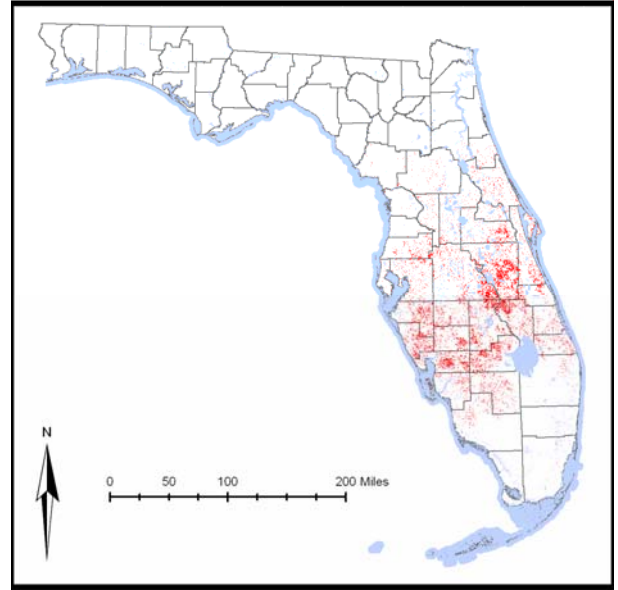


Dry Prairie



Status

Current Condition: Poor and declining. According to the best available GIS information at this time (see Appendix D. GIS Data Tables), 1,215,099 acres (491,733 ha) of Dry Prairie habitat exist, of which 29% (353,768 ac; 143,165 ha) are in existing conservation or managed areas. Another 13% (163,613 ac; 66,212 ha) are in Florida Forever projects and 11% (131,803 ac; 53,339 ha) are in SHCA-designated lands. The remaining 47% (565,915 ac; 229,018 ha) are other private lands.



Some habitat distributions or locations may be misrepresented on this map due to size, resolution and insufficient data sources.

Habitat Description

FNAI type: Dry Prairie

Dry Prairies are large native grass- and shrub-lands occurring on very flat terrain interspersed with scattered cypress domes and strands, bayheads, isolated freshwater marshes, and hardwood hammocks. This community is characterized by many species of grasses, sedges, herbs, and shrubs, including saw palmetto, fetterbush, staggerbush, tar flower, gallberry, blueberry, wiregrass, carpet grasses, and various bluestems. The largest areas of these treeless plains historically occurred just north of Lake Okeechobee. In central and south Florida, palmetto prairies, which consist of former pine flatwoods where the overstory trees have been thinned or removed, are also included in this category. These sites contain highly scattered pines that cover less than 10 to 15 percent of an area.

Associated Species of Greatest Conservation Need

Mammals

- *Sylvilagus floridanus* Eastern Cottontail Rabbit
- *Spilogale putorius* Spotted Skunk
- *Puma concolor coryi* Florida Panther

Birds

- *Anas fulvigula fulvigula* Florida Mottled Duck
- *Colinus virginianus* Northern Bobwhite
- *Elanus leucurus* White-tailed Kite
- *Caracara cheriway* Crested Caracara
- *Falco sparverius paulus* Southeastern American Kestrel
- *Grus canadensis pratensis* Florida Sandhill Crane
- *Grus americana* Whooping Crane
- *Columbina passerine* Common Ground-Dove
- *Athene cunicularia floridana* Florida Burrowing Owl
- *Aimophila aestivalis* Bachman's Sparrow
- *Ammodramus savannarum* Grasshopper Sparrow (migrant)
- *Ammodramus savannarum floridanus* Florida Grasshopper Sparrow
- *Ammodramus henslowii* Henslow's Sparrow
- *Sturnella magna* Eastern Meadowlark

Amphibians

- *Rana capito* Gopher Frog

Reptiles

- *Terrapene carolina bauri* Florida Box Turtle
- *Gopherus polyphemus* Gopher Tortoise
- *Heterodon platirhinos* Eastern Hognose Snake
- *Drymarchon couperi* Eastern Indigo Snake
- *Pituophis melanoleucus mugitus* Florida Pine Snake
- *Lampropeltis calligaster* Mole Kingsnake
- *Crotalus adamanteus* Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake

Invertebrates

- *Chelyoxenus xerobatis* Gopher Tortoise Hister Beetle
- *Aphodius troglodytes* Gopher Tortoise Aphodius Commensal Scarab Beetle
- *Copris gopheri* Gopher Tortoise Copris Commensal Scarab Beetle
- *Onthophagus polyphemi polyphemi* Gopher Tortoise Onthophagus Commensal Scarab Beetle
- *Atrytone arogos arogos* Arogos Skipper
- *Atrytonopsis hianna loammi* Southern Dusted Skipper

Conservation Threats

Threats to Dry Prairie habitat that were also identified for multiple other habitats are addressed in the Chapter Multiple Habitat Threats and Conservation Actions. These threats include:

- Conversion to agriculture
- Conversion to commercial and industrial development
- Conversion to housing and urban development
- Incompatible fire
- Incompatible forestry practices
- Incompatible resource extraction: mining/drilling
- Invasive plants
- Roads
- Surface water withdrawal

Threats specific to Dry Prairie included incompatible forestry practices because this habitat supports grassland bird SGCN that are not tolerant of adjacent dense pine stands. Habitat-specific threats from mining include both habitat loss and inadequate mitigation for habitat alteration that results in small, fragmented areas rather than more contiguous areas of this habitat. Military base closure threatens potential conservation protection for Dry Prairie.

