


# Naval Air Station Whiting Field program secures easements

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MILTON — The Community Planning Liaison Office at Naval Air Station Whiting Field recently partnered with the U.S. Navy, state of Florida, and Santa Rosa County offices to secure restrictive easements over approximately 4,000 acres from Evergreen Timberco Florida LLC and Kingfisher Timber LLC.

These 4,000 acres are located adjacent to NASWF and the new Navy Outlying Landing Field (NOLF) Site X that support the base's aviation training mission.

This longstanding and nationally recognized coordination effort in encroachment partnering resulted in the execution of more than \$3.5 million in Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration funding; \$790,000 in Santa Rosa County match funding acquired from the Florida Defense Infrastructure Grant program; and more than \$3 million in state-acquired forest legacy funds.

At its heart, buffering is the acquisition of acreage adjacent to or near the base to avoid incompatible development underneath critical flight tracks, noise corridors, and accident zones. These efforts also safeguard an operational footprint and mission at the Navy's busiest aviation training complex well into the future.

The acquisition completes a majority of the operational buffer around NOLF Site X, which complements Navy-County's earlier efforts in securing a 600-acre restrictive easement acquisition in May 2020, located immediately west of NOLF Site X.

To this end, more than 10,000 acres adjacent to NAS Whiting Field and countywide NOLFs have been protected.

Not only is NAS Whiting Field an important resource for the Navy, but its presence impacts the civilian community. The Enterprise Florida Fact Book estimates that the base and service personnel constitute a \$1.43 billion asset for Santa Rosa County, Milton and the surrounding area.

The hard work between the Navy's community planning liaison and the community leaders for buffering provides solid dividends for both.

“This base buffering effort, coupled with established land development codes (lighting, noise, military airport zones, military airport influence areas, and AICUZ recommendations), will aid in alleviating noise concerns, mitigating mission constraints, enhancing readiness, and protecting our mission footprint over land and airspace,” said Randy Roy, Navy Operational Liaison Officer.

Additionally, restrictive easements provide a cornerstone for conservation elements that serve the community and the Navy’s mission. Acreage acquired protects forests, creeks, and trails and enables continued public use. Easements also protect the habitats of animals and birds native to the area, with the added benefit of keeping them from moving into the area around the airfield.

NAS Whiting Field and Santa Rosa County have a truly unique relationship, and the Department of Defense uses their partnership as the model for base relations and planning with communities.

All of the acquisitions and easements come from willing sellers and are purchased at market value. The buffering land also reduces noise from overhead aircraft and keeps residential development away from high traffic flight areas.

All of this helps to make NAS Whiting Field a good neighbor for Santa Rosa County and Milton and is an important part of state-wide military buffering initiatives.

“Our goal is to secure real estate that will have an immediate, as well as long term, impact on preventing incompatible development from impeding NAS Whiting Field’s mission,” Roy said.

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