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**Cover**: Natural regeneration a few years after Katrina on private land in Mississippi. Photo by Judd Brooke.

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Eighty-six percent of the forest land in the South is privately owned. Here are some more statistics from The Southern Forest Futures Project (2013).

- 59% of forest owners own 1-9 acres.
- 60% of family-owned forests are in holdings of 100 acres or more.
- 2/3 of the family forests are owned by people who have sold trees.
- 8 of every 10 acres of Southern forest land are owned by people or organizations who have commercially harvested their timber.

These statistics accurately depict most of the landowners I meet every day in the field or talk to on the phone. They speak passionately about owning family land and wanting to “pass it on in better shape than they received it.” They talk about their old longleaf but also about their young stands that they burned for the first time a couple of months ago. They cut timber, and they rake straw, but they also talk about the gopher tortoise burrows, the male bobwhite calling from the piney woods, and a sea of grasses and spring wildflowers under majestic pines as the sun sets on a warm April evening.

The Longleaf Alliance is dedicated to helping the landowners of the Southern forests achieve their objectives of healthy, productive forests that they can harvest sustainably. Last year, we held 14 Longleaf Academies where 25-30 private landowners received one-on-one personal attention from staff and invited expert speakers on subjects such as how to plant and grow longleaf, how to safely burn longleaf, and how to restore their land to a longleaf forest that is both beautiful and productive and gives them pleasure when they walk their sand roads.

This past fall, we worked with one private landowner to take restoration to the next level and restore the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker to their forest. This species had been absent for over 50 years, and today four pairs of this unique bird are living in cavities scattered over Hitchcock Woods in Aiken, South Carolina. Next fall, four more landowners in the South Carolina Low Country will receive birds as part of this project, and a waiting list is growing. The Alliance is also working with the University of Georgia (UGA), South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Georgia DNR, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and American Forests to raise, release and restore the gopher tortoise to public and private lands in South Carolina. Thirty young tortoises that were hatched at UGA’s Savannah River Ecology Lab last fall will be released this summer, and the goal for 2017 is 100 more eggs collected, hatched, and raised.

Private lands restoration can involve site prep performed by expert contractors, planting seedlings from our nursery partners and planted by trained crews, learning to prescribe burn, planting groundcover grasses and forbs, and returning the red-cockaded woodpecker and the gopher tortoise to their land. Our goal is 8 million acres of longleaf by 2025, but the restoration will not end with these trees in the ground in 2025. We are only just now getting started and as long as the Southern landowner owns the land that they love, and they can derive income from that land, The Longleaf Alliance will be there to help. Now get out and enjoy YOUR spring woods. Early April comes but once a year!
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2017 Calendar

April 18-20, 2017
Longleaf Academy: Gopher Tortoise Restoration and Management 301
Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center
Andalusia, Alabama

April 28, 2017
Learn and Burn Field Day
West Central Louisiana Ecosystem Partnership (WLEP)
Woodworth, Louisiana

May 9, 2017
Habitat Restoration Field Day
Jordan, Georgia

May 23-25, 2017
Longleaf Academy 101
Stockton, Alabama

June 13-15, 2017
Longleaf Academy: Herbicides & Longleaf 201
Tuskegee, Alabama

July 11-13, 2017
Longleaf Academy 101
Ft. Stewart-Altamaha Partnership area, Georgia (Exact location TBD)

Aug 15-17, 2017
Longleaf Academy: Herbicides & Longleaf 201
Tall Timbers Research Station
Tallahassee, Florida

September 26-28, 2017
Longleaf Academy: Understory Restoration 201
Southern Pines, North Carolina

October 11-13, 2017
Longleaf Academy: Understory Restoration 201
Alexandria, Louisiana

October 24-26, 2017
Longleaf Academy: Understory Restoration 201
Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center
Andalusia, Alabama
(NOTE: Location changed from Milton, Florida)

For more information about events please visit The Longleaf Alliance website (www.longleafalliance.org).

SPRING 2017 MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST

Evaluate Young Stands:
- Assess winter tree plantings for early mortality from freeze damage or other factors.
- Uncover and/or lift viable containerized longleaf seedlings that were planted too deep.

Planting Longleaf:
- Order seedlings for future plantings early. Sometimes nurseries sell out of preferred seed sources or entire inventories. A list of preferred nurseries can be found at www.longleafalliance.org.

Herbicide Treatments:
- Assess stands for herbaceous competition to determine the need to spray or mow, especially on former agricultural sites. If a chemical release treatment is needed, know your pH before applying Oust® or Oustar®.
- Apply hexazinone as a site prep or to control oaks on sandhills around bud-break. Hexazinone is tough on oaks but easy on many understory species.

- If harvesting a tract, ensure adequate time for resprouting before applying a fall herbicide site prep treatment. If in doubt, wait a year.

Prescribed Fire:
- Evaluate your winter burns to determine if you obtained desired fire effects.
- Burn young longleaf stands invaded by short needle pines or hardwood stems that are too large to control with winter burns.
- Use growing season fire in wiregrass stands to promote viable wiregrass seed production and more wildflowers.
- Conduct a seed bed preparation burn on mature stand with good cone crops. This allows the seed bed to be clean but not so clean that all the seed is destroyed by predators.

Plant Native Warm-Season Grasses:
- Plant before mid-May to try to avoid summer droughts.
FROM THE INBOX

Q&A

Q. Dear Longleaf Alliance,

I have recently inherited 205 acres of land in Taylor County, Georgia from my parents. I live in Charlotte, North Carolina and haven’t a clue about where the property is located on the ground. How can I locate the land and know what is mine?

Clueless in Charlotte

A. Dear Clueless,

You are not alone in your plight. Many are inheriting land each day and are absentee landowners. In your case, you own an entire land lot in Taylor County, which is halfway between Columbus and Macon, Georgia. The town of Butler is the county seat and it is easy enough to locate the property in the county deed records or tax maps in the courthouse. You may even be able to access these records online. All you will need is the land lot number, tax map number or the name of owner.

If the records are digitized and accessible by computer, you will most likely get the image of an aerial photo with the property boundaries superimposed. Based on its relation to roads and streams, it should be easy enough to find on the ground.

If you locate it on the ground, look for the property boundary to be marked with blazes on trees along the property line or painted bands spaced periodically along trees on the property boundary.

If you have trouble finding the property lines, retain the services of a reputable, local forestry consultant. They can easily locate the property for you and for a fee, report on the condition of the property and the boundaries. If the lines or blazes are faded and difficult to find, it may behoove you to have the property surveyed and the lines remarked. This should be done by a registered land surveyor. Some consulting foresters can offer this service or be able to recommend a qualified surveyor. This is an additional expense, but well worth the cost. Once the lines have been remarked, it is easy to periodically refresh the property line markings.

Knowing where your boundaries are can save you from a neighbor unwittingly trespassing on your property and cutting your timber, hunting or thinking your land is theirs. Good boundaries show an active interest in the property and are one sign of being an active manager, which can be an advantage come income tax time as active management allows for more tax deductions than passive management.

A good consulting forester can be a life-saver for absentee landowners who know little about forest land or how to manage it. They can advise you with decisions relating to managing your land and are well worth the fees they charge for their services.

For more information on the services they offer, go to www.acf-foresters.org

The Longleaf Alliance

Resource Management Service, LLC is proud to support the work of The Longleaf Alliance and its partners.
**Sundial lupine** is a rhizomatous perennial plant in the **Legume family**. Because of its rhizomatous growth habit, this plant is normally found growing in small patches. This lupine, when in flower, reaches a height of 2 ½ feet tall. The palmately compound leaves are primarily basally arranged, and each leaf is made up of 7-11 short leaflets that measure ¼ - 1 inch in length. The flower stalks emerge in the spring and are composed of blue-purple pea-like flowers that are arranged in racemes. The hairy legume fruits are formed over the summer.

**Distribution & Habitat**
Sundial lupine grows in dry habitats such as sandhills and dry, open hammocks. Their distribution is fairly widespread across the eastern portion of North America from Canada, south to Florida, and west to Texas. This species can be found in all states where longleaf occurs.

**Wildlife Uses**
Lupines, in general, are widely used by native pollinators for nectar. Additionally, the sundial lupine plays an important role as a larval host plant for two butterfly species: Karner blue butterfly and Frosted elfin butterfly.

**Other common species**
Other lupines that can be found in the longleaf system include lady lupine (Lupinus villosus) and skyblue lupine (Lupinus diffusus.) These two species can be easily distinguished from sundial lupine since they both have simple leaves and sundial lupine has palmately compound leaves.

**Commercial Availability**
Sundial lupine is commonly offered commercially in both seed and plant form.

**References**


Spring is a wonderful time to be in the woods for a number of reasons, particularly if you are someone who enjoys birding. During this time of year, the cast of characters who call longleaf woodlands home can change a bit. One welcomed spring and summer resident is the Prairie warbler, a neotropical migrant which winters in the Bahamas, southern Florida, and the Caribbean islands. While many species remain in one area and are considered to be resident birds, a number of birds are neotropical migrants and breed in North America but migrate to the tropics during the winter months.

This striking warbler has olive green upper parts, rufous streaks on its back, and has a bright yellow throat and breast with streaking on the sides and flanks. It is typically found in shrubby areas or where forests are regenerating and can be identified by its bright yellow plumage, wagging tail, and distinct song, a series of rapid and ascending buzzy notes – “zee zee zee zee.” This energetic bird builds open-cup nests in trees and shrubs close to the ground (less than 10 feet) and feeds on a variety of invertebrates including insects and spiders.

Prairie warblers breed in a large portion of the Eastern United States and can be seen in shrubby fields, dunes, and regenerating forests, including longleaf pine. These habitats are often referred to as early successional habitats. Succession occurs when habitats change and develop over time, following disturbance events. Many species depend on these habitats, which can include old fields, pastures, young forests, and thickets with shrubs. Other early successional forest songbird species include Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat, Indigo Bunting, and Northern Bobwhite.

