



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
HEADQUARTERS 96TH AIR BASE WING (AFMC)  
EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE FLORIDA

Mr. Stephen M. Seiber  
Chief, Natural Resources Section  
96 CEG/CEVSN  
501 De Leon Street, Suite 101  
Eglin AFB FL 32542-5133

MAR 15 2010

Mr. Donald W. Imm, Ph.D  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1601 Balboa Avenue  
Panama City FL 32405

Dear Mr. Imm:

Eglin Air Force Base (AFB) Natural Resources Section (NRS) is reinitiating Section 7 consultation under the Endangered Species Act for the Military Housing Privatization Initiative (MHPI) due to a change in the Proposed Action at Eglin AFB and Hurlburt Field, Florida (FWS Log No. 2008-I-0221). Eglin NRS still maintains a No Effect determination based on the following: 1) no federally-listed threatened or endangered species are present, and 2) no known essential habitat is present.

Eglin is currently preparing a Preliminary Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the MHPI at Eglin AFB and Hurlburt Field. The Proposed Action is for the Air Force, through privatization, to initially convey 1,413 housing units (including infrastructure and utilities) located on Eglin and Hurlburt (854 at Eglin Main Base, 4 at Camp Pinchot, 150 at Poquito Bayou, 25 at Camp Rudder, and 380 at Hurlburt Field) to a private real estate development and property management company (Figure 1 and Table 1). Of the 1,413 units, the Air Force proposes that the contractor would demolish a minimum of 1,404 existing dwellings through a phased approach (25 at Camp Rudder; 849 at Eglin Main Base; 150 at Poquito Bayou; and 380 at Hurlburt Field).

Using the same phased approach, the Air Force proposes that the private developer would construct 1,477 new units (35 units at Camp Rudder, 484 units at Hurlburt Field, 958 units at Eglin AFB on Parcel 1), which would be owned and operated by the private developer on behalf of Eglin and Hurlburt Field (Figure 1 and Table 1). While for Parcel 1 a total of 673 acres may actually be leased, only approximately 603 acres are available for development at this parcel. Once suitable replacement housing has been developed, 9 historic units (4 at Camp Pinchot and 5 at Georgia Avenue) and associated facilities within the Historic Districts would be returned to the Air Force for adaptive reuse. The Recreation Center Family Camp (FAMCAMP) would be relocated to the eastern portion of Hurlburt Field (Figure 2).

The majority of the parcels proposed for demolition and construction at Eglin AFB and Hurlburt Field are already urban or landscaped. The undeveloped portion of the Main Base Parcel is mostly poor quality, fire-suppressed longleaf pine sandhills. The Camp Rudder parcel

is already developed, although it is surrounded by high quality sandhills habitat. At Hurlburt Field, the undeveloped portions of the Pine Shadows and FAMCAMP parcels are flatwoods and hammock habitats, and the relocation sites for the FAMCAMP are flatwoods.

Confirmed flatwoods salamander habitat exists west of the Pine Shadows and Live Oak Terrace parcels at Hurlburt Field (Figure 2). Gulf sturgeon critical habitat is present off-shore of Soundside Manor, the Capehart and Wherry parcels slated for demolition, and Eglin Main Base Parcel 1 (Figures 2 and 3). The Eastern indigo snake has been sighted near the Camp Rudder parcel and red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) foraging habitat is located approximately 0.25 miles to the east of the Camp Rudder parcel (Figure 3). Two inactive RCW cavity trees exist along the western boundary of the Eglin Main Base Parcel 1, and recent surveys documented one inactive gopher tortoise burrow on this parcel (Figure 3). Black bears have been sighted at or near each of the proposed sites. No sensitive animal species were documented within the boundaries of the proposed areas during surveys conducted during October and November, 2009 (Entrix, 2010).

