

ABOUT CONSERVATION 20/20

Conservation land is important for water resources, flood prevention and wildlife habitat. These lands also provide green space for public recreation and enjoyment.

In 1996, Lee County voters in southwest Florida approved a referendum to establish a conservation land acquisition program. At that time, Lee County had very few protected natural areas. Growth and development began to rapidly replace open space. Concerned citizens came together to propose and advocate for the referendum. This group coined the term "Conservation 20/20" to symbolize a vision for the future of Lee County balanced between necessary growth and development and protected conservation land.

Twenty years later, in 2016, Lee County voters returned to the ballot box and voted overwhelmingly for the Conservation 20/20 program to continue. Today, nearly 30,000 acres of conservation land is protected in Lee County through the Conservation 20/20 program for the benefit of present and future generations.

Conservation 20/20 considers land to purchase in Lee County from willing sellers who nominate their property for consideration. Nominated land is evaluated according to its significance for water resources and wildlife habitat.

Conservation 20/20 manages preserves spread throughout Lee County. Typical land management activities include:

- Restore natural water flow
- Protect federally and state protected animal and plant species
- Remove, treat and minimize the spread of invasive exotic plants
- Conduct prescribed burns to restore wildlife habitat and minimize the risk of wildfire

Complete details about each preserve, including location, public access information and recreational opportunities, is available online at www.Conservation2020.org.



To learn more about Conservation 20/20, visit:
www.Conservation2020.org

Lee County Parks & Recreation
www.LeeParks.org



Connect with us on Facebook
Search: LeeCountyFLConservation2020

Learn more about Lee County military history:

Southwest Florida Military Museum & Library
4820 Leonard Street, Cape Coral
www.SWFMM.org



BUCKINGHAM ARMY AIR FIELD

Lee County, Southwest Florida



U.S. military combat aircraft training over the Caloosahatchee River, circa 1943

Nearly 50,000 acres in Lee County were once used as part of the Buckingham Army Air Field Flexible Gunnery School during World War II. Military recruits were trained here between 1942 and 1945 as turret gunners assigned to bomber planes flying over the European and Pacific Theaters.

Remnants of the air field remain today, including structures that may be visited at three Lee County Conservation 20/20 preserves.



www.Conservation2020.org

WILD TURKEY STRAND PRESERVE

11901 Rod & Gun Club Road
Fort Myers, FL 33913

The Gunner's Trail (1.8 miles) allows visitors to witness remnants of the former air field while hiking through a variety of restored natural communities. This portion of the preserve was primarily used for gunnery training designed to simulate air-to-air combat. Gunners were trained to shoot at moving objects by aiming at targets carried on unmanned military vehicles. These vehicles moved along a system of concrete rail tracks.

From the designated trail, visitors will walk along a section of elevated gunnery track embankment and pass by multiple concrete turret foundations. An interpretive panel provides additional information.

This trail also includes an elevated wetland boardwalk and observation area. Portions of the trail are ADA-accessible. Preserve amenities include paved parking, restroom facility and picnic shelter. Parking is free. Guided nature walks are also scheduled regularly at this preserve.

Starting point of the moving target practice range



Photographs courtesy the Southwest Florida Military Museum & Library and private collection of Jim Zbick

BUCKINGHAM TRAILS PRESERVE

8790 Buckingham Road
Fort Myers, FL 33905

More than 7 miles of hiking and equestrian trails allow visitors to explore both the historical and environmental features of this preserve.

This preserve of primarily mesic and scrubby flatwoods includes several structures from the former air field. These include the remains of concrete tower bases, shooter platforms, and skeet trap ranges. Also preserved onsite is a berm that served a spur of the Seaboard Air Line Railroad, which delivered military supplies and goods.

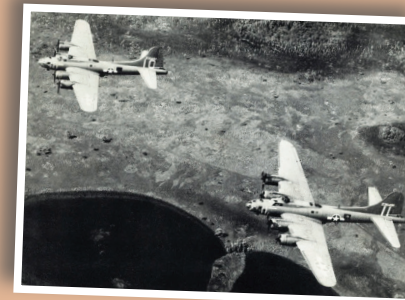
Ground moving target ranges that existed on this site consisted of two long oval tracks on which E-5 turrets, jeeps, and other military vehicles operated. Heavy concentrations of black fragments from clay pigeons that were used for target practice can also be seen throughout this preserve.

The marked hiking trails at this preserve are primitive. Be advised that trails may be wet following heavy rain. Parking is free.