Before settlement in the United States, the Prairie Warbler was not widely distributed in its current breeding range as much of it was forested. Coinciding with deforestation, Prairie warblers began to inhabit this geography, but beginning around 1970 the species began declining as forests regenerated. The 2014 “State of the Birds” report recognizes it as a Watch List species, indicating it may become threatened without actions directed at protection. Conserving this suite of early successional birds can include a variety of management techniques. In longleaf pine, prescribed fire and forest thinning can provide suitable habitat for the Prairie warbler and other early successional birds.

References
Most landowners take pride in managing their lands; however, many lack the knowledge to answer the following basic questions before they begin: 1) What are their wildlife management goals?; 2) What is their current habitat type(s)?; 3) What is their target habitat type(s)?; and 4) How do they plan to reach their goals? This is where a reputable wildlife biologist can add value by providing guidance and additional education throughout the process. The more landowners know about what their goals are, the easier it is for a biologist to help them accomplish their goals.

A biologist will begin a site visit expecting to see the habitat(s) the landowner described, bringing insight into the landowner’s thoughts on how it should be improved. The biologist should also have a history of the property’s management practices and consider how future actions may be impacted. A biologist should explain the accuracy of the landowner’s preconceived habitat assessments and teach them how to properly evaluate wildlife habitats. A biologist will use the knowledge gained from the initial questions, other directed questions, and a site visit of the property to help landowners determine their needs. The biologist should also make sure that management recommendations to reach desired habitat types properly align with the landowner’s goals/objectives.

Habitat consists of the essential resources required for survival and reproductive success of a species. It includes both living and non-living components of the environment. Focusing on habitat restoration addresses the basic wildlife needs of food, shelter from weather and predators, and a place to raise their young. While water is also vital to wildlife, it is usually not a limiting factor within many forests types including the longleaf pine ecosystem; therefore, most landowners in the historic range do not have to manage specifically for water.

Groundcover is more important than tree type for most wildlife habitat associated with the longleaf ecosystem. Although longleaf pines are the preferred tree when possible,
The best time to start managing the groundcover in a longleaf ecosystem is before the longleaf seedlings are planted. *Photo by Kyle Marable.*

other southern yellow pine species may be managed to mimic the longleaf ecosystem once mature. To create quality wildlife habitat in a pine stand, landowners must re-establish groundcover (if not present), manage existing groundcover (where applicable), and be active and engaged in property management. Determining the current stage of the pine stand prior to management will greatly affect how groundcover and associated wildlife habitats are restored. Identify four unofficial stages: 1) About to be planted, 2) Young (just planted to first thinning), 3) Almost mature (approximately between first thinning and second thinning), and 4) Mature (approximately post second thinning). The great advantage of longleaf pines is that land managers can treat stages 2–4 similarly. When managing loblolly pines, for example, the ability to manage groundcover and wildlife habitat varies greatly with each stage.

Landowners who want to maintain or establish native groundcover should consider site history and vulnerability to exotics before planting longleaf pines. Site preparation, native seed bank composition, and potential competition may vary greatly depending on site history (i.e. hayfield/pasture, row crop, and cutover areas). The importance of exotic/invasive plant removal and vulnerability to exotic/invasive species is often overlooked by landowners. Exotic/invasive plants displace the native plants required by native wildlife and pose a threat at any pine stage. Therefore, landowners should make sure to identify and monitor exotic/invasives and ensure treatment before longleaf seedlings are planted. However, landowners who have existing longleaf pines are not without management options to restore groundcover and treat exotic/invasives.

Groundcover can be restored in two ways: natural regeneration and artificial regeneration. Natural regeneration involves promoting the growth of native plants found in the seed bank or colonization from nearby seed sources (i.e. mature plants) into the restoration area. Natural regeneration is preferred, when possible because it is the easiest and cheapest method. However, it is limited by the plants in the area and may result in the absence of necessary plants (e.g., legumes). Therefore, natural regeneration must be monitored to ensure that desired species needed for quality wildlife habitat are returning and present. When natural regeneration is not possible or does not produce the desired results, artificial regeneration is needed. Artificial regeneration is the planting of desirable species. This is usually accomplished by broadcasting or drilling seeds. When using artificial regeneration, it is important to select site-suitable native species. Competition control will likely be needed; therefore, herbicide tolerance of the selected plants must be considered. Artificial regeneration is usually done between rows of trees when needed in a forested site.

Whether the groundcover was naturally restored, artificially restored, or already present, it will need to be properly managed, or it will be lost. In a longleaf ecosystem, prescribed fire is an essential tool for groundcover management. Fire reduces litter accumulation, creates bare ground, sets back plant succession, and inhibits woody invasion. Fire also stimulates germination of grasses, forbs and legumes, increases insect production, and creates a mosaic of plant communities. Prescribed fire should indeed come with a prescription that includes a purpose and specific objectives. Frequency, season,
and extent must be considered when planning a prescribed burn. Landowners typically burn every 2–4 years when managing groundcover in a longleaf ecosystem. Frequency and season vary depending on site productivity and habitat management objectives. The extent of burns depends on the management objectives and the desired burn pattern. Landowners should be aware of how successful their burns are and when they need to be modified. Landowners should also be able to recognize when fire is not enough, and other treatments such as herbicide or mechanical are needed.

In summary, landowners need to know what they have and what they want in terms of habitat and wildlife management goals. They should start planning for groundcover before planting longleaf if possible. Landowners need to be familiar with the site history and how it will help or hinder groundcover restoration. A focus on native species restoration and exotic invasive species removal is necessary for success. Fire is essential for the longleaf ecosystem and is often the best tool for managing groundcover and wildlife habitat. However, landowners should know when fire is not enough and what to do about it. Landowners who are active and engaged in their land management will see the most success. Furthermore, landowners should seek guidance from a reputable wildlife biologist to answer questions about managing wildlife habitat.

As a continuing service to Alabama landowners, the Alabama Wildlife Federation provides wildlife habitat restoration guidance and assistance to all Alabama landowners. This program, Alabama Longleaf Pine Restoration on Private Lands – IV, in partnership with the National Wildlife Federation, is funded through a grant from the Longleaf Stewardship Fund, and support from Alabama Power and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Prescribed fire is essential to the longleaf ecosystem and often the best management tool. Photo by Kyle Marable.
INVESTING IN CONSERVATION

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[ II ]
There’s reportedly an ancient Anglo-Saxon Law that states: “Whatever is affixed to the soil belongs to the soil.” And that applies directly or indirectly to all terrestrial life forms – plant, animal and human! But, as any land manager can attest, not all soils are created equal and some are inherently more productive than others for certain plants and animals. Specifically addressing soils and wildlife, Durward L. Allen (1974) in his classic book “Our Wildlife Legacy” Chapter 2, entitled “They Grow in the Soil,” points out that: “Like crops we cultivate, all living things reflect in numbers and vigor the quality of the earth that bears them...Good soils yield the best crops, both in quantity and quality, of practically everything that lives upon them.” This axiom certainly applies to bobwhites and most other wildlife species. Thus, what constitutes “good soil” for bobwhites?

Before answering that question let’s define some basic soil properties or attributes. A primary consideration is soil texture which relates to the relative proportions of sand, silt, and clay. Based on these percentages and using the Soil Texture Triangle (Figure 1) soils can generally be categorized into major textural classes. Sands and sandy soils are commonly referred to as coarse textured or “light soils” and have relatively large soil particles with few exchange sites to hold water and nutrients. Whereas clays and silts are referred to as being fine textured or “heavy” with relatively more exchange sites. Loams are derived from a mixture of two or more of the textural classes.

“Light” or sandy soils often require managing timber at a lower density (left thinned to 20 BA) to obtain adequate vegetation for bobwhites. However, on higher quality soils timber volume, (especially mature longleaf) can reach levels upwards of 80 BA (as seen in picture on the right) and with proper application of prescribed fire still maintain decent understory vegetation for bobwhites.
Soil texture is critical in affecting moisture and nutrient holding capacity and influencing water infiltration rates. Infiltration rate relates to soil hydrology as a product of soil drainage, potential for flooding and ponding, aeration, pH (i.e., potential of Hydrogen), nutrient availability to plants, and salinity. The attribute of pH is a measure of a soil acidity or alkalinity. Soils with a pH of 7.0 are considered neutral whereas those with a pH below 7.0 are acidic and those above are alkaline. Soil pH is important as it strongly influences nutrient transfer. For example, acidic soils bind nutrients so tightly that they can’t be effectively taken in by plant roots rendering them useless to plant growth. In this scenario applying fertilizer, for example on brood fields or food plots, is a waste of time and money—applying lime will help moderate the soils pH when too acidic and increase the efficacy of fertilizers. In contrast, alkaline soils often lack certain nutrients (e.g., iron, zinc, manganese) which may be caused by over-liming or may even occur naturally in some regions. Application of acidifying fertilizers (e.g., ammonium sulfate) or soil amendments such as organic matter can help to moderate alkali soils. So back to our question of what constitutes “good soil” for bobwhites.

Herbert Stoddard (1931) and Walter Rosene (1969), both authors of landmark books on bobwhite ecology and management, defined good soils as those being well drained and fertile with the capacity for producing a diversity and abundance of preferred food and cover plants. Rosene specifically stated that: “Soils should be well drained with at least moderate inherent fertility…pH of 6 to 7…texture should be sandy or loamy, and the slope such that rain runs off easily…(but) level enough to operate agricultural equipment.” With this in mind, let’s consider the properties of soil and topography as they relate to the potential for bobwhite management.