### **Eastern Indigo Snake and Gopher Tortoise**

The gopher tortoise and indigo snake may be found anywhere on Eglin. While these species prefer frequently burned pine forests, they may traverse lower quality habitats, and may also use open areas such as road right-of-ways and sandy spots within developed areas. Land clearing, demolition, and construction activities must abide by certain restrictions per the *Indigo Snake Programmatic Biological Opinion for Eglin AFB* (USFWS, 2009). One month prior to any demolition, land clearing or construction, a gopher tortoise/indigo snake survey must be completed. If any tortoises or indigo snakes are found in the path of construction/demolition, Eglin NRS personnel will relocate the animals in accordance with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) guidelines.

Before any clearing or construction activities begin, personnel must view a brief on Eglin threatened and endangered species, including the indigo snake. Informational brochures containing the following information must be distributed to contractors, and signs with this same information must be posted at land clearing, demolition, and construction sites:

- A description of the indigo snake, its habits, and protection under Federal Law;
- Instructions not to injure, harm, harass, or kill this species;
- Directions to stop clearing activities and allow the indigo snake sufficient time to move away from the site on its own before resuming clearing;
- Telephone number to call if a live or dead eastern indigo snake is encountered.

Although unlikely, there is the possibility that one of these species may traverse a demolition or construction area; thus, vehicle and equipment operators will be directed to cease any activities should an indigo snake or gopher tortoise be sighted, and allow the animal sufficient time to move away from the site on its own before resuming activities. Personnel must immediately report any sightings of an indigo snake or gopher tortoise to the Eglin NRS. If a gopher tortoise burrow is discovered during demolition, land clearing, or construction, all

activities will be avoided within 25 feet of the burrow until Natural Resources staff have had a chance to examine the burrow and relocate the animal and any commensal species, if necessary.

Given the poor habitat quality of most of the proposed Military Family Housing (MFH) sites, and implementation of requirements from the *Indigo Snake Programmatic Biological Opinion*, impacts to the gopher tortoise and indigo snake will not be significant, and there will be no effect on the indigo snake.

### **Red-cockaded Woodpecker**

Two inactive RCW cavity trees are located along the northwestern boundary of Eglin Main Base Parcel 1. No good foraging habitat is available near the trees, with most of the surrounding habitat consisting of sand pine. Additionally, the closest active clusters are over five miles away, and RCWs do not fly this great a distance, particularly with no foraging habitat available. These areas are not significant or of importance in future RCW management or as an emphasis area as designated by the *Eglin Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan* (U.S. Air Force, 2006). Furthermore, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) concurred with the Eglin NRS that any future developments impacting inactive RCW trees on Eglin Main Base were not likely to adversely affect the RCW (USFWS, 1997). Thus, there will be no effect on the RCW at Parcel 1.

The Camp Rudder parcel is bordered on three sides by high quality sandhills habitat, much of which serves as foraging habitat for the federally endangered RCW. The housing area is approximately 0.25 mile from RCW foraging habitat and 0.75 mile from the nearest active RCW cavity tree (Figure 3). No direct impacts to RCW foraging habitat or cavity trees will occur, but noise impacts from demolition, construction, and daily housing activities may occur. Only 25 units will be demolished and 35 built at the Camp Rudder site, so demolition/construction noise impacts will be short-term. If the nearby RCW cluster was disturbed by demolition/construction activities, the birds will likely just utilize other portions of their foraging habitat during that short time period. Over the long-term, daily housing operations will not constitute a significant impact to RCWs in the Camp Rudder area because these birds are already exposed and habituated to visual and noise disturbances from the existing development and roads. There will be no effect on the RCW at the Camp Rudder Parcel.

### **Reticulated Flatwoods Salamander**

Buffer habitat for confirmed reticulated flatwoods salamander ponds is about 0.25 miles to the west of Pine Shadows at Hurlburt Field. Stormwater runoff may increase the amount of sediment, pollutants, and volume of water (thus altering hydrology) entering wetlands. However, the 1,500-foot vegetated buffer around the pond will serve to treat pollutants, uptake excess nutrients, control erosion, slow the flow of water, and decrease the volume of water reaching the wetland. Thus, there will be no effect on the reticulated flatwoods salamander at the Hurlburt parcels.