The following stresses and sources of stress threaten this habitat:

Stresses		Habitat Stress Rank
A	Fragmentation of habitats, communities, ecosystems	High
B	Habitat destruction or conversion	High
C	Altered hydrologic regime	High
D	Altered fire regime	High
E	Insufficient size/extent of characteristic communities or ecosystems	High
F	Altered landscape mosaic or context	High
G	Altered community structure	Medium
H	Altered species composition/dominance	Medium
I	Habitat degradation/disturbance	Low

The sources of the stress, or threats, were used to generate conservation actions.

Sources of Stress		Habitat Source Rank	Related Stresses (see above)
1	Roads	Very High	A, B, C, D, E, F
2	Conversion to housing and urban development	Very High	A, B, C, D, E, F
3	Conversion to commercial and industrial development	High	A, B, E
4	Conversion to agriculture	Medium	A, B, C, E, F
5	Surface water withdrawal	Medium	A, C, D, F
6	Incompatible fire	Medium	D, F
7	Incompatible grazing and ranching	Low	D, F
8	Military activities	Low	A, B, E
9	Invasive plants	Low	D, F
10	Incompatible agricultural practices	Low	A, B, F
11	Incompatible forestry practices	Low	A, E
12	Incompatible resource extraction: mining/drilling	Low	A, B, E
Statewide Threat Rank of Habitat		Very High	

Conservation Actions

Actions to abate the threats to Dry Prairie that were also identified as statewide threats (Roads, Conversion to housing and urban development, Conversion to commercial and industrial development, Conversion to agriculture, Surface water withdrawal, Incompatible fire, Invasive plants, Incompatible forestry practices (also see actions below), Incompatible resource extraction: mining/drilling (also see actions below) are in the Chapter Multiple Habitat Threats and Conservation Actions.

Actions to abate specific threats that were identified for Dry Prairie are listed below. These actions were designed to reduce the impacts of adjacent forest management, mining and mine mitigation, and potential management or loss on Avon Park Air Force Range.

Military Activities

Overall Rank	Capacity Building	Feasibility	Benefits	Cost
H	Establish a permanent consultative group of multi-agency environmental professionals that work with USDOD on development of any statewide plans for base expansion, increased usage, and growth or closure needs to enhance positive, or minimize any negative, impacts on wildlife and conservation lands.	M	H	M
Overall Rank	Land/Water Protection	Feasibility	Benefits	Cost
VH	Work to develop partnerships to encourage conservation of significant habitats on lands encompassed by federal/state base closures.	H	VH	VH
Overall Rank	Land/Water/Species Management	Feasibility	Benefits	Cost
H	Support a collaborative effort among the USFWS, Avon Park Air Force Range, Archbold Biological Station, and the FWC to develop and implement a mitigation and management plan to accommodate military needs and maintain habitat and species viability at APAFR.	VH	M	VH
M	Create a cooperative program to ensure consistent implementation of management plans on federal lands with sufficient capacity for conservation management of wildlife and habitats on military lands in Florida (e.g., prescribed fire, invasive species control, monitoring). Agreement should include that USDOD provides sufficient access to critical habitats for management and monitoring purposes (e.g., identify a procedure for routine access to restricted areas for these purposes). (State agencies, NGO conservation organizations, and USDOD)	M	M	M
Overall Rank	Planning and Standards	Feasibility	Benefits	Cost
M	Work to develop partnerships to encourage the implementation of comprehensive management, and mitigation plans that protect high quality habitats and natural resources.	H	M	M

Incompatible Forestry Practices

Overall Rank	Planning and Standards	Feasibility	Benefits	Cost
L	Ensure that bird viability is the priority in management decisions on public lands where silvicultural management is in conflict with maintaining viable populations of imperiled grassland and scrub birds.	M	L	L

Incompatible Resource Extraction: Mining

Overall Rank	Economic and Other Incentives	<i>Feasibility</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	Cost
H	Create incentives (e.g., mitigation credits, permit streamlining) to encourage preservation of large contiguous patches of Dry Prairie and other sensitive upland habitats.	H	H	H
M	Create incentives to avoid loss of, and impacts to, SHCAs and sensitive habitats from mining, particularly wet and dry prairie, scrub, and bat caves.	H	M	H