Generally, sandy loams to loamy sands (see Figure 1.) hold enough water and nutrients that with proper management they are capable of producing the desired diversity and abundance of native grasses, forbs, and woody plants (about 1/3 of each type) needed by bobwhites for both food and cover. These soils also tend to be well aerated with a pH that is slightly acid to neutral which favors legumes (critically important plants for quail and other wildlife); and they respond well to prescribed fire, winter disking, liming, fertilization and other bobwhite management practices. Additionally, they have enough water holding capacity to be somewhat drought resistant but yet are well drained enough to not be flood prone or become anaerobic, which lowers pH.

On the other hand deep sands tend to be drought prone, infertile, and not naturally capable of producing the desired abundance and diversity of food and cover needed by bobwhites. While at the other extreme, heavy soils tend to be poorly drained, acidic, erosive and easily compacted. In flat topography they are prone to flooding and ponding which can be devastating to bobwhite nesting if heavy rain events occur during the nesting season. Proper application of management should thus be tailored to a property based on soil type and management objectives. For example, “heavy” soils are difficult to work during winter months as they are often too wet to support equipment for winter disking, mowing, and supplemental feeding. Heavy wet soils, like those commonly found in the Southeastern flatwoods, tend to be acidic and prone to becoming dominated by bluestem grasses to the detriment of bobwhites. Grass domination is especially problematic on these soils when sites are repeatedly burned during the mid-to-late growing season. Furthermore, timber volume contributes substantially to factors associated with the soil’s hydrology, pH and nutrients as well as vegetative cover for bobwhites. Therefore, timber density should receive constant attention on a well-managed quail property (Stoddard 1931), especially germane to soil quality.

All considered, it’s no surprise that the intensively managed wild quail lands of the Greater Red Hills Region from Tallahassee Florida to Thomasville and Albany Georgia are generally comprised of sandy loam to loamy clay soils. While exceptions exist, this Region’s soils are very conducive to
bobwhite management. This doesn’t mean that bobwhites cannot persist or even be managed to high huntable numbers on deep sands or heavy clays. In fact, Tall Timbers works with several landowners who successfully manage bobwhites on these less suitable soil types. But the management challenges and potential for population declines are greater and expectations have to be adjusted based on site conditions and their relative potential. Traditional management practices can’t be “cookbooked” or assumed to work on these sites but must be adaptively modified or fine-tuned through time to achieve the desired results.

The bottom line is that soil is foundational to growing plants and crops, and when it comes to producing a huntable “crop” of bobwhites, the soil is where it all begins. As such, understanding your soils is critical when making management decisions and establishing realistic population targets, harvest quotas, and getting the most out of your property.

References:
Stoddard, H. L. 1931. The bobwhite quail: its habits, preservation, and increase. Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, New York, USA.

What kind of soils do you have?
Property specific soil information is available through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. They have soil surveys for most counties and a very useful and interactive on-line program called Web Soil Survey: https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/

There’s also an app for that!
See SoilWeb for iPhone: https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/soilweb-for-the-iphone/id354911787?mt=8

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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If you live or manage forest properties in the Low Country, you probably already have the pleasure of knowing W. McLeod “Mac” Rhodes. If you are from another part of the longleaf range, it is our pleasure to introduce him and to share a little of his experience.

Mac’s family is a large landowner with properties scattered about in Berkeley, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester, Hampton and other South Carolina Counties. Some of these lands have been in the family for about 100 years, and their long history of stewardship derives from great-grandparents on both sides of his family. Mac’s great-grandfather McLeod ran a sawmill in North Carolina after the Civil War and expanded their business into South Carolina timberlands just after World War I. Mac grew up around his grandfather McLeod and the time spent with him is probably the source of his love for the woods and forestry.

On the other side of his family, his grandfather Rhodes, like his father before him, was in the turpentine business in Colleton County until it died out in the 1950s and then became a pulpwood dealer. “I also spent a lot of time with this grandfather. I remember his calendars for ‘Miss Turpentine’ from when I was in his office as a boy. When Mead-Westvaco Corporation decided to sell their timberlands a few years back, we bought a large tract from them, which turned out in title work to be some of my great grandfather’s land sold to West Virginia Timber Co. in the 1930s” recalls Rhodes.

These happy and formative experiences along with his interest in forestland led him to obtain a forestry degree and to focus on managing their land. A bachelor’s degree from Duke was followed by a Masters in Forestry from Clemson, and he also earned a law degree from the University of South Carolina. He is a Registered Forester in South Carolina, and a member of the American Tree Farm System, The Longleaf Alliance, and Lowcountry Open Land Trust.

The guiding principle of land management is simple for Mac -- “Land is a good investment, and if you take care of it, it will take care of you. We always try to manage well and leave it better than we found it. All of us in forestry always plan ahead; we have to for the next crop. Another benefit of working with the land is a sense of humility about what we do and the fact that the land will carry on long after we are gone. From this derives a responsibility of stewardship.”

Mac manages several family businesses which own acreage primarily in the coastal plain of South Carolina. Timber production is the primary objective on some tracts and aesthetics the primary on others. They try to promote good wildlife management on all. Some beautiful tracts are grown on a very long rotation; some are managed more towards a 28-
year rotation. But Mac is quick to add this: “Pick out at least one part of a piece of land that you want to keep for beauty or aesthetics, a place where you can go for renewal and recharging. That way the pleasure and the necessary work of managing land are always together."

“At first, our emphasis was on loblolly but started to shift to longleaf in the 1990s after my mother bought a tract of former agricultural land in Hampton County planted in loblolly. Some small areas were not planted and noticing how sandy the soil was I planted longleaf which did well on these droughty soils. Then as the young loblolly grew and were thinned, annosus losses occurred and we began cutting out the loblolly and replacing it with longleaf. During the process, we fell in love with the beauty of longleaf. My sister had the same experience with annosus on a nearby tract, and so we began converting to longleaf there. As we got more involved with longleaf, we became excited about the restoration of longleaf in much of its original range, especially where it is the best-suited species.” Mac’s family has now restored longleaf on lands they own in Charleston, Colleton, and Hampton Counties. They have converted about 800 acres of the 1,800-acre Hampton tract to longleaf, and are continuing the conversion as stands of loblolly are harvested, as well as about 150 acres on his sister’s tract.

In the process of doing this, Mac learned about The Longleaf Alliance, which has become an important resource and help, both in technical assistance and through cost-share programs. Many kinds of assistance are available with longleaf, and these can make a big financial difference for private landowners managing the somewhat higher expense of establishing longleaf. It also became important when volunteer loblolly invaded some longleaf plantings. Rhodes noted, “We all love the beauty of longleaf, and always enjoy reading the materials from LLA. One of my employees attended the Academy program last year. Bob Franklin has also assisted us with cost share through The Alliance.” And of course, NRCS incentive programs can also be a big help to landowners, with their priority for longleaf restoration and management on appropriate sites.

Now with more longleaf, prescribed fire is becoming an increasingly important management tool for the family. As the stands develop they are doing understory prescribed burning on a 3-5 year return interval.

The family remains in the lumber business, and Mac is President of McLeod Lumber Inc. of Charleston, S.C. and Managing Partner of Essex Farms, LLC, also of Charleston. Extremely involved in many forestry endeavors, he recommends becoming actively involved in supporting those things you care about. He helped organize and has become a leader in the TriCounty Forestry Association (Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester Counties). He currently serves as Chair of the Forestry Association of South Carolina (SCFA), and on the Boards of the Forest Landowners Association and Forest History Society, and as Vice-Chair of the Center for Heirs Property Preservation. Here they started a forestry program which has turned out to be a great success. When the title is cleared, and the property can again become an economic benefit rather than a drain, it is a good thing. The lands also serve as teaching sites for SAF and other tour groups. He also finds time for a couple of committees at Clemson related to forestry.

All the associations are worthwhile, but of course, tend to have different objectives. His work with the Forestry Association helps to ensure that better legislation is passed for the forestry sector and helps to educate South Carolina teachers and students about forestry. More recently he became associated with the Forest Landowners Association, encouraging similar recognition for forestry concerns on the federal level. The Forest History Society honors the long perspective of our forests and resources, and he is personally intrigued by the long history of these lands and his family’s role in the 1800s and 1900s. Even people knowledgeable about forestry, in general, need this longer perspective to do well with longleaf. “The TriCounty Forestry Association is very important in the rapidly urbanizing area around Charleston, to communicate with County officials and agencies about the importance of forestry, prescribed burning, and agricultural use classifications. Whether working with local, state, or federal officials, many may not understand what makes the difference for forest landowners and good stewardship.”

About his dedication, Mac says, “I like the challenge; it’s always different, and the opportunities and problems on any piece of land vary. I love being in a field where I have a legitimate reason to be outdoors and in the woods. It is a great privilege to work with timberland.”
As one of the most iconic and unique creatures of the longleaf ecosystem, the gopher tortoise has inspired frequent articles and mentions in The Longleaf Leader. Arguably the most important keystone species for longleaf ecosystems, gopher tortoises provide shelter and refuge via the burrows they construct for up to 360 other important species who inhabit the longleaf forest.

Due to declines in their populations, gopher tortoises are an Endangered Species Act 'Threatened' species west of the Tombigbee-Mobile River in South Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana; due to continuing declines, it is a candidate for listing east of the Tombigbee all the way to southeastern South Carolina. As more engaged management has improved habitat conditions, biologists are hopeful that reliable population data will demonstrate stable to recovering populations and thus preclude the need for additional regulations.

Several incentive programs were recently launched to aid recovery of this species and thus avoid the need for more formal protections and regulations, as previously reviewed in The Leader. Recently we were asked, “So how are we doing on the gopher tortoise recovery efforts?” To gather the most up to date answer to this question, we engaged gopher tortoise expertise from across the Southeast and compiled their perspectives and comments. Contributors to this article are: Jess McGuire, Game Management Program Manager for the Georgia DNR; Matt Elliott, Nongame Conservation Manager for Georgia DNR; Ericha Shelton-Nix, Wildlife Biologist for Alabama DCNR; Michael Bush, Statewide Biologist for Florida NRCS; Michael Sampson, State Forester for Georgia NRCS; Renee Bodine, Public Affairs for Florida NRCS; Brandon McCray, Resource Conservationist for Alabama NRCS; and Will Dillman, South Carolina DNR Herpetologist.