On the southeast portion of the Eglin Main Base Parcel 1, there is a small area of overgrown flatwoods surrounding a shallow depression that is considered potential habitat for the federally endangered reticulated flatwoods salamander (120 acres) (Figure 3); however, Eglin NRS

biologists stated that this pond has very low potential to support the flatwoods salamander as it is more of a sand pit than a natural pond (Gault, 2010). No land clearing or construction will occur within at least 50 feet of the wetland, leaving a vegetated buffer to help filter pollutants and prevent erosion. Permits will mandate stormwater management and erosion control measures, which will provide additional pollutant treatment. Given the low likelihood of occurrence and the implementation of buffer and stormwater and erosion control requirements, there will be no effect to the reticulated flatwoods salamander at Eglin Main Base Parcel 1.

## **Gulf Sturgeon**

Demolition at Capehart and Wherry on Eglin Main Base, and demolition and construction at Eglin Main Base Parcel 1 and Hurlburt's Soundside Manor will occur in close proximity to bay shoreline, and may result in increased polluted runoff and turbidity in nearby Choctawhatchee Bay where Gulf sturgeon critical habitat is designated. Potential adverse effects to Gulf sturgeon and Gulf sturgeon critical habitat from this polluted runoff could include species avoidance of the impact area, minor physiological effects (such as interference with respiratory functions), and indirect effects related to the reduction of light and degradation of bottom substrates where prey items reside. However, less than one mile of shoreline will be temporarily affected, and will not result in significant or long-term effects to water quality or the quality of bottom sediments.

The developer must implement stormwater management and erosion control measures as mandated by permits. These controls would help to slow the velocity of the water, allow infiltration, allow sediments to settle out, and treat pollutants in the runoff. Additionally, a minimum vegetated buffer width of 50 feet will be maintained along the bay shoreline at the Eglin Main Base Parcel 1, and no new vegetated areas along the shoreline at Soundside Manor will be cleared.

Once construction is complete, establishment of only a limited number of access points to the water will help maintain the vegetated buffer such that it will filter most runoff from the MFH areas. Any access point that begins to become an erosion problem will be temporarily closed and rehabilitated to minimize sedimentation issues in the bay and sound. Recreational activities of MFH residents may disturb bottom sediments and degrade or destroy area of submerged vegetation. Measures that will minimize these impacts include roping off designated swimming areas and providing educational materials (i.e., signs, brochures) to residents on the importance of protecting these habitats.

Required stormwater management and erosion controls, maintenance of a vegetated buffer, and designation of access points and swimming areas will serve to minimize impacts to nearby waters from runoff and sedimentation. Thus, there will be no effect on the Gulf sturgeon or Gulf sturgeon critical habitat.

## **Sea Turtles**

Several species of sea turtles utilize Santa Rosa Island (SRI) for nesting. Urban glow associated with street and house lighting can disorient nesting turtles and hatchlings. The use of "turtle friendly" lighting for new street or dock lights at the Soundside Manor location will

minimize the effect of urban glow to sea turtles and hatchlings on SRI. There will be no effect on sea turtles.

## **Migratory Birds**

Noise and human presence associated with demolition, construction, and daily activities may affect migratory birds using nearby habitats. However, neither Hurlburt Field nor Eglin AFB is considered an important stopover area or concentration site for neotropical migratory birds. Migratory birds that do use the area may avoid habitats along the border with the development, but will still have many acres of suitable habitat in the nearby area. Thus, although MFH noise may affect migratory birds, Hurlburt Field and Eglin AFB will still maintain a sizeable area of habitat to support migratory birds during spring and fall migrations; thus, impacts to migratory bird populations will not be significant.

## **Management Requirements**

The developer (through lease agreement) will implement all permitting requirements and management actions developed through coordination with regulatory agencies, such as utilization of stormwater management techniques. Additionally, the following management actions will occur to minimize impacts to biological resources.

