

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
AND CONSUMER SERVICES**

**FLORIDA FOREST SERVICE**

**FLORIDA WILDFIRE AVIATION PLAN**

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**EFFECTIVE: AUGUST 26, 2024**

**1. PURPOSE**

This document provides information and operational requirements pursuant to Florida Statute 590.02 (h), which says all state, regional, and local government agencies operating aircraft in the vicinity of an ongoing wildfire must operate in compliance with the applicable State Wildfire Aviation Plan.

The Florida Forest Service (FFS) is charged with statewide responsibility to prevent, detect, suppress, and extinguish wildfires. To accomplish these missions both fixed and rotor wing aircraft are owned, leased, contracted, and dispatched by the FFS. Safety of fire suppression aircraft and ground resources is the number one priority in operating over and on a wildfire. Safety is only accomplished when all agencies operating aircraft in the vicinity of the wildfire follow appropriate operating protocols.

**2. FLIGHT OPERATIONS - MANNED AIRCRAFT**

During any given wildfire, the Florida Forest Service may have one or a combination of fixed winged and rotor winged aircraft. To maintain the level of safety required to perform the arduous and complex task of wildfire suppression, all aircraft not coordinated by the FFS must remain away from the wildfire. Pilots of aircraft that need to enter the airspace over a wildfire must contact the FFS for the status of aircraft over the wildfire, and to obtain radio frequencies for communication with suppression aircraft and ground resources. Communication with the FFS should be established prior to approaching within 5 nautical miles of the wildfire.

On wildfires that the FFS has not responded to, the initial attack agency may dispatch suppression aircraft controlled by their own organization. The initial attack agency must notify the FFS that they have aircraft at the wildfire. This is necessary because the FFS routinely flies detection and smoke sorting patrols and could potentially fly over any fire. All aircraft will be coordinated by the Florida Forest Service's Incident Commander and or the Unified Incident Commanders.

When a Florida Forest Service Incident Management Team has been assigned to single or multiple wildfires, all reconnaissance and tactical aircraft will be coordinated by the Management Team's Air Operations Branch Director or the Operations Section Chief.

Requirements for participation by Non-Florida Forest Service aircraft in wildfire suppression are: positive radio contact with FFS aircraft and FFS ground resources on pre-planned and approved radio frequencies, commitment to follow the tactical and logistical direction of the Incident Commander, their designee, or FFS aircraft pilot. It should be understood that the FFS may request an aircraft to vacate the vicinity of a wildfire if deemed the aircraft is non-essential to the fire suppression efforts lead by the FFS.

Non-suppression aircraft, reconnaissance, and non-essential aircraft must request approval from the Florida Forest Service Incident Commander, Unified Incident Commanders, or the Florida Forest Service aircraft on the scene to enter the vicinity (5 nautical miles from the center of the wildfire) of a wildfire managed by the FFS. Communication may be accomplished by contacting the FFS Dispatch Center, Incident Commander, or FFS aircraft. News media aircraft are requested to contact the FFS on Air to Air or Air to Ground radio frequencies for coordination.

### **3. FLIGHT OPERATIONS - UNMANNED AIRCRAFT (DRONES)**

Florida Forest Service use of unmanned aircraft over wildfire is restricted and requires advance approval and significant coordination to ensure the safety of manned aircraft, pilots, and ground personnel. Agencies or organizations that anticipate operating unmanned aircraft over wildfires should contact the FFS Aviation Manager for further details on the requirements and approval process.

Manned and unmanned aircraft are not be permitted to operate over a wildfire at the same time.

### **4. SUPPRESSION PRIORITIES**

Florida Forest Service suppression aircraft (helicopters or state contracted aircraft that drop suppressants) are considered statewide resources under the operational control of the State Officer in Charge. Close coordination between the FFS Dispatch Centers and the State Officer in Charge is required. The following suppression priorities will be used to guide aircraft assignments when multiple requests are made for the same resource.

1. Public and Firefighter Safety
2. Protection of Property, and High Value Natural Resources
3. Initial Attack
4. Emerging Potential Problem Wildfires
5. Large Wildfire Incident Support

**5. TEMPORARY FLIGHT RESTRICTIONS (TFR)**

Temporary Flight Restrictions or Notices to Airmen initiated by the Florida Forest Service will be managed by the FFS. If another agency initiates the Temporary Flight Restriction or Notice to Airmen for wildland fire, the agency managing the TFR must notify the FFS Dispatch Center for that geographic area. Management of that TFR will be the responsibility of the initiating agency in coordination with the Florida Forest Service. FFS Dispatch Centers shall notify the FFS Aviation Manager at 850-228-7764 when a TFR or Notice to Airmen has been requested.

**6. CONTACT DIRECTORY:**

**State Officer in Charge** **Cell 850-566-2612**

**Lance Lovett**  
**Aviation Manager** **850-681-5986**  
**Cell 850-228-7764**

**Francis Neely**  
**Aviation Operations Administrator** **352-291-5592**  
**Cell 850-228-7768**

**Dispatch Centers:**

**Blackwater Forestry Center** **850-957-5701**  
Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa Counties

**Chipola Forestry Center** **850-373-1801**  
Bay, Calhoun, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Walton, Washington Counties

**Tallahassee Forestry Center** **850-681-5951**  
Franklin, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Wakulla Counties

**Perry District** **850-223-0751**  
Dixie, Lafayette, Madison, Taylor Counties

**Suwannee Forestry Center** **386-243-6243**  
Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Hamilton, Suwannee, Union Counties