What we found are that many partners are engaged in this effort including an increasing number of private landowners. Much is at stake, but we expect to be successful in protecting viable populations of gopher tortoises and doing so in enough places across the range so as to avoid the need to list this species. Several different approaches are being employed to provide a brighter future for the tortoise.

NRCS focuses on ‘helping landowners help the land.’ Since 2012, Working Lands For Wildlife (WLFW) and its predecessor, the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) have assisted landowners with restoring and protecting 278,000+ acres to benefit the gopher tortoise across the South. Whether accomplished under the Gopher Tortoise program or the new Bobwhite Quail program, actions like thinning and burning help both species to thrive. Within Florida, NRCS longleaf contracts have more than doubled from FY2015 (42) to FY2016 (85). Michael Sampson, State Forester for the Georgia NRCS adds, “Georgia NRCS has been working with our partners to improve habitat and prevent the gopher tortoise from being listed in this part of its range. The 2014 Farm Bill Working Lands for Wildlife Gopher Tortoise Initiative has allowed Georgia NRCS to serve and partner with private landowners in Georgia. So far we have awarded Georgia landowners 104 contracts, obligated a total of $1,999,565.20 and helped to improve management on 12,556 acres in Georgia.”

And there is more planned for 2017-18. WLFW goals for the tortoise will be focused on a new priority area to increase effectiveness, and by the end of 2018 will include practices on more than 205,000 new acres. Key targets across the South include prescribed fire on 121,120 acres, the additional acreage of longleaf establishment, and increased vegetation management to correct degraded habitats on 40,760 acres. We want to be sure that trees already in the ground are being properly managed in order to benefit gopher tortoises and other wildlife.
Another approach that is also proving fruitful is Georgia’s Gopher Tortoise Initiative. Matt Elliott, Nongame Program Manager for the Georgia DNR, explains “This is primarily a land acquisition program, though we are also interested in some permanent conservation easements. This effort is primarily coordinated through the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, with a mix of state, private (foundation), and federal funding. About easements, they must be permanent and protect or encourage the types of management necessary to keep tortoises on the landscape.”

“Citizen support of this effort is critical,” adds Jess McGuire, Program Manager for Game Management with Georgia’s DNR. “Good gopher tortoise habitat is good upland wildlife habitat for many species. These purchases are also providing excellent hunting, fishing, and recreational opportunities, in addition to being of high conservation value.”

What can private landowners do to help prevent listing? Private landowners own the vast majority of the lands within the natural range of the gopher tortoise in all states, and they also stand to benefit as the tortoise thrives. Simple management practices to protect the tortoise and its burrow, and to provide decent habitat, can preclude the need for additional protections.

Michael Bush, Statewide Biologist for NRCS in Florida, offers these suggestions: “Be an active citizen, support conservation amendments and initiatives when at the voting booth; be supportive of prescribed fire and the smoke that accompanies it within your community; attend Gopher Tortoise meetings and provide supportive comments; write your elected officials to encourage gopher tortoise recovery efforts; write letters to the editors in your local papers. For those with land to be managed, apply for NRCS assistance via your local service center and actively manage your lands to maintain early successional conditions, especially using frequent, low-intensity prescribed fires.”

Are we on track and making progress? Michael Sampson offers this insight: “It appears we are making progress as habitats are improved and protected. The biggest gap is gopher tortoise population data from private lands, which is another area where proactive citizen/landowner involvement can make a critical difference.”

Will we succeed? “Most in the biological science community are optimistic at this point that we can be successful in our effort to preclude the need to list the gopher tortoise in the East. We continue to focus on improving as much habitat as possible with the available funding and collecting data as we go,” says Michael Bush. “We need to identify the large populations (those that meet Minimum Viable Population size, or MVP) and work with landowners to get those lands protected and surveyed. Landowners could help spread the word on this, and that will build support.” Jess emphasized, “We think we have a good story to tell, and so the more data we have, the better our case should be.” Efforts on the ground, both public and private, are making headway for the tortoises. However, more support is needed.

Will Dillman, Herpetologist for the SC DNR, reports: “Although we are at the very northern end of the range, we have two important projects underway. The South Carolina Gopher Tortoise Initiative is identifying all major populations on public and private lands and doing transect surveys with
cooperation of the landowners to locate the major populations. We also are managing two properties now, one for natives on Aiken Gopher Tortoise Heritage Preserve, and a second for restocking of waif tortoises, in collaboration with the Savannah River Ecology Lab. We are watching these artificial populations to see how they behave with regards to recruitment and are encouraged by excellent survival so far. Both of these are in Wildlife Management Areas. We are very interested in cooperating with private landowners, to benefit them, the tortoise, and many kinds of wildlife.”

Momentum is building in Alabama also. Brandon McCray, Resource Conservationist with Alabama NRCS, adds that “if you consider EQIP, as well as WLFW projects, nearly 175,000 acres of potential gopher tortoise habitat have been improved in Alabama through 2016.” Though many of these acres do not have viable populations currently, better habitat provides opportunity for many wildlife populations to expand.

Sometimes, it is not enough to have great habitat if the population has previously been eliminated due to past overharvesting or management practices. For example, both the Conecuh National Forest and Eglin Air Force Base have outstanding habitat areas available for gopher tortoises, but very low populations. Both would like to increase gopher tortoise populations through approved relocations. Much like previously successful RCW work, these partners are seeking funding for gopher tortoise recovery work that would follow Federal recovery plan guidelines. Gopher tortoise relocations would be coordinated with State Wildlife Agencies in Florida and Alabama.

Proactive landowners and managers will make the difference. Jess adds “We need landowners to rally behind their state agency efforts to get more surveys completed. We need to focus technical and financial assistance programs on helping landowners get more thinning and burning on the ground. We are also gearing up to help shape the next Farm Bill. Let’s highlight success stories with Farm Bill programs, and the difference these programs have made. Landowner advocates have an outsized impact on their elected representatives, state and national.”

**LANDOWNER CORNER**

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SINCE 2001, THE LARGEST PRIVATELY OWNED PRODUCER OF CONTAINERIZED PINE SEEDLINGS IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA.
Activities have been moving along over the past two months. With the awareness that we’re behind the rate of restoration needed to achieve the ALRI goal of 8 million acres restored by 2025, we’ve been working on the question of what can be done to enhance the rate of restoration.

At the fall meeting in Savannah, we talked about the need to refine our game-changing elements. We thought it might be possible to get some traction on six key issues, and here’s where we stand.

1) Increase the rate of restoration on public lands. There’s a significant effort underway by the USDA-FS in Region 8 to explore what additional areas might be restored to longleaf pine across the region’s National Forests. Jeff Matthews, the regional silviculturist in Atlanta, is leading a team that is developing a strategy to accomplish that, with the strong support of Regional Forester Tony Tooke. Kyle Jones and Clay Ware, our intrepid agency longleaf pine coordinators, are involved with that effort as well.

2) Increase the rate of restoration on private lands. This is a more difficult problem to solve, but among the options is whether longleaf pine restoration can be made more attractive to large landowners. Incoming LPC Chair Andrew Schock is leading that effort, along with several of the LPC members from organizations that own or manage large properties. And partners are working with the Department of Defense Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program to engage large landowners adjacent to military bases.

3) Shift in the message of urgency and importance. Our take on this game changer is whether upcoming listing evaluations of at-risk or petitioned species and potential additions to list of T&E species in longleaf pine ecosystems are an opportunity or a barrier and whether that could leverage increased funding to restore longleaf habitat to preclude the need to list these species. I recently visited with the Management Chiefs of the Southern Group of State Foresters (SGSF), and this point about species already listed or petitioned to be listed under the Endangered Species Act led to a vigorous discussion! Private landowners who are actively managing their timberlands are going to be very resistant to longleaf pine restoration if doing so limits their options for managing their property. We need to figure out how to resolve that question.

4) Promote longleaf opportunities and proposals for Gulf Restoration funding. We need to continue conversations with agency leaders about what might be feasible.

5) Increase support for prescribed burning. Again, in my visit with the SGSF Management Chiefs, I asked questions about whether states could enhance support for prescribed burning. The chiefs agreed that more prescribed burning was needed, but pointed out a host of reasons why that will be difficult to implement—including different liability laws in different States, and how costs for state burning crews would be covered under current State budgets.

6) Reinvest and expand support for land protection through both fee title and easement acquisitions. Our outgoing Chair, Troy Ettel, is the expert on this issue to enhance the longleaf pine emphasis in Land and Water Conservation Fund acquisitions. Our USDA-FS colleagues in Region 8 also noted that there are opportunities for this to occur within their Forest Legacy programs.

Finally, in January, we enjoyed a good meeting with our FCC partners and our FCC Principals and came away with some ideas about developing a road map to longleaf restoration across the range by enhancing our networks across SGAs with the Longleaf Implementation Teams. Look for some action there this spring as we try to stand up a strike team to provide some common data and mapping capabilities across the SGAs. That’s a model analogous to and inspired by the efforts ongoing within the USDA-FS Region 8.
How do you transform great work on individual properties into a more comprehensive project on a landscape level with dedicated leadership? If it’s longleaf restoration, you start and grow a Local Implementation Team.

The Ocala Local Implementation Team (OLIT), led by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), is a collaboration of conservation partners simultaneously creating a conservation plan to guide future work and getting longleaf work done now. The anchor for OLIT is the 389,000-acre Ocala National Forest, established in 1908 by Teddy Roosevelt as the first national forest in the Eastern United States. OLIT built upon the Memorandum of Understanding for the North Central Florida Prescribed Fire Working Group, which allows partners to work across ownership boundaries to implement fire. OLIT focuses its work on longleaf pine habitat in the region, covering 1.2 million acres of longleaf pine and South Florida slash/longleaf pine habitat encompassing critical wildlife corridors in north-central Florida’s Ocala Significant Geographic Area.