- Maintain at least a 50-foot vegetated buffer around all wetlands and water bodies on Eglin Main Base, with a suggested minimum of 100 feet.
- Do not clear any new areas along the sound shoreline or around wetlands at the Hurlburt Field parcels.
- Avoid construction in jurisdictional wetlands.
- Control suspended sediments and increases in turbidity through management practices such as sediment curtains.
- Implement the highest standards possible for stormwater management.
- Limit the number of access points to the water to maintain the vegetated buffer.
- Temporarily close and rehabilitate any access point that begins to become an erosion problem.
- Designate swimming areas to minimize disturbance to shoreline vegetation.
- Provide educational materials (i.e., signs, brochures) to residents on the importance of protecting water quality and shoreline vegetation.
- One month prior to land clearing, demolition, or construction activities, conduct a gopher tortoise/indigo snake survey, and relocate any animals in accordance with FWC guidelines.
- Provide project personnel with a description of the eastern indigo snake, its habitat, and protection under federal law. Instruct personnel not to injure, harm, or kill this species.

- Direct project personnel and residents to cease any activities if an eastern indigo snake or gopher tortoise is sighted, and to allow the animal sufficient time to move away from the site on its own before resuming such activities.
- Direct project personnel and residents to report any sightings of indigo snakes or gopher tortoises to the Eglin NRS.
- Direct personnel to contact Eglin NRS staff if a gopher tortoise burrow is discovered during demolition, land clearing, or construction. All activities should be avoided within 25 feet of the burrow until NRS personnel have had a chance to examine the burrow and relocate the animal and any commensal species if necessary.
- Use “turtle friendly” lighting (low-pressure sodium vapor street lighting) at Soundside Manor, Pine Shadows, and FAMCAMP.

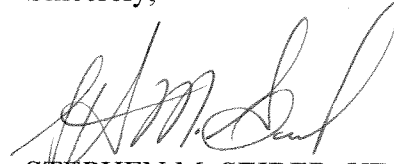
Additional potential mitigations not directly related to federally-listed species that are under consideration include:

- Educate workers and residents on the need to contain their household wastes in a manner so as to not attract bears.
- Educate vehicle/equipment operators and residents on the need to stop the vehicle or equipment if a bear is sighted and to allow the bear to move away from the site before resuming activities.
- Direct personnel and residents to report any sightings of black bears to the Eglin NRS.
- Require off-site equipment to be cleaned for invasive non-native species prior to first-time use on Eglin.
- Coordinate with Eglin NRS to monitor the MFH areas during demolition, construction, and post-construction for early detection and treatment of any invasive non-native species that are discovered.
- Require the developer to remove any invasive non-native species within the MFH areas.

Eglin NRS biologists indicate there is no potential for direct or indirect effects from the proposed action on protected species. Eglin NRS has made a No Effect determination concerning the MHPI at Eglin AFB and Hurlburt Field.

Eglin AFB will notify the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service immediately if it modifies any of the actions considered in this No Effect determination or if additional information on listed species becomes available, as the USFWS may require a reinitiation of consultation. If impacts to listed species occur beyond what Eglin has considered in this assessment, all operations will cease and Eglin will notify the USFWS. Prior to commencement of activities, Eglin will implement any modifications or conditions resulting from consultation with the USFWS. Eglin NRS believes this fulfills all requirements of Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and no further action is necessary. If you have any questions regarding this letter or require a copy of the EIS, please feel free to contact Bob Miller (850-883-1153) or myself (882-8391).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S.M. Seiber', written in a cursive style.

STEPHEN M. SEIBER, YF-02  
Chief, Natural Resources Section

Attachments:  
Table 1  
Figures 1-3

## References

Entrix, 2010. Eglin Air Force Base Military Housing Privatization Initiative Habitat Assessment and Biological Survey. Prepared by Russell Burdige and Andy Barth. January, 2010.

Gault, 2010. Personal communication between Kathy Gault, Eglin Endangered Species Biologist and Stephanie Hiers, SAIC Environmental Scientist, regarding potential flatwoods salamander ponds at Eglin Main Base Parcel 1. February 2010.

U.S. Air Force, 2006. Threatened and Endangered Species Component Plan, Eglin AFB, FL. 96 CEG/CEVSN.

USFWS, 1997. Concurrence signature on Section 7 Consultation letter regarding development on Eglin Main Base and inactive RCW trees. June 10, 1997.