Skeet range target practice

Flying training over Fort Myers



SIX MILE CYPRESS PRESERVE NORTH

11400 Lockett Road Ext.
Fort Myers, FL 33905

Trains once brought supplies and goods from Fort Myers to Buckingham Army Air Field via the Seaboard Air Line Railroad. Portions of the former railroad grade remain visible at this preserve.

Majestic live oak and slash pines are now established along this abandoned elevated railroad bed, which measures nearly 60 feet wide across a portion of the preserve. Several miles of hiking and equestrian trail are available for visitors to enjoy. Horses must remain on the designated equestrian trail. This is to prevent berm erosion and protect the natural systems of the preserve.



Buckingham Army Air Field personnel experience wading through a cypress swamp during a recreation break from training.

Preserve our history

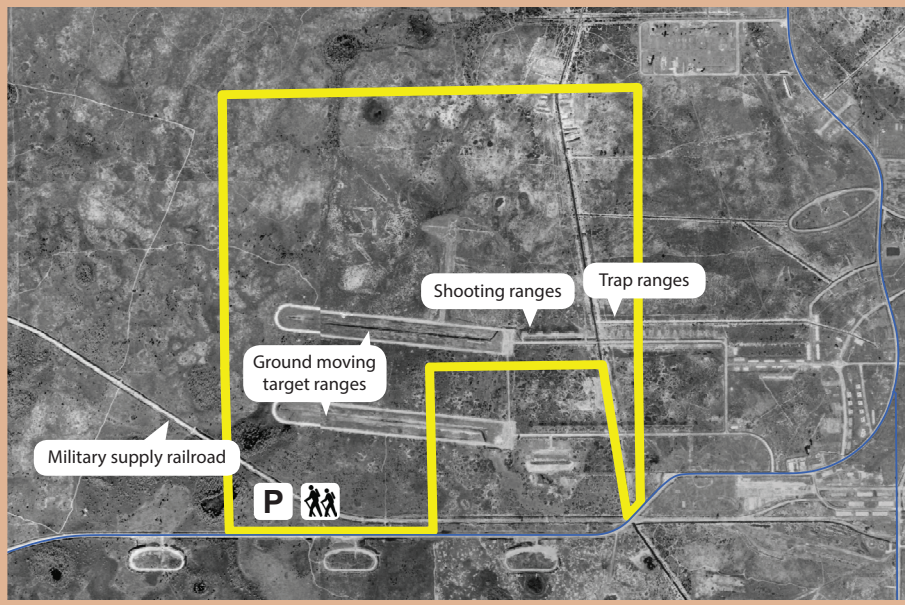
Visitors are asked to please remain on marked pathways.

Please do not touch or stand on any of the remnant structures. The collecting of any historical artifacts is not permitted. Lee County Ordinance 06-26, as amended, is strictly enforced.

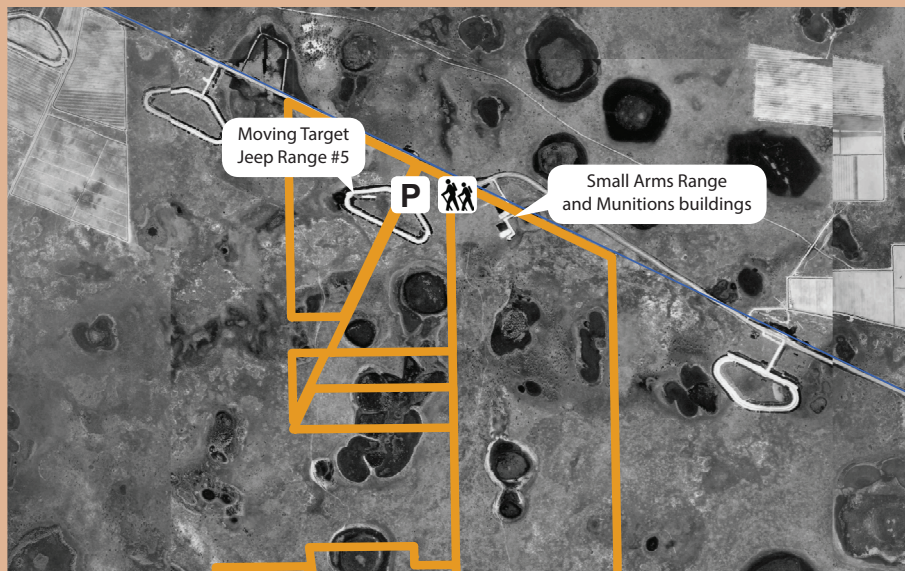
Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve North