Planning and prioritizing

Since we first met at Ordway-Swisher Biological Station in Fall 2013, we have combined planning and prioritizing with on-the-ground doing. At the first meeting, partners revised our proposed boundary submitted to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Longleaf Stewardship Fund (NFWF LSF) to reach north to Camp Blanding Joint Training Center and south to the Withlacoochee and Seminole State Forests.

In early May 2014 at Ocala National Forest, we reviewed NFWF LSF award resources, which we’ve been fortunate to have covering work from 2014-2018. We discussed projects, reviewed other resources, and compiled a wish list. The OLIT email list started growing to share accomplishments, workshops, incentive programs, resources, and other upcoming events. Tony Grossman of the Florida Forest Service (FFS) said, “I learn about resources from OLIT emails that I wouldn’t otherwise see.”

We are fortunate to have the FFS/Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) Longleaf Pine Ecosystem Geodatabase that maps distribution and condition of longleaf habitat in the state. Using that data, OLIT created a rough draft of three priority areas for work. In priority areas, 41% of longleaf habitat is on conservation lands, while 59% is on private lands, showing both public and private lands strategies are crucial for this region.

The OLIT conservation planning committee drafted key and desired outcomes, a situation analysis, and ranked threats in preparation for our two-day workshop to bring it all together. Last fall, Hurricane Matthew postponed our workshop until December, providing the opportunity to learn from the Apalachicola region workshop in October since we are going through the same process. As a result, we are producing guidance for other LITs embarking on conservation planning in the future.

On-the-ground work on public lands

Timing was perfect to begin on-the-ground work when NFWF LSF funding arrived. Central Florida’s 2014 fire season provided many great controlled burning days, and TNC’s Northeast Ecosystem Restoration Team (ERT) took full advantage of the opportunity. Returning the ecologically appropriate fire return interval to longleaf habitat is critical, and so 7,050 acres of controlled burning was planned with support from NFWF. The ERT overachieved, accomplishing 8,173 acres
of controlled burning on properties managed by ten federal, state, local or private agencies or organizations, demonstrating the breadth of the partnership.

Fall 2014 brought change, with the ERT transitioning from TNC to Wildland Restoration International (WRI). Partners in the OLIT consistently rank the ERT the most vital restoration and maintenance tool on our landscape, so it remains the main tool. WRI hit the ground running, conducting 1,198 acres of longleaf management and five acres of planting.

In 2016, to restore longleaf sandhill, we conducted herbicide treatment of encroaching oaks on 100 acres at Camp Blanding Joint Training Center, with ongoing surveys to assess the effects on herbaceous groundcover to inform future land management. We also partnered with the National Forest Foundation’s Treasured Landscapes program to conduct red-cockaded woodpecker habitat restoration on Ocala National Forest. We looked towards other partners, American Forests and Arbor Day Foundation, to get longleaf pine seedling awards for restoration projects on Florida Park Service, St Johns River Water Management District, and Alachua Conservation Trust lands.

**On-the-ground work on private lands**

While the ERT worked mainly on public conservation lands, longleaf habitat restoration, maintenance and technical assistance on private lands was implemented largely through a Florida Forest Service (FFS) private landowner incentive program. In the first program of 25 contracts with private landowners, 655 acres of longleaf planting, controlled burning, native understory establishment, invasive plant control and improvement were completed on 19 properties. This program resulted in more than the sum of its parts, including a project with a landowner that originally signed up to plant 66 acres of longleaf pine and ended up planting 150 acres, leveraging the $10k incentive program investment with $28k of his own funds. This program was renewed for 2017, thanks to continued NFWF LSF funding, so stay tuned to the OLIT email list for alerts.

One project funded in part through the FFS incentive program, the Kincaide Loop Partnership, worked across adjacent private, county and city properties to coordinate longleaf management in Gainesville. In addition to the work done on the ground and an inspiring multi-presenter overview of the project at an OLIT meeting, one of the private landowners planned two field days to visit longleaf management projects across state, city, nonprofit and private lands to learn from each other’s approaches and experiences.

**Outreach and Training**

We reached out to others to build the partnership, including the Florida Forestry Association, Longleaf Partnership Council meetings, and biennial Longleaf Conferences to learn the latest in big-picture objectives and resources and to provide a Central Florida perspective. The Coordinator published an Op-Ed in the Ocala Star-Banner about the importance of restoring longleaf pine and made presentations titled, “Investing in a Forest that Fire Built.” Taking advantage of a story about longleaf pine in a Florida insert to the TNC magazine, we worked with TNC and NRCS to get stories out on social media, radio, and print news.
to promote the value of longleaf pine. We introduced the OLIT to The Central Florida Prescribed Fire Council annual meeting.

The OLIT coordinated two-day “Tools for Engaging Landowners Effectively” workshops for all four LITs in Florida, with 28 private landowner incentive program leads, outreach specialists and others to learn the latest private woodland attitude survey data results and create outreach plans for: increased longleaf management, increased prescribed fire, and increased engagement with Farm Bill and other incentive programs.

The OLIT worked with The Longleaf Alliance (LLA) and Florida Forest Service (FFS) to conduct a Longleaf Academy 101 at the FFS Withlacoochee Training Center in Brooksville in April 2015. The 30 participants were a good mix of county foresters, private lands biologists, private landowners, and a utility company land manager. Everyone was engaged, and one private landowner said, “This class was an eye-opener. I can visualize what I want now and know how to say it. I learned about what I have and what it could be.” While training was not originally a big part of the OLIT budget, we quickly learned that partners who conduct training were eager to help make that happen in our region. Following that success, the OLIT partnered with the FFS, LLA, Southern Fire Exchange, and Florida Forest Stewardship Program for training workshops in the region. At one, an attendee said, “This was by far the best workshop I’ve attended in my professional career as a forester.”

Looking ahead, we will see a change in leadership. TNC is committed to leading OLIT through 2018, while the Alachua Conservation Trust has stepped up and is eager to take on a larger role in the region by building on their longleaf restoration work to lead OLIT into the future. Stay tuned and watch us grow!
The National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Longleaf Stewardship Funded (LSF) project to hand plant nearly 200,000 longleaf seedlings at Flint Rock WMA was nearly derailed by a malfunctioning thermostat in the refrigerated trailer used to store the seedlings during the project. Because of some fast thinking and a keen eye, only a handful of the seedlings got cold enough to form ice crystals, but longleaf fans should take some time to learn about sampling seedlings for freeze damage (see photo for some instruction). Some quick tips to avoid chilled longleaf:

- Put a separate thermometer in the refrigerated trailer to verify the accuracy of the unit’s thermostat. A unit with Min/Max readings can be helpful.
- Check on the temperature in the trailer at various times throughout the day…these check-ins are good for fuel and door inspections as well.
- Longleaf that were grown in outside nurseries are more acclimated to cold and will suffer less damage than those grown indoors. Tubelings should be better insulated from the cold than bare root seedlings, but may also stay frozen longer.
- Longleaf that have been over-cooled will suffer from reduced growth vigor, but will often survive. Thus, it’s hard to calculate the real impact of a freeze until several years into a project.

Seedlings with freeze damage will show brown tissue in a cross section of the root just below the collar, though it can take hours to days for the browning to be noticeable.

In other planting news, over 430,000 LSF-funded seedlings have been planted in the Apalachicola River region this winter including projects at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, Apalachicola River Wildlife Enhancement Area, and L Kirk Edwards Wildlife Management Area. Most of these were funded through ARSA’s third NFWF Longleaf Stewardship Fund proposal, bringing our total seedlings planted to well over 1 million in three years.

ARSA members are also very excited about the February 24-26 Wallwood Longleaf Challenge that was held at the Wallwood Boy Scout Reservation in Gadsden County, Florida. Our aim was to bring the longleaf message to 130 scouts and their adult troop leaders.
Reducing Wild Hog Populations Along the Chattahoochee Fall Line

By Brant Slay, The Nature Conservancy

Wild and feral hogs are one of the most destructive, efficient, and dangerous non-native invasive species that challenge landowners and the conservation community across the Southeast. Wild hogs are smart, adapt easily to most environments, and reproduce at an extremely prolific rate. A young pig (gilt) reaches sexual maturity at 6-8 months and can produce her first litter of 4-6 piglets at the end of her first year. An adult female pig (sow) has a gestation period of 114 days allowing her to have two litters of 6-10 piglets per year. Their amazing reproductive capacity make wild hogs one of the most problematic invasive species to control. Wild hogs are responsible for timber damage, farm and crop damage, water quality degradation, destruction of natural ecosystems, and they out-compete native species. They create a negative economic impact of approximately $2.5 billion across the U.S. annually.

To decrease ecological degradation on sensitive sites and minimize negative impacts on longleaf plantings, the Chattahoochee Fall Line Conservation Partnership (CFLCP) recently launched a pilot program to provide assistance to landowners who want to reduce wild hog populations on their property.

In collaboration with The Nature Conservancy and Jager Pro Hog Control Systems and with support from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant funding we have developed cooperative agreements with local landowners to trap hogs. We are able to provide state-of-the-art pig traps and on-site assistance as a component of our Longleaf Pine Landowner Assistance program. This effort is designed to reduce an invasive species while restoring and enhancing the historic longleaf pine ecosystem along the Chattahoochee Fall Line. The removal of wild hogs on key conservation properties is critical to the success of our regional restoration efforts.