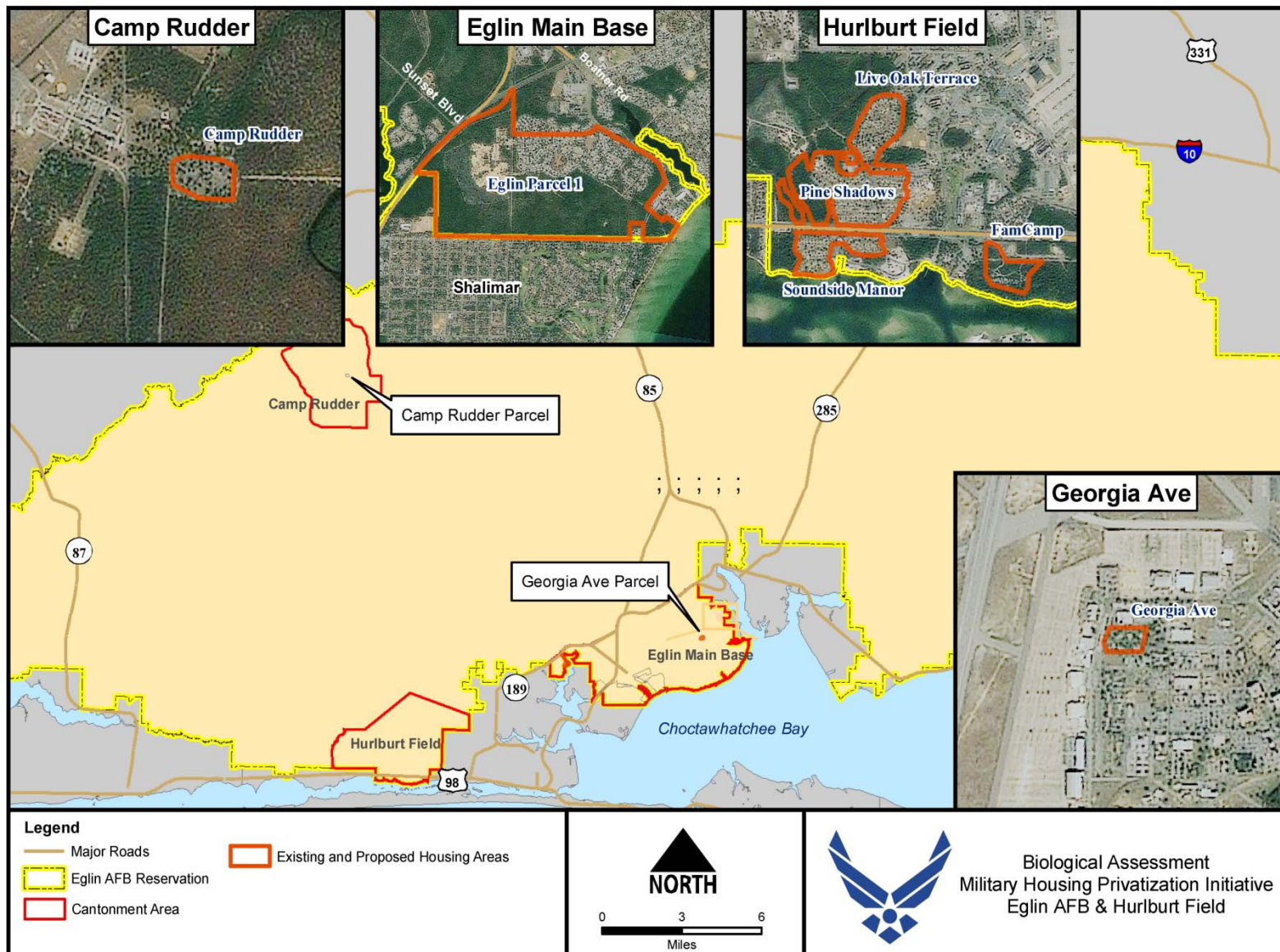
USFWS, 2009. Indigo Snake Programmatic Biological Opinion for Eglin AFB, FL. February 18, 2009.

