



Okeechobee County, Florida

# Avon Park Army Airfield

Site Summary

February 2012

## Defense Environmental Restoration Program (DERP) Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS)

Across the country, the Department of Defense (DoD) acquired property, often during times of war, to use for military training, testing and demonstrations. Once the military no longer needed the land, it was cleaned up to the standards of the time and transferred to other entities. These Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS) can range from privately-owned farms to National Parks. They also include residential, industrial and educational properties. DoD is committed to correcting environmental damage caused by its activities and created the Defense Environmental Restoration Program for Formerly Used Defense Sites (DERP-FUDS) to evaluate and if necessary, to remediate FUDS. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) manages the program on behalf of DoD. Congress passed the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), also known as Superfund, in 1980 and the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) in 1986. It is this law that dictates the process USACE must follow. USACE conducts investigations to determine the potential risk to human health and the environment from contamination such as underground storage tanks, unexploded ordnance and munitions constituents (material inside the munitions). Public involvement and community participation are important components of the process. USACE partners with stakeholders throughout the process, including congressional representatives, state and local regulatory and environmental agencies and affected property owners.

Between 1942 and 1977, the government acquired approximately 218,884 acres in Highlands, Okeechobee and Polk Counties in central Florida to establish Avon Park Army Airfield. The Army used the site during World War II to train pilots and air crews.

The Army constructed over 500 buildings including dormitories, administrative offices, mess halls, chapels and related infrastructure such as roads and utilities. Several practice targets were constructed for crews flying B-26s and B-17s. The targets included a mock 555-acre town on the shores of Lake Arbuckle, a floating water target on Lake Kissimmee, an 8 mile railroad bombardment target, a combination bombing and gunnery range and 2 position firing courses.



Following the War, the full site was not needed. The US Air Force maintained about 106,000 acres west of the Kissimmee River and currently uses it for the Avon Park Air Force Range. The military disposed of the remaining 112,771.6 acres of land east of the Kissimmee River in Okeechobee County. That land comprises the Formerly Used Defense Site (FUDS) known as Avon Park. The State of Florida owns a large portion of the FUDS property which is now the Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park. Other



portions of the FUDS are currently used for agricultural and residential purposes.

The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is conducting a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) on the FUDS portion of Avon Park. The purpose of a RI/FS is to characterize the nature and extent of contamination – or to determine where and what types of contamination may be present as a result of the military's use of the property during WWII. In addition to ten target areas, known as Munitions Response Sites (MRSs) east of the Kissimmee River, USACE will investigate a one-acre MRS known as Arbuckle Creek Fuze Disposal Area. It is along Arbuckle Creek just south of the lake where the bridge for County Road 64 crosses Arbuckle Creek. The map on the second page shows the MRSs.

The RI/FS will include searching for munitions and collecting environmental samples to test for munitions constituents, the materials inside of munitions. To search for munitions, the Corps' contractor will use a digital metal detector known as

a magnetometer. In addition to a metal detector on a cart that crews pull across the ground, the survey will also include using a magnetometer attached