Alapaha River Wildlife Management Area Open in South Georgia

By Matt Elliott, Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Variously known as the “Lentile Tract,” “The Snake Sanctuary,” or (Auburn University wildlife professor emeritus) “Dan Speake’s indigo snake study site” amongst herpetologists, and “The Pasture” by local hunters, the 6,869 acres of Alapaha River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) had achieved near-legendary status in certain circles well before its official opening date of September 30, 2016. Providing the border along Irwin and Tift counties between Tifton and Ocilla, Georgia, the river at this point is more a series of lakes connected by vast floodplain forests than a constant flow. Sandhills dominate the current landscape at Alapaha River WMA, and provide the basis for the state’s interest in seeing it permanently conserved.

The list of rare species found at Alapaha River WMA is extensive: eastern indigo snake, Florida pine snake, gopher frog, striped newt, Suwannee alligator snapping turtle, Bachman’s sparrow, pond spice, silky camellia, Say’s spiketail, and many others. The population of gopher tortoises is around 2000, fairly incredible for a property of this size. The number and density of gopher tortoises, in particular, attracted the interest of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), who in turn sought funding assistance for acquisition from the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Defense, and private foundations. In what was truly a team effort, the state was able to purchase the property in August of 2016.

Management of the property will be closely guided by a plan focused on the tortoise, and approved by the Department of Defense and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The over-arching goal of the plan will be maintenance and restoration of longleaf and associated wetland habitats. Prescribed fire and gradual conversion of planted slash pine stands back to longleaf will be the primary techniques employed.
The Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP) is very pleased to welcome the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) as the newest partner in the now 15-member public/private landowner partnership. NWTF owns 4,650 acres of land in south Alabama in the Conecuh/Escambia River watershed. The property borders approximately eight miles of the Big Escambia and Little Escambia Creeks and is home to rare species such as the gulf sturgeon and the gopher tortoise.

The NWTF is working to restore appropriate portions of their lands back to longleaf pine and to manage those lands with prescribed fire. Already NWTF staff and the GCPEP Ecosystem Support Team have worked together to complete site preparation prescribed fires to ready lands for longleaf seedling plantings. The NWTF has a mission of not only enhancing wild turkey populations, but also the continuation of hunting and quality wildlife habitat that benefits abundant game and non-game species.

To better focus limited funding and staff on highest priority conservation needs, NWTF has developed a more strategic approach to conservation delivery focused on priority regions and ecosystems across the country. One of those systems is the longleaf ecosystem of the southeast. With recovery of the longleaf ecosystem a high priority in the GCPEP Conservation Plan, partners are excited about the additional restoration that will be occurring on NWTF lands and increasing opportunities to get more fire on the ground, more longleaf planted, and more wildlife habitat restored.

Both the Alabama and Florida Chapters of the NWTF have provided important financial support to GCPEP helping to increase longleaf restoration and the implementation of prescribed fire, both critical actions in improving wildlife habitat in the landscape. Businesses including IFCO and Red River Specialties Inc. have donated products and services in support of longleaf restoration on NWTF lands, and those have served as valuable match contributions in helping to pursue additional restoration funding. Thank you NWTF and friends for the positive impact you are already having in the GCPEP landscape.

A joint Cape Fear Arch Conservation Collaborative and Onslow Bight Conservation Forum meeting was held on February 9th in Pender County, NC. The meeting’s agenda this year focused on an update on future management plans for the approximately 80,000-acre Hofmann Forest owned by North Carolina State University, a lesson on dendrochronology and old growth cypress along the Black River from Dr. David Stahle of the Tree-Ring Laboratory at the University of Arkansas, and an update on the current status of the gopher frog in North Carolina from Jeff Hall of the NC Wildlife Resources Commission. The joint meeting has become an annual event for the two LITs and is a great way for partners working in separate but neighboring landscapes to learn from each other, discuss common challenges and opportunities, and plan future collaborations.
Regional Updates

West Central Louisiana Ecosystem Partnership Spring 2017 Update
By Dan Weber, The Nature Conservancy

At the Biennial Longleaf Conference in Savannah, Georgia this past November, conservation partners were recognized for having made exemplary contributions to longleaf restoration across the range. This was the first year that awards were given to partnering agencies in addition to the individual awards given in the past. Both the Louisiana Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) team and the United State Forest Service (USFS) team under Ranger Lisa Lewis for work on the Vernon Unit within the Calcasieu District of the Kisatchie National Forest were recognized. Both agencies serve on the steering committee of the local longleaf implementation team known as the West-Central Louisiana Ecosystem Partnership (WLEP) and play a critical role in shaping longleaf restoration and protection strategies in the state.

The 85,000 acre Vernon Unit forms the core of the Fort Polk/Kisatchie National Forest Significant Geographic Area where the local implementation team composed of the U.S. Department of Defense, state and federal wildlife agencies, conservation NGOs and others have united to restore longleaf pine and other native ecosystems within a six parish conservation area. NRCS State Conservationist Kevin Norton leads the implementation of the Longleaf Pine Initiative in Louisiana delivering cost share assistance and technical guidance to landowners interested in planting or improving existing longleaf stands in the state. The effort is split between a three parish region in west-central Louisiana and an area targeting the enhancement of Gopher Tortoise habitat in southeastern Louisiana. We are proud of these leaders, and their recognition is a clear validation of the important advances being made in longleaf conservation in the state.

North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership: A History Lesson
By Jeff Marcus, The Nature Conservancy

On December 7, 2016, many of the original participants that worked together in the early 1990s to tackle red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) recovery efforts in the North Carolina Sandhills gathered to share their history of overcoming conflicts and challenges for the benefit of current partners in the North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership (NCSCP). The NCSCP (ncscp.org) was formed in 2000 to facilitate collaboration between federal, state and non-profit conservation groups to conserve the vanishing longleaf pine ecosystem and recover RCWs. The NCSCP reached its RCW recovery goal in 2006; they’ve developed management and conservation goals for public and private lands, purchased land or easements to protect over 30,500 acres of RCW habitat, implemented research and survey programs, and helped restore fire regimes that are critical for maintaining longleaf pine ecosystems and their associated wildlife.

Founding and current members of NC Sandhills Conservation Partnership gathered in December to celebrate its history and successes. Photo by Ginger Bauerband (NC State Parks).
Okefenokee/Osceola Longleaf Implementation Team Update

By Hunter Bowman

The Okefenokee/Osceola Longleaf Implementation Team (O2) had a very busy winter. We rehired a six-man burn team staffed by Job Corps, a vocational school for disadvantaged youth. This year the team received additional funding and is now supported by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, the Dobbs Foundation, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). A new crew coordinator, Anthony Cabales, brings significant fire experience and a commitment to preparing the crew members for careers in natural resources.

We also wrapped up longleaf plantings with the Georgia Forestry Commission’s Dixon Memorial State Forest, the Langdale Company, and the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, where volunteers planted containerized seedlings by hand!

The team also held its biannual meeting where we discussed our long-term plans for the O2. This wrapped up a multi-month effort to prioritize lands for longleaf restoration over the next decade, which was necessary for the submission of a NFWF Longleaf Stewardship Fund grant proposal. In order to better prioritize the mandated 150,000 acres, the O2 embarked on several efforts to use remote sensing and other novel techniques to accurately map the location of its longleaf and hazard fuels. We hope that we can perfect these techniques moving forward.

Sewee Longleaf Conservation Cooperative (SLCC): Using Partnerships to Focus on Small Landowners

By Steve Gilbert, South Carolina Wildlife Federation

The South Carolina Wildlife Federation, under funding grants and agreements with NFWF and the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), runs the landowner cost share program of the SLCC. The majority of our restored and managed acreage comes from large (e.g. plantation) landowners. However, we are making a concerted effort to connect with smaller landowners.

One case study is a worthy example of this effort. Mr. Gerald Addison attended a LIT cost share presentation at a Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) workshop and became an enthusiastic proponent of longleaf pine conversion. His land held a few challenges including a heavy woody midstory that needed to be mechanically cleared and several pockets of large white oaks that he wanted to save. Michael Broom of the South Carolina Forestry Commission (SLCC partner) helped Mr. Addison locate “chipping” operations that were interested in mechanically clearing the midstory and harvesting scattered loblolly timber in the overstory. Subsequent visits by myself, USFWS biologist Joe Cockrell, and Joseph W. Jones Ecological Center experts fostered the development of a plan to allow the conversion while saving the white oak clusters.

Mr. Addison has proven that smaller landowners can be reached and spread enthusiasm for longleaf conversion as evidenced by the following email from him:

I am extremely pleased with how my Long Leaf Pine project is progressing. In a conversation with an adjacent landowner and relative, I mentioned how helpful and professional everyone involved has been and briefly discussed my project. They have, within the past few weeks, clear cut some 100 acres of loblolly and had plans to re-plant same. After our conversation, they are rethinking that decision and are leaning toward replanting with long leaf pine. It appears at this point that there might be the potential for an addition long leaf pine project that is in close proximity to my property.

Thank you again for your help and for affording me the opportunity to meet all the folks that are going to help make my project a success.

Gerald Addison

Addison property field trip. Photo by Colette DeGavray.

Cluster of White Oaks on Addison property prior to clearing. Photo by Steve Gilbert.
REGIONAL UPDATES

South Carolina Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership (SLPCP) Update

By Charles Babb, Coordinator

The use of prescribed fire on small, privately owned tracts in the SLPCP focus area is increasing thanks to a joint effort between the Partnership and the USFWS Resilient Landscape program. Twenty landowners recently attended the SC Forestry Commission’s Certified Prescribed Fire Managers (CPFM) class sponsored by the Partnership. This was the second group of landowners to receive the classroom training required to become a certified burner in South Carolina.

After successfully completing the CPFM class, landowners work through a series of small-group training aimed at guiding them from the development of a burn plan through the execution of the burns required to become fully certified.