**Table 1. Proposed MHPI Activities**

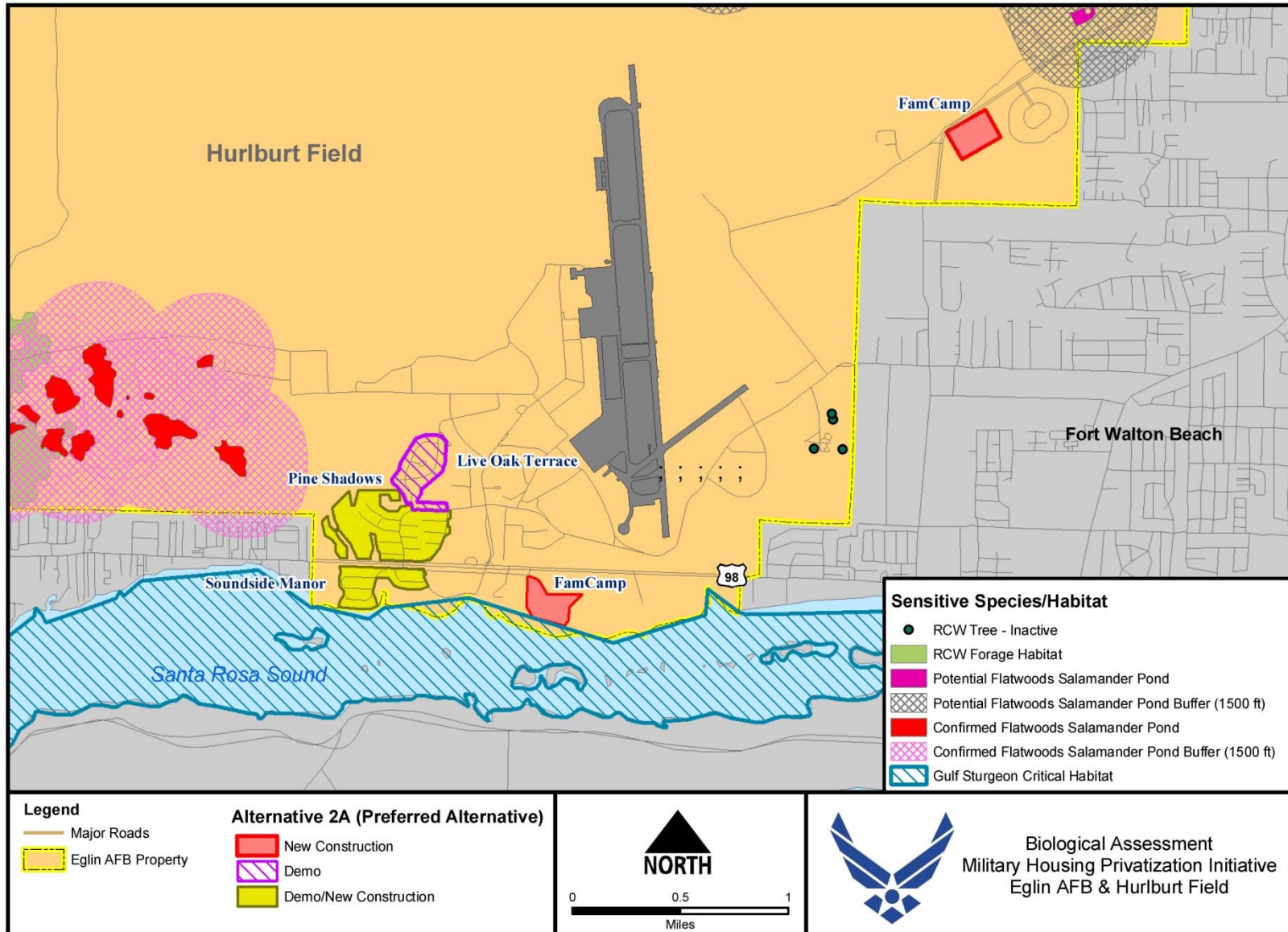
Parcel		Current Number of Units	Year Built	Commonalities			Max # Units Potentially Constructed*
Name	Acres			Action for Current Units	# Units Demolished (minimum)	# Units Renovated	
<b>Eglin AFB</b>							
Wherry Capehart	306	479	1951-58	Demolition	479	0	0
Georgia Avenue	3	5	1943	Adaptive Reuse	0		
Hidden Oaks	651	126	2001	Demolition	126		
Old Plew		58	1966-68	Demolition	58		
New Plew		186	1968	Demolition	186		
Poquito Bayou	91	150	1976	Demolition	150		
Camp Pinchot	15	4	1912-1940	Adaptive Reuse	0		
Camp Rudder	10	25	1975	Demolition	25		
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,076</b>	<b>1,033</b>	<b>N/A</b>		<b>1,024</b>		<b>35</b>
Eglin Main Base Parcel 1		0	N/A				<b>958</b>
<b>Hurlburt Field</b>							
Live Oak Terrace	35	110	1957 & 1976	Demolition	110	0	484
Pine Shadows	85	196	1957		196		
Soundside Manor	31	74	1957 & 1997		74		
FAMCAMP	19	0	N/A	N/A	N/A		
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>N/A</b>		<b>380</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>484</b>
<b>Overall Totals</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>1,413</b>			<b>1,404</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,477</b>
<b>Total End State (current units (1,413) – adaptive reuse (9) – demolition (1,404) + new construction (1,477))</b>							<b>1,477 Units</b>