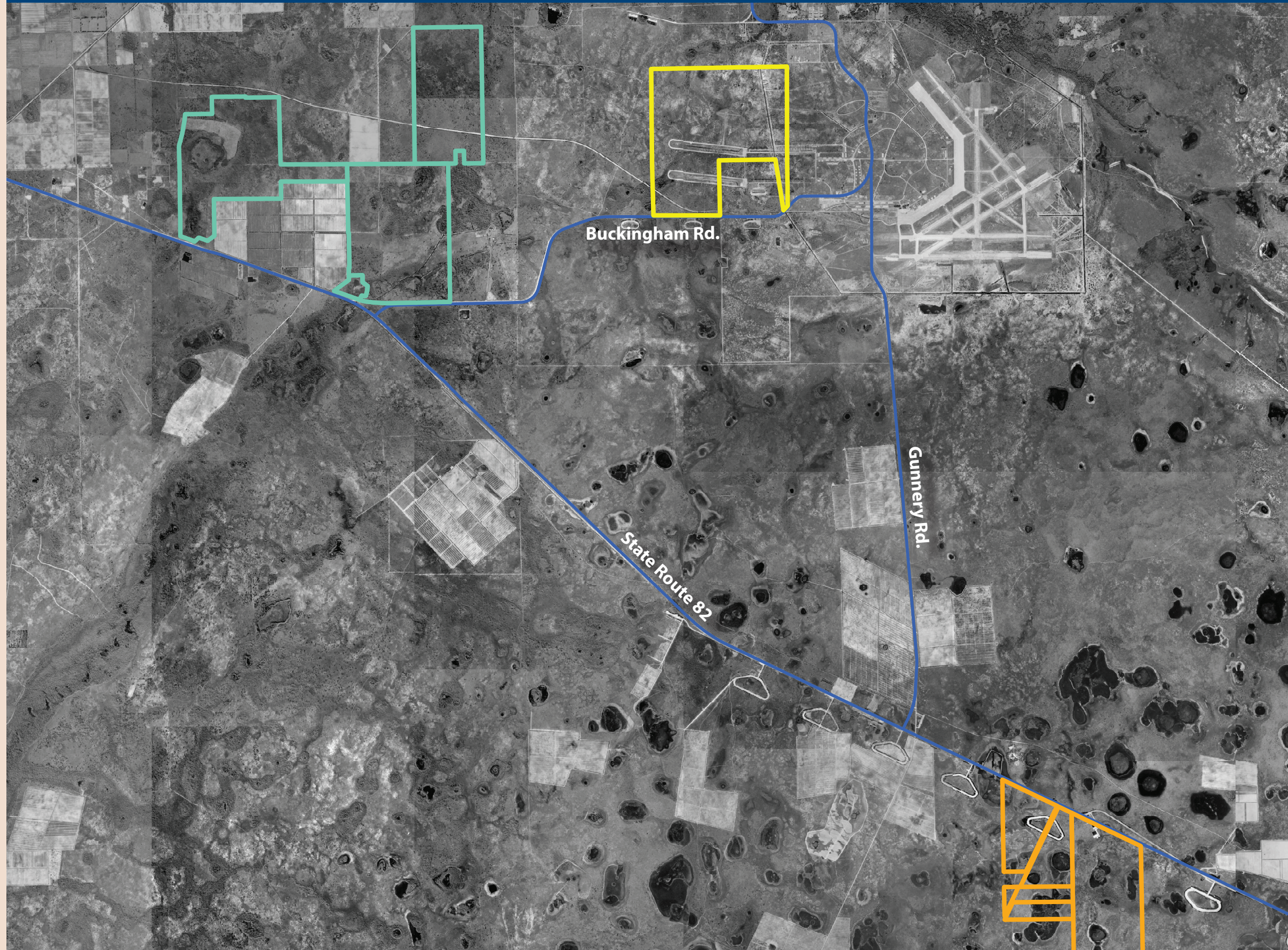
Buckingham Trails Preserve



Wild Turkey Strand Preserve



BUCKINGHAM ARMY AIR FIELD



This historical aerial photograph of Lee County in 1953 shows the area that was used a decade earlier as the site of the Buckingham Army Air Field and its training base operations. Today, this area in east Lee County is developed as primarily residential communities and neighborhoods. The air field is now a private-use airport operated by the Lee County Mosquito Control District.