

**Eglin AFB Wildflower Management Plan
Santa Rosa/ Walton/Okaloosa Counties
2015**

Supplementary to the terms and conditions of the right-of-way easement between the Department of the Air Force and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) dated May 19, 1970, the following Vegetation Management Plan and Maintenance Requirements shall apply until which time that it is mutually agreed to update this document or terminate the agreement. The overall goal of the Vegetation Management Plan is to manage the roadsides to benefit wildflowers and rare plants, without compromising public safety or conditions of the easement agreement. This initial plan shall be implemented for **three** years from the date of acceptance, and then evaluated to determine its success in achieving plant management goals and whether modifications (adaptive management) to maintenance practices are needed to incorporate the results of ongoing monitoring and other current scientific studies that inform management decisions.

Introduction

State Road 285 from Interstate 10 to SR293 in Walton and Okaloosa Counties, State Road 85 from the Shoal River Bridge to SR123 in Okaloosa County, and SR87 from the Yellow River Bridge to Vonnie Tolbert Rd. traverse through dry, sand scrub habitat which support many native wildflowers. The rights of way on either side of these roadways provide habitat which replicates forest openings and support native grass and herbaceous plant species that are critical in the ecosystem health of the scrub. The sensitive soils supporting these plant communities have been damaged from repeated mowing during the growing season, but retain the potential for recovery from the remnant seed bank and revegetation from adjacent populations.

It is the intent of the following plan to provide a baseline for development of a program of adaptive management, following the guidelines of the Department of Transportation Wildflower Management Program Policy No. 650-030-001-h, Sec. 3.1, "Throughout the state, managing naturally occurring roadside wildflowers areas is the preferred means of increasing the abundance, visibility and enjoyment of wildflowers. Wildflower Areas will be managed to minimize the effects of routine roadside maintenance activities". Through careful monitoring and periodic analysis, this plan is expected to undergo modifications as conditions change. This plan will balance the need for roadside safety and compliance with the conditions of the easement agreement with the ecological needs of the native plant communities by defining and scheduling the maintenance activities of roadside vegetation management.

Management Summary:

The management prescriptions inside these wildflower segments include:

1. T-1 Routine roadside mowing shall occur during the months of April, May, June, July, August, and September on a thirty (30) day mowing cycle as weather conditions permit. Each mowing cycle shall be completed within 10 calendar days of beginning the cycle, weather permitting.
2. T-2 Full right-of-way mowing may occur during lightning season (May 15 to June 15) and during dormant season (December 15 to January 15) as authorized according to need by the FDOT D3 Vegetation Management Specialist.

The approximate number of cycles for each type of mowing will be as follows:

T-1 Routine Roadside mowing 8 cycles (6 minimum cycles)