Source: Eglin AFB and Hurlburt Field Housing Offices, 2009

\*Numbers represent the optimal development scenario at each location based on desired features in the privatization RFQ and are for planning purposes only; actual numbers of units and distribution may vary depending on proposals offered by developers. Existing FAMCAMP would be relocated near Commando Village on Hurlburt Field as part of the Proposed Action.



**Figure 1. Overview of Eglin AFB and Hurlburt Field Military Family Housing Areas**



**Figure 2. Sensitive Species at Hurlburt Field Military Family Housing Areas**

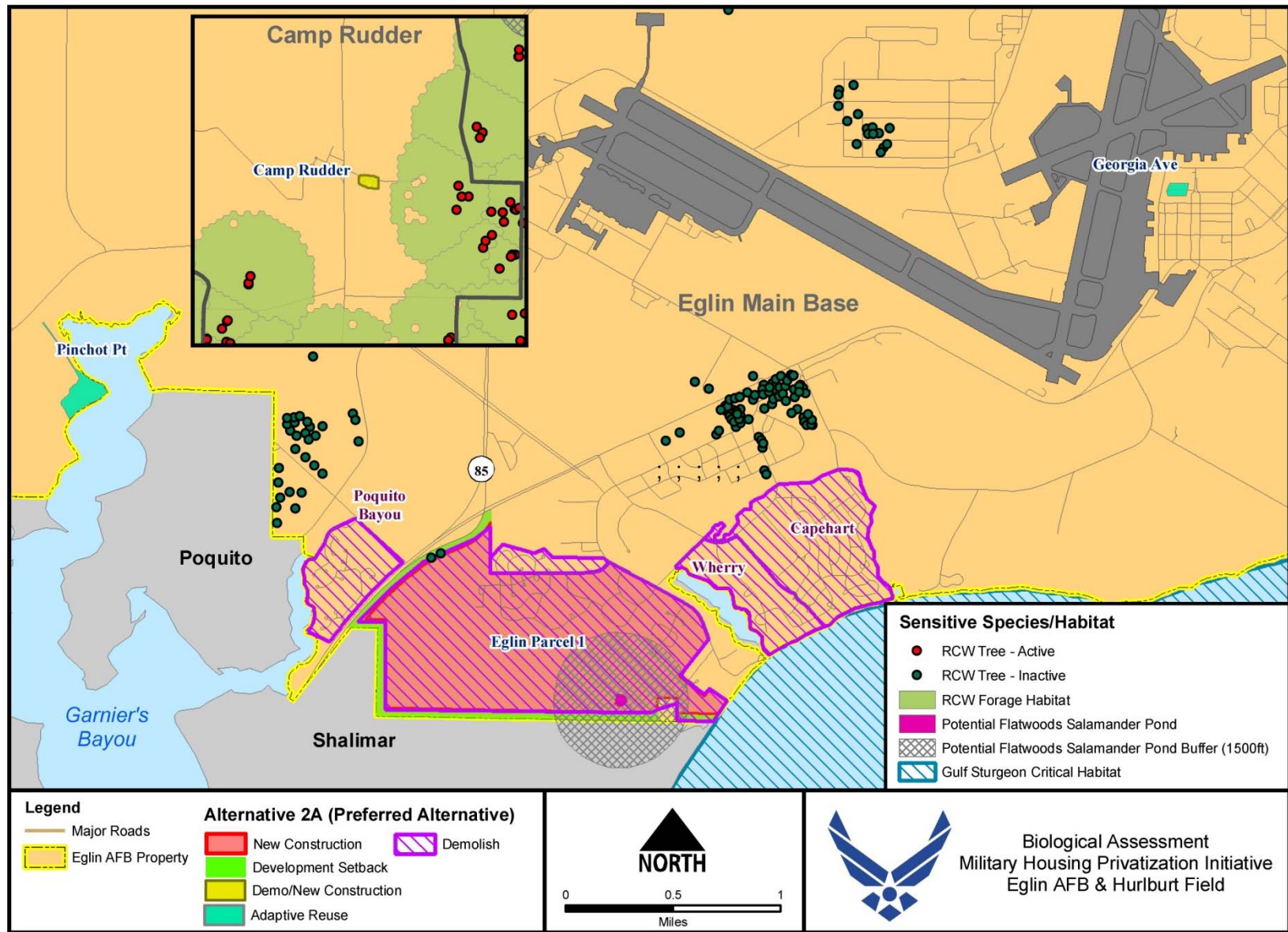


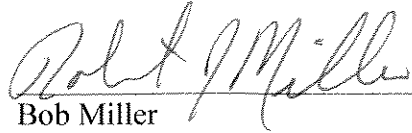
Figure 3. Sensitive Species at Eglin AFB Military Family Housing Areas

**SIGNATURES**

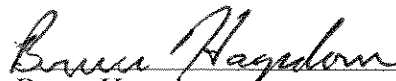
**CONSULTATION REGARDING**

**IMPACTS TO FEDERALLY LISTED SPECIES  
RESULTING FROM MILITARY HOUSING PRIVATIZATION INITIATIVE  
AT EGLIN AFB, FLORIDA AND HURLBURT FIELD, FLORIDA**

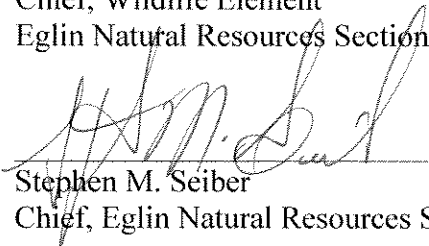
Reviewed by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Bob Miller  
Endangered Species Biologist  
Eglin Natural Resources Section

