



## Gopher Tortoise CCA

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- The gopher tortoise is endemic to the southeastern United States, and has been in population decline in recent years. While the tortoise is federally-listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in the western portion of its range, it is currently a candidate species for listing in the eastern portion (see figure below). State and federal representatives from Florida, Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina (states within tortoise range) formed a partnership to develop a conservation strategy for the gopher tortoise within the SERPPAS region.
- In 2007, SERPPAS established a Gopher Tortoise Team (GTT) to address the decline in gopher tortoise populations. The goal of the GTT, which includes partners from a variety of federal and state agencies, the military services, and NGOs, is to preclude the need to list through the implementation of effective management techniques. The primary activity undertaken to accomplish this goal is through the development of a Candidate Conservation Agreement (CCA) that will serve as the vehicle to coordinate and implement proactive, non-regulatory management actions to protect gopher tortoise habitat and current populations. Ultimately, the CCA will prevent the need for USFWS listing of the species.
- The CCA will organize a cooperative, range-wide approach to gopher tortoise management and conservation in its eastern range, and allow signing parties to leverage knowledge and funding within a common conservation framework. The CCA is voluntary and flexible in nature, and has been developed so different conservation and management actions can be agreed to and implemented at different levels by the signing parties.