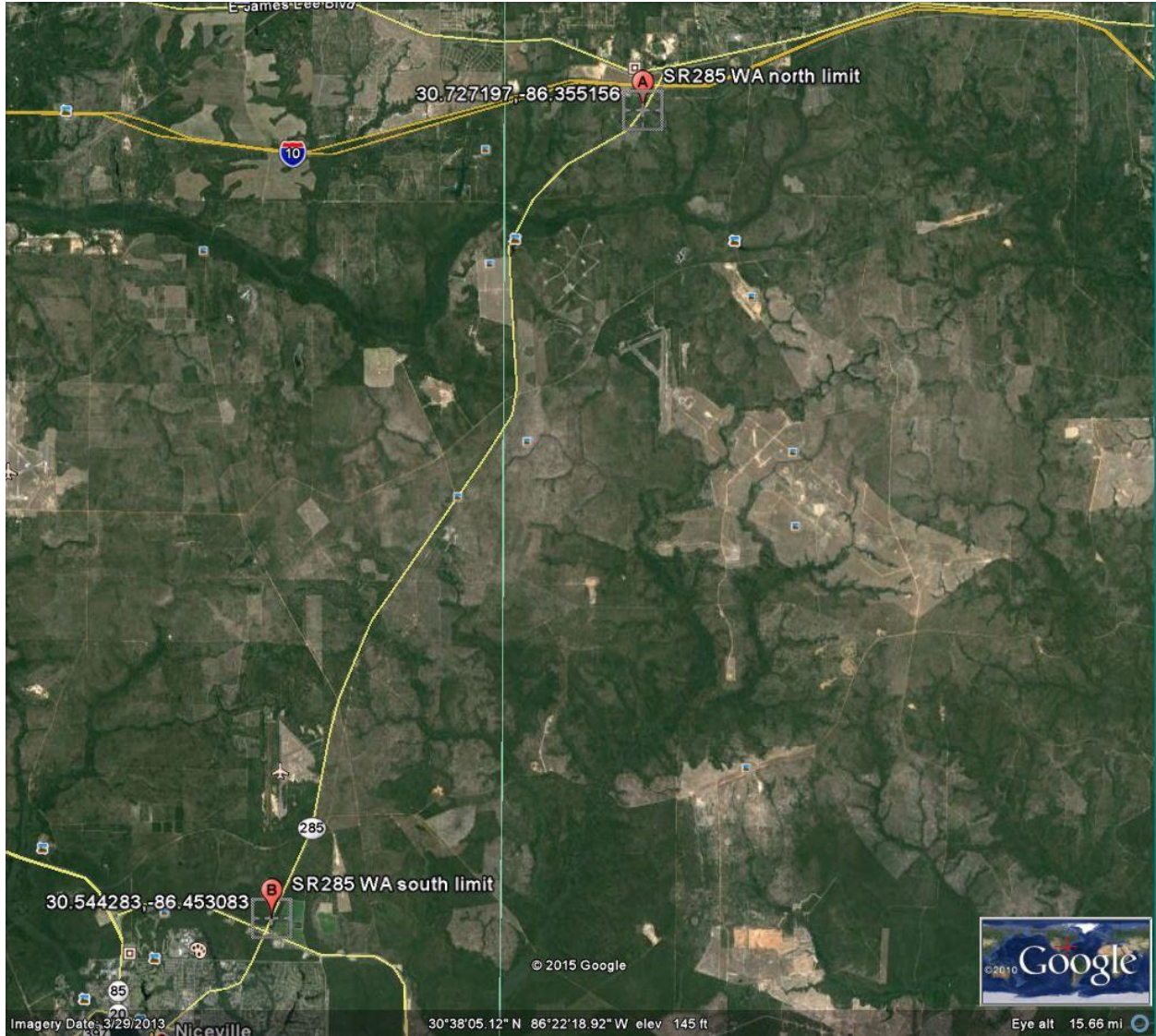
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T-2 Full Right-Of-Way mowing 2 cycles (1 minimum cycles)

3. Roadside mowing heights shall be according to the guidelines of the *FDOT Guide for Roadside Vegetation Management* and the *FDOT Maintenance Rating Program Handbook*.
4. Full right-of-way mowing heights shall be as authorized by the FDOT D3 Vegetation Management Specialist. The use of boom mowers may be required to avoid rutting of wet ditches and seepage slopes.
5. Routine roadside mowing shall occur in the 15 feet adjacent to the edge of pavement or to the toe of the front slope, whichever is less.
6. Full right-of- way mowing shall occur from the edge of pavement to the limit of the right-of- way or wood line.
7. Prescribed burning of the right-of- way shall be at the discretion of the Department of the Air Force.
8. A semiannual survey of species shall be performed by FDOT D3 Vegetation Management Specialist to monitor the progress of the plant community composition within the full right of way. Special attention shall be taken to locate and record the occurrence of species of concern including federally and state listed endangered or threatened species. This document shall be made available to all stakeholder agencies for planning purposes.
9. A semiannual survey of the right- of- way shall be performed to locate and record the occurrence of invasive plant species that present a roadside safety hazard. Special management practices that may include spot treatment of herbicides or hand clearing will be performed to remove the hazard. These special practices shall be at the direction of the FDOT D3 Vegetation Management Specialist.