**Jacksonville District**  
Clay, Duval, Nassau Counties

**904-266-8351**

**Waccasassa Forestry Center**  
Alachua, Marion, Putnam Counties  
Gilchrist, Levy

**352-395-4951**  
**352-493-6060**

**Bunnell District**  
Flagler, St. Johns, Volusia Counties

**386-585-6151**

**Withlacoochee Forestry Center**  
Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Pasco, Sumter Counties

**352-797-4100**

**Orlando District**  
Brevard, Orange, Osceola, Seminole Counties

**407-888-8760**

**Lakeland District**  
Hillsborough, Pinellas, Polk Counties

**863-940-6701**

**Myakka District**  
Charlotte, Desoto, Hardee, Manatee, Sarasota Counties

**941-213-6970**

**Okeechobee District**  
Glades, Highlands, Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, St. Lucie Counties

**863-467-3221**

**Caloosahatchee Forestry Center**  
Collier, Hendry, Lee Counties

**239-690-8001**

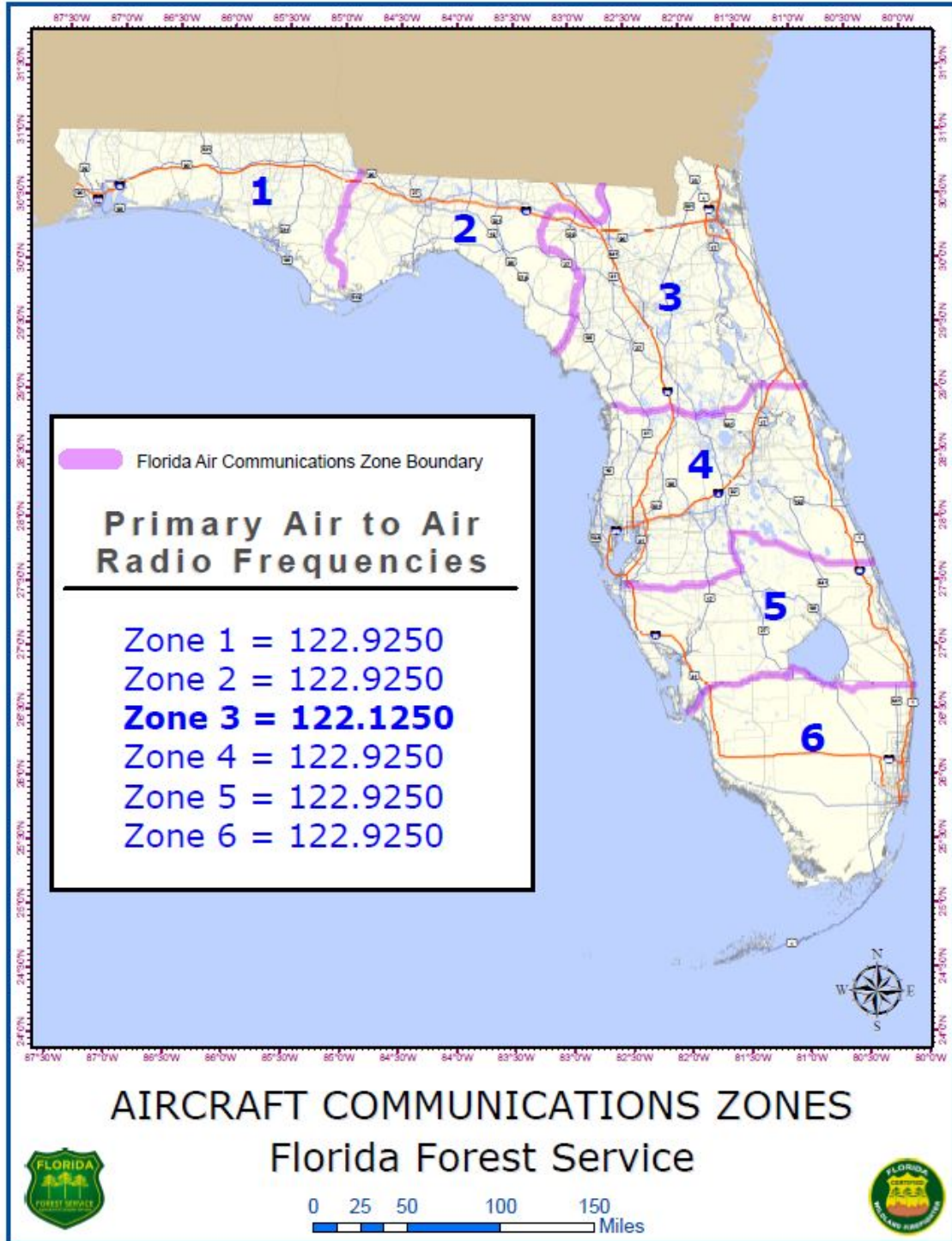
**Everglades District**  
Broward, Dade, Monroe, Palm Beach Counties

**954-453-2800**

7. COMMUNICATIONS

PURPOSE

AIR TO AIR



<b><u>PURPOSE</u></b>	<b><u>RX &amp; TX FREQUENCY</u></b>
FFS FLIGHT FOLLOWING	159.300 (Tt 156.7)
FIRE MUTUAL AID (RED/VFIRE22)	154.265 (Tt 156.7)
FIRE MUTUAL AID (WHITE/VFIRE21)	154.280 (Tt 156.7)
FIRE MUTUAL AID (BLUE/VFIRE23)	154.295 (Tt 156.7)

**COOPERATING AGENCIES SHOULD CONTACT THE LOCAL FLORIDA FOREST SERVICE OFFICE AND DETERMINE THE RADIO FREQUENCIES USED FOR TACTICAL COMMUNICATION ON WILDFIRES IN THEIR AREA.**

Note: Tt=Transmit Tone