on-the-ground control projects to demonstrate effectiveness in approach. They would also be networked into other CISMAs in the Florida.

Summary of Approach:

A CISMA encourages development of local partnerships among federal, state, and local governmental agencies, tribes, individuals, and other

interested groups to manage invasive species in a defined area addressing both public and private lands. The value of the CISMA approach is the expansion of invasive species management from large public and private landowners to more comprehensive landscape level projects.



The CISMA process, which has been repeated across the United States and in other countries, results in efforts that work across boundaries, pools limited resources and similar priorities to manage and eradicate invasive species, and creates a unity of voice that will propel this issue of invasive species to the forefront of the public's awareness.

Benefit:

The benefits of this project are in reducing invasive species re-infestations on and adjacent to four military bases in Florida to prevent wasting costly efforts and resources, as well as protect high quality natural areas and imperiled species. This project has also allowed local bases to support a landscape level approach, which has proven to be an efficient and effective way to combat the threat of invasive species to all lands and waters, including military installations and missions.

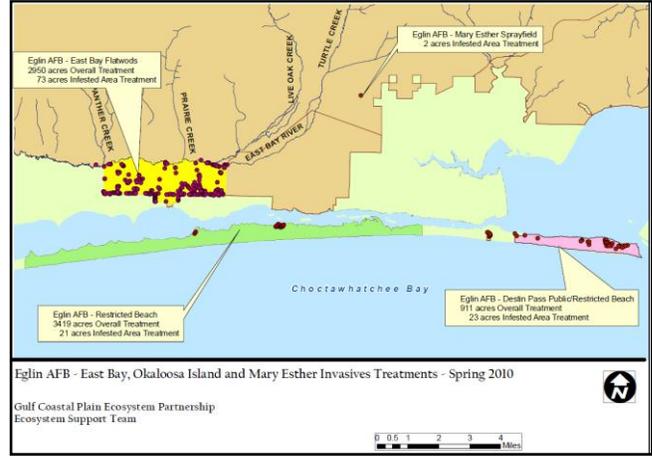


Accomplishments:

This project created two new CISMAs, with representative steering committees, supporting both Eglin AFB and Avon Park Air Force Range (AFR). It also strengthened two existing CISMAs supporting Key West NAS and Camp Blanding. The four CISMAs are, respectively, 6 Rivers CISMA, Heartland CISMA, Keys Invasive Species Task Force and First Coast Invasive Species Working Group.

All four CISMAs completed five-year strategic plans, utilizing a strategic plan template that was developed for this project. The template allowed for the leaders of the CISMA to customize a plan that fits their needs and ensured they were successful in individually meeting their own local priorities as they relate to invasive species.

All four CISMAs participated in a statewide workshop held by FISP at the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council (FLEPPC) Symposium. Successes, challenges and new ideas were shared from the 12 CISMAs who participated. This meeting, along with the monthly CISMA calls, has strengthened the 4 CISMAs in this project by allowing them to network across the State.



6 Rivers CISMA - invasive plant project sites.

The Keys Invasive Species Task Force (ISTF), through a coordinated partner workday, completed an on-the-ground invasive species control project to help buffer Key West NAS. Nearly one mile of shoreline at Boca Chica Beach, directly adjacent to Key West NAS conservation lands, was cleared of latherleaf (*Colubrina asiatica*) and beach naupaka (*Scaevola taccada*). Both plants easily outcompete native beach plants and distribute their floating seeds on nearby beaches.



Florida CISMA workshop participants - April 2010.

The 6 Rivers CISMA, through the GCPEP ecosystem support team, completed an on-the-ground invasive species control project to help buffer Eglin AFB. Nearly 120 acres of invasive plants were treated on the East Bay Flatwoods, Okaloosa Island, Mary Esther field, and the Brier Creek project areas. The main species was Chinese tallow (*Sapium sebiferum*), with occasional occurrences of Japanese climbing fern (*Lygodium japonicum*), Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), lantana (*Lantana camara*), and mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin*).



Keys ISTF partners cutting and herbiciding Scaevola taccada on Boca Chica Beach.

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