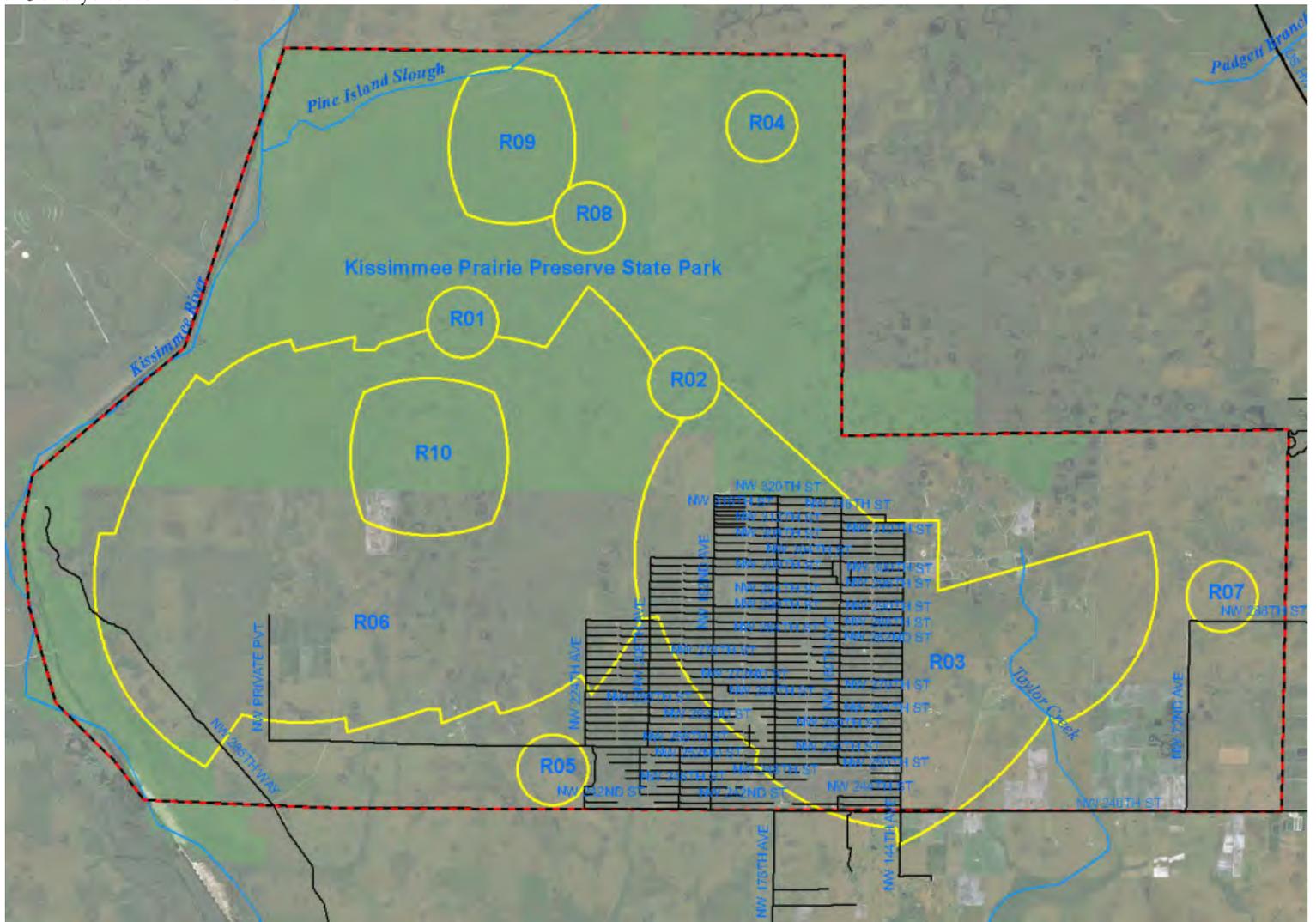
Digital Geophysical Mapping

to a helicopter that will fly approximately six feet above the ground. Other than two small areas (MRS 05 and 07), the aerial survey will be completed primarily within Kissimmee Prairie State Park Preserve. Once the ground has been mapped, technicians will analyze the data to identify subsurface items most likely to be munitions. Munitions experts will then dig the metallic items that appear to be munitions in order to identify them.

Aerial Magnetometer



Once the field work is complete, the contractor will analyze the data and will write a report. The report will include recommendations about future action. These recommendations could range from educating the public about the potential dangers to conducting a complete removal action. USACE will not know what is appropriate until the field work is complete, and the data are analyzed. The report and its recommendations will be summarized in a Proposed Plan. The plan will be presented to the public who will have a minimum of 30 days to comment on it.



**Safety First!**

Because of how the military used this site, munitions could still be present. Even though they are old, they could still be dangerous. Always remember the 3Rs.

**R**ecognize an unusual-looking item could be dangerous

**R**etreat – do not touch the item and leave the area

**R**eport it by calling 911 immediately.



**For More Information**

US Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District

Toll-Free 866-279-4880

FUDS.Florida@usace.army.mil

http://fuds.saj.usace.army.mil