In hybrid classroom and field sessions, experienced partnership prescribed fire managers help these landowners identify key characteristics that become critical components of a burn plan. Site-specific components such as fuel loads, smoke-sensitive areas, and preferred firing techniques are discussed, along with the overall objectives they want to accomplish.

Landowners are then encouraged to attend and participate in prescribed burns on other properties to get a feel for the progression of activities on a real burn. Finally, with the assistance of the coordinator or other partners, they conduct the first burn on their property.

Coupled with the availability of the SLPCP’s prescribed fire rental trailer, landowners feel more confident in their ability to safely apply prescribed fire as a management tool.

For more information on the SLPCP please visit www.chesterfieldswcd.com/longleaf.html.

South Lowcountry – ACE Basin (SoLoACE) Longleaf Partnership Update

By Bobby Franklin – SoLoACE Longleaf Partnership Coordinator

As I write this update for the Spring 2017 Longleaf Leader, Winter has arrived in the South Lowcountry and ACE Basin. Leaves are off the hardwood trees and our first hard freeze of the season is upon us. My Grandma McCants would call it “hog-killing weather.” With the turning of the season, landowners are planting trees, getting prescribed burning done, checking property boundaries and doing road maintenance as the weather permits.

While waiting for spring to arrive, it’s a good time to take stock of what the Partnership has accomplished since its beginnings in 2014: 1,084 acres of longleaf plantings cost-shared; 224 acres successfully referred to federal and state cost-share programs; 520 acres of midstory hardwood control and pre-commercial thinning of loblolly in longleaf stands cost shared; 354 acres of prescribed burning in longleaf cost shared that leveraged an additional 4,800 acres of longleaf prescribed burning. Since 2014, we have held four field days that were attended by 204 landowners and managers and three longleaf academies with 72 attendees. Also, 80 red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) nesting cavity inserts have been installed at three locations in the project area: Aiken Gopher Tortoise Preserve, Donnelley Wildlife Management Area, and 35 on private property, Aiken’s Hitchcock Woods. Earlier this fall, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources translocated RCWs onto the Donnelley property and back in the summer, two RCWs from nearby Savannah River Site found the inserts at the Aiken Gopher Tortoise Preserve.

Hitchcock Woods also released RCWs, marking the first time in 60 years that the birds have resided on their property.
In January, the TLIT, Texas A&M Forest Service, and The Longleaf Alliance hosted “Herbicides and Longleaf 201” a 3-day course at Rayburn Country Resort. Participants included 21 consulting foresters, agency staff and landowners. The Longleaf Alliance training zeroed in on how to achieve woody competition control, establish longleaf and retain those valuable herbaceous components like native legumes and various grasses. East Texas yaupon is one of the more challenging species to control as a longleaf competitor. Years ago, natural and prescribed fires would frequent the forests controlling understory shrubs like yaupon. Unchecked, yaupon spreads within a forest stand and develops into dense thickets that steal moisture and nutrients from developing pines. A common discussion in the training was the selection and timing of the herbicide to control the yaupon yet allow survival of little bluestem, switchgrass, and legumes.

Consultant Mike Hartman has attended both Longleaf 101 and 201 and has been working with landowners to establish longleaf. He said this course will help in developing a strategy of fire and herbicides to enhance his longleaf projects.

Longleaf Alliance Staff Ryan Mitchell and Karen Brown, were assisted by a cadre: Dr. Eric Taylor with Texas A&M Forest Service, Jason Grogan of Stephen F. Austin University, and Dr. Jimmie Yeiser, Professor Emeritus.
While you’re in the grass stage…

“Grass Stage” is a section just for kids and/or kids-at-heart. Longleaf forest management is a long-term endeavor, and in order to keep the longleaf pine ecosystem in longleaf, the next generation must get engaged or else all of the hard work, restoration, and protection currently going on will be for naught. We hope you share “Grass Stage” with your “next generation” longleaf enthusiast.

Lesson 23: Timber and forest products are the biggest industry in many southern states. When pulp and paper mills came to the South, they helped landowners and small towns make money. Longleaf pine was not a good tree for paper making and it began to disappear. Use Lesson 23 found on our website (www.longleafalliance.org/what-we-do/education/next-generation) to fill in the blanks and find the answers in the word search puzzle. Answers can be found at bottom of the page.

Today’s industrial forests are grown primarily for its __________________________ fiber. Many forests are now harvested at __________________________ maturity rather than __________________________ maturity. __________________________ and __________________________ are species that grow quickly in a __________________________ type forest.

Whereas, native __________________________ forests have more __________________________. During the mid-20th century the pulp and paper industry came to the South and shifted agriculture away from __________________________ and to pine trees. During the same period the __________________________ infestation encouraged landowners to switch commodities. Longleaf pine is much better suited for higher quality forest products such as __________________________, __________________________ poles, and __________________________.

Answers: cellulose, economic, ecological, monoculture, biodiversity, bollweevil, infestation, utility, lumber, cotton, loblolly, slash, longleaf

By Anne Rilling, The Longleaf Alliance
Most folks know Charlie Daniels as the hard fiddlin’ country rocker of “The Devil Went Down To Georgia” Fame. In the early 1970s, he was in the vanguard of the country-rock movement. Some even know he was an accomplished studio musician in Nashville before he formed the Charlie Daniels Band. Those that don’t know that he’s an accomplished bluegrass musician will enjoy this CD.

Songs From The Longleaf Pines is a 2005 release, Charlie’s first bluegrass album. He’s no stranger to the genre. Born in Wilmington, North Carolina, he spent his youth there and in Elizabethtown and Goldston, as well as Baxley and Valdosta, Georgia, the heart of the longleaf range. His father was a farmer, timberman and logger, so Charlie is no stranger to the longleaf pineywoods. He sang of “an old two-lane blacktop through the tall longleaf pines,” in an earlier tribute to the Tar Heel State in Carolina, I Remember You.

You won’t find any songs about longleaf pine in this bluegrass collection of gospel songs. What you will find is Charlie going back to his roots, the Pentecostal gospel music and bluegrass of his youth. The CD is a tribute to the hardscrabble, country folk who made a living in the pineywoods of his youth.

The playlist includes songs familiar to most; “Keep On The Sunny Side”, “I’ll Fly Away”, “Softly And Tenderly”, and “How Great Thou Art”. Others such as “Walking in Jerusalem”, “Preachin’, Prayin’, Singin’” and “The Old Crossroads”, are bluegrass and Southern Gospel standards. There are also recitations of the 91st and the 23rd Psalm that will give you chills.

All of the selections are tightly woven with excellent instrumentation and beautiful harmonies. He is backed up in this production by some of bluegrass music’s royalty: Earl Scruggs and Rob McCoury on banjo, Ronnie McCoury and Chris Thile on mandolin, Scott Rouse and Tim May on guitar, Ricky Skaggs, Cyndi Wheeler, The Whites, and Mac Wiseman on vocals. Jason Carter plays fiddle, along with the irrepresible Charlie Daniels.

If you appreciate acoustic music, beautiful harmonies, and songs that tell stories, you will love Songs From The Longleaf Pines. I guarantee you’ll find yourself clapping in time, tapping toes and doing a little singing and dancing to the music that is a tribute to the heritage of those good folk in the longleaf pineywoods.
Matt Toole grew up around the barrier islands and salt marshes of Savannah, Georgia. He received a BFA from Georgia Southern University in 1994 and an MFA from Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville in 2000. Toole has since been a resident artist at the Scottish Sculpture Workshop in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, The John Michael Kohler Art’s Center in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, and Franconia Sculpture Park near Minneapolis/St Paul, Minnesota. He has traveled throughout the U.S., U.K., Latvia, and Ireland collaborating on cast iron projects and creating performances dealing with the process of casting metal. Mr. Toole has been involved with the International Conference on Contemporary Cast Iron Art since 1997. He was formerly a professor of Foundation Studies and Sculpture at the Savannah College of Art and Design from 2005 until 2016.

Matt Toole is a collector. He seeks unique forms like weathered branches, rocks from around the world, decaying bones, old tools, instruments, and random metal parts. Many of the manufactured objects tend to be more precise, rigid and often lifeless, while the naturally occurring objects tend to show growth and transformation over time. By marrying the natural forms with the manufactured forms, he intends to highlight the contrasting aesthetic qualities of both. With special attention to contour, he attempts to unify the various components into a single cohesive form by creating connections that are seamless and undetectable. Breaking free of static compositions, he favors dynamic or kinetic arrangements in order to breathe new life into old objects. Ultimately, the impetus of this series of found object sculptures is not to recreate nature or industry, but use the actual objects to showcase the similarities and fine details of their form.

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But more than 80 miles from any beach and 90 miles north of Orlando, Alachua County is an outdoor destination with a lot to offer in spite of being far from the ocean. If you ask a local in Alachua County: “Why do you love it here?” You’ll get a diversity of answers, but a common thread shared among many of our residents is a deep appreciation for the natural beauty, wildlife, and outdoor recreation opportunities in north Florida. Gainesville is, first and foremost, a college town, anchored by the University of Florida and its many colleges and hospitals. However, the city of Gainesville has a lot to offer non-student residents and visitors alike, from a busy arts, culture, and local food scene to a welcoming and active downtown district with a mix of southern hospitality and modern amenities. Regardless of your goals for your visit to Gainesville and Alachua County, we recommend you bring your bathing suit, hiking boots, bicycle, a pair of binoculars, and plenty of time to explore Alachua County’s world-class natural attractions.