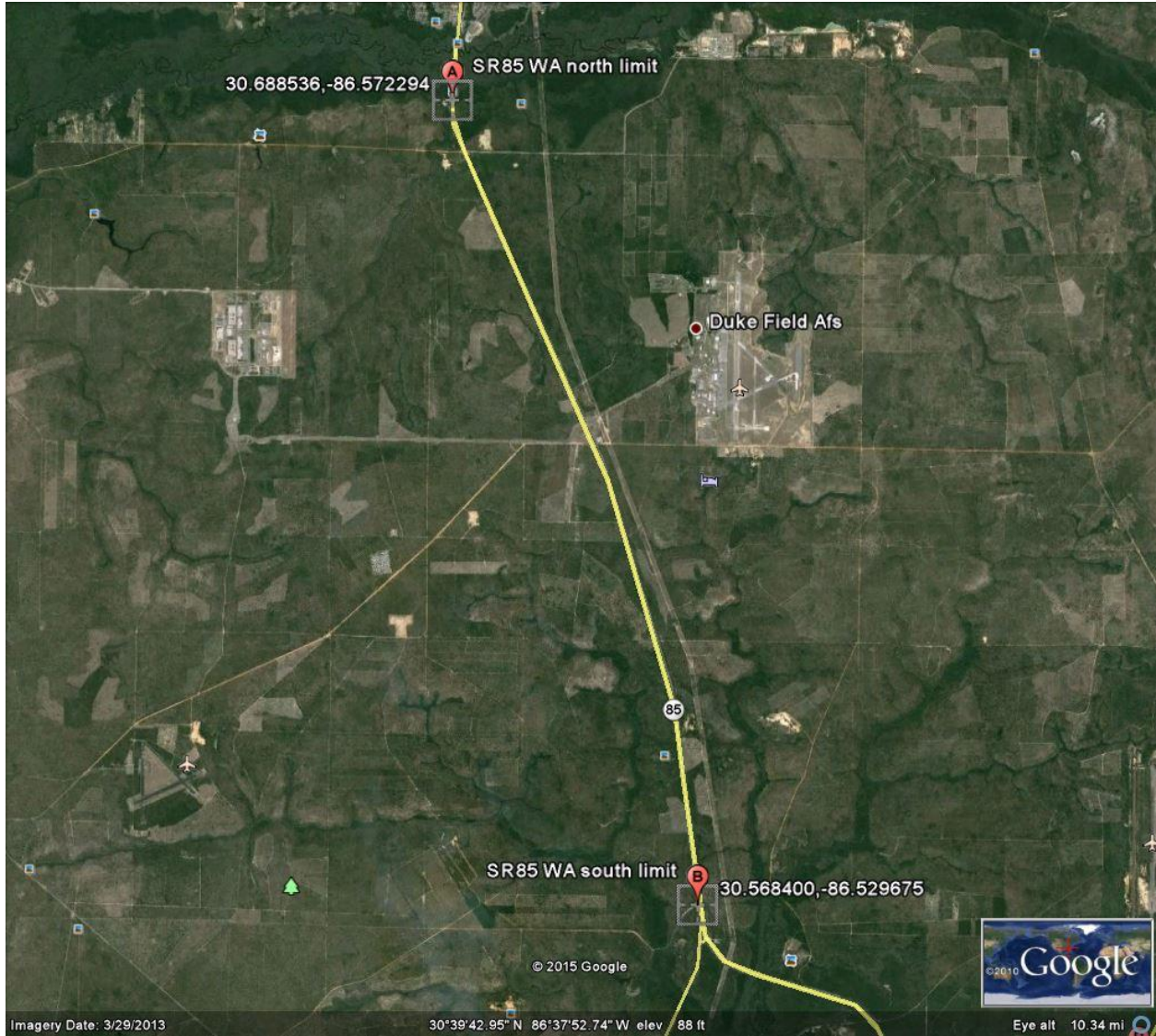
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SR285 WA limits



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SR85 WA limits



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SR87 WA limits