3/10/10  
Date

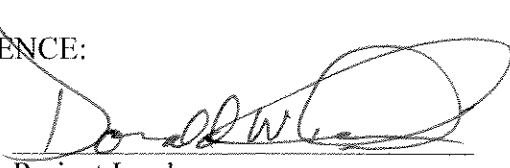
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Bruce Hagedorn  
Chief, Wildlife Element  
Eglin Natural Resources Section

3/10/10  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Stephen M. Seiber  
Chief, Eglin Natural Resources Section

3/11/10  
Date

USFWS CONCURRENCE:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Project Leader  
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Panama City, FL

3/26/10  
Date

FWS Log No. 4410-2010-I-0175

**Addendum per April 14 email from USFWS:** All exterior (outside building lights including houses, recreational facilities and all street lights) within the areas known as Soundside Manor and FamCamp-south shall be wildlife lighting ([http://myfwc.com/CONSERVATION/Conservation\\_LivingWith\\_WildlifeLighting\\_index.htm](http://myfwc.com/CONSERVATION/Conservation_LivingWith_WildlifeLighting_index.htm)). In addition, At Pine Shadows full cut-off low pressure sodium street lighting only is needed. Replaces language regarding sea turtle friendly lighting in original March 2010 consultation and March 17 email from USFWS.