If you have an interest in history, a good place to begin your visit is with a stay at the Herlong Mansion Bed and Breakfast nestled in the historic town of Micanopy on US HWY 441 at the southern edge of the county. With towering live oaks, numerous antique shops, and the Micanopy Historical Society Museum and Archives, you can explore this quaint town and learn about Chief Micanopy, an early 19th-century Seminole chief who led the second Seminole war in Florida after it was negotiated from Spain in 1819. From there, you can walk to the Tuscawilla Preserve, a 600-acre marsh preserve with hiking trails on the south side of town or take a short drive to the nearby 5,700-acre Barr Hammock Preserve where local hikers and birdwatchers also get their fix. Another favorite option is the nearby Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park where visitors can see a 1930s period restoration of a cracker-style farmhouse and walk through the property much the way it was when the famous author lived in the town of Cross Creek. Just a few miles north of Cross Creek on county road 325, is...
the 2,850-acre Longleaf Flatwoods Reserve. Actively managed with fire, exotics controls, and some restoration activities by the St. Johns River Water Management District, this is one of the few remaining natural stands of longleaf in our county. Come here to hike or ride your horse on one of the numerous loop trails or camp overnight by permit.

If cycling is your thing, just 2.5 miles north of Longleaf Flatwoods Reserve is a parking area for the Gainesville - Hawthorne State Trail. A paved rail trail managed by the Florida Park Service that passes through farms, cattle pastures, preserves and Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park, you can ride 18 miles in one direction from the city of Hawthorne to downtown Gainesville, passing through a diversity of landscapes and forest types along the way. Don't forget to set aside time to get one of the artesian spring-themed beers at First Magnitude Brewery, one of five local craft beer houses. First Magnitude is almost on the bike trail, has live music and free yoga on the weekends, and the brewery supports local conservation efforts - especially youth environmental education programs focused on water quality and springs protection. What's all the fuss with springs? According to state geologists, Florida may have the greatest concentration of artesian springs in the world, with over 700, and the highest concentration of springs in Florida is right here in north central Florida along the Santa Fe and Suwannee Rivers. Hence the need to pack a bathing suit. Start in High Springs, a great place to get lunch, and then head to Ichetucknee Springs State Park, Gilchrist Blue Springs, Ginnie Springs, or rent a canoe right in High Springs and paddle the Santa Fe River where you can stop in at multiple springs perched along the course of the river.

So if you're wondering: "How do Gainesville, Florida, and longleaf intersect?" I would start by visiting Morningside Nature Center, a 278-acre city park and environmental education center on University Avenue just 4 miles due east of downtown Gainesville. Miraculously spared by the plow, the city of Gainesville Nature Operations Department acquired this tract of longleaf in the 1970s and has been conducting prescribed fires on this property since the early 1980s and it has some of the best-looking longleaf sandhill and flatwoods groundcover in the area and is one of only a few places to find brown-headed nuthatches in the county. The City of Gainesville Nature Operations has an active natural resource management and fire program, and they are using funding from tree mitigation in developed areas around the city as well as assistance from the Longleaf Stewardship Fund to plant longleaf and wiregrass in sandhill restoration sites on the 80-acre Boulware Springs Nature Park, just south of downtown.

If you’re starting to get a picture of a community that is committed to conservation and longleaf, you’re catching on. Since the late 1990s, staff, volunteers, and board members from Alachua Conservation Trust ran three successful county-wide ballot initiatives where the citizens chose to tax themselves to set aside conservation land as the population and development grew. In the sixteen years since, the Alachua County Forever program has protected over 22,000 acres of high-quality conservation land, developed an active prescribed fire program, and now has multiple longleaf pine restoration projects in the works. The most recent ballot initiative, Wild Spaces, Public Places which also funds recreational improvements at more traditional city parks is projected to generate as much as $50 million for additional conservation lands over the next eight years.

For those passionate about birdwatching, wildlife photography, or if your visit to Florida requires seeing alligators, no trip to Gainesville is complete without a stroll on the La Chua Trail at Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park south of downtown Gainesville. Accessed by bicycle from the Gainesville-Hawthorne State Trail or by driving in the north entrance to the state park, the La Chua Trail rarely fails to deliver some wildlife spectacle. An elevated berm trail threading out into a 16,000-acre marsh provides access to an experience sometimes equated to an African safari. Often seen here is a herd of bison, wild cracker horses, wintering sandhill cranes (sometimes by the thousands) and when the water is cool, but the sun is out, alligators haul out onto the banks of a canal by the hundreds. Watching the cranes come in to roost on a winter evening when the sun is setting can be an unforgettable experience. If La Chua is too wild and intimidating, Gainesville Nature Operations manages one of the most popular wildlife photography hot spots in the region nearby - the Sweetwater Wetlands Park. This system of boardwalks and trails around a series of treatment wetlands is a fantastic place to see waterfowl, wading birds, various birds of prey, and in 2016 even the occasional snail kite.

If you need a break from the outdoors, the Harn Museum and Florida Museum of Natural History with the accompanying Butterfly Rainforest have a myriad of
entertaining indoor activities for the curious mind. These two buildings are side by side on the west edge of the University of Florida campus on SW 34th Street, and just a mile north, the UF Bat Colony is a great place to take your squeamish friends at dusk when as many as 300,000 bats emerge on a spring or summer night. It’s estimated that this colony may eat as much as 2,500 pounds of insects in a single night, so be sure to express gratitude when they emerge.

Just six miles southwest of the UF campus museums is the Historic Haile Homestead, built in 1854 by the Haile family, recent transplants at the time from Camden, SC. This home, one of the oldest in Alachua County, is unique in that it is almost entirely original construction, including mortise and tenon joinery and beams and siding hand-hewn by slaves from longleaf pine on the property. Docents, trained to guide visitors through the history are available for tours on weekends. For anyone interested in southern period architecture and construction, or just want to see some of the most beautiful wide-plank heart pine flooring ever put down, this home is an experience not to be missed.

If the Haile Homestead excites you about learning more of the lives and history of early Florida settlers, Dudley Farm Historic State Park is also found on the west side of town. At Dudley Farm, visitors can find a one-of-a-kind authentic 325-acre working “Cracker” farm, see the evolution of North Florida farming through the eyes of three generations of the Dudley family; from the pioneer days circa 1850 through the introduction of gasoline-powered equipment circa 1945. Dudley Farm Historic State Park is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Some highlights include a visitor center, park staff in period clothing performing chores, production and harvest of heritage crop varieties and sugar cane, raising of heritage livestock varieties including Cracker cows and Barred Rock chickens, family farmhouse with original furnishings, general store and post office, an 1880s kitchen outbuilding, and a cane syrup complex with cane grinding, boiling, and bottling.

Whether you’re a history buff or just looking for a great community to enjoy the outdoors, options abound with great hiking, biking, birding, paddling and equestrian opportunities found in and around Gainesville.
HERBACEOUS WEED CONTROL IN LONGLEAF PINE PLANTATIONS

- Forest landowners interested in growing longleaf pine must follow a carefully designed and well-executed management plan to grow productive stands.
- Longleaf pine seedlings are intolerant of shading, can have slow early growth and remain in the "grass stage" for an extended period which makes these stands vulnerable to the competing vegetation.
- Old agricultural (crop) fields pose a unique set of challenges compared to cut-over forested sites. For example, the weed spectrum found in old ag fields is typically very different from cut-over sites.
- Many of the problem weeds found on these sites can be controlled with either Milestone® or Transline® herbicides.
- These two selective herbicides control key competitive broadleaf weeds, certain susceptible woody plants, and vines that are frequently found in new longleaf pine plantations.
- Managing for these species can improve longleaf pine seedling survival and establishment thus leading to improved growth.

Contact Darrell Russell to learn more about treating longleaf pine plantations with Milestone® and Transline® herbicides.

Darrell Russell
Senior JVM Sales Specialist
dwrussell@dow.com

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BURNER BOB GOES TO THE CAPITOL

By Randy Tate, The Longleaf Alliance

As a result of past efforts by the Georgia Prescribed Fire Council, the first week of February is now designated Prescribed Fire Awareness Week in Georgia. Randy Tate, the Fort Stewart/Altamaha LIT Coordinator and the current Chair of the Georgia Prescribed Fire Council, presented Governor Nathan Deal with a "Burner Bob" poster at the signing of the Georgia Prescribed Fire Awareness Week proclamation on Feb. 7th this year at the Georgia State House.

Burner Bob is the creation of Mr. Reese Thompson, a self-described Tree Farmer from Vidalia, Georgia and a Longleaf Alliance Board Member. Burner Bob is popping up everywhere and Reese hopes he will be used to promote the wise use of prescribed fire for restoring and maintaining longleaf habitat, like that needed by Bobwhite Quail. There is also a Burner Bob coloring book describing his story and maybe soon, a Burner Bob mascot costume. Be on the lookout for Burner Bob. And, thanks to Reese for giving us a new alternative to Smokey Bear.

THE LONGLEAF ALLIANCE WELCOMES NEW STAFF MEMBER

By Vernon Compton, The Longleaf Alliance

The GCPEP Ecosystem Support Team (EST) is pleased to welcome Danielle Deming as a new Team Member. Danielle has a Bachelor’s Degree in Natural Resource Conservation from the University of Florida. She has a strong fire background and previously worked for the Florida Forest Service at Goethe State Forest and on an Initial Attack Engine Crew on the Nez-Perce/Clearwater National Forest. Most recently Danielle has served as the Gulf Islands Shorebird Steward for the Audubon Society. Her diverse background, particularly in forest fuels, will be a great asset to the EST. Danielle becomes the 4th member of the EST, and together they will continue to work with GCPEP partners in Alabama and Florida to increase the amount of prescribed fire, invasive species control, mechanical treatments, and rare species recovery that occurs in the landscape.
As the planting season concludes and we look forward to another great year, I would like to take this opportunity to commend our Nursery Conservation Partners for their ongoing commitment to The Longleaf Alliance. Nurseries such as Bodenhamer Farms and Nursery, Blanton’s Longleaf Container Nursery, Meeks’ Farms & Nursery, International Forest Company, and Whitfield Farms & Nursery have provided some of our largest contributions over the years, and we are humbled by their level of support and advocacy for the longleaf pine. Thank you to our new partners, PRT and Advantage Forestry Container Pines, for coming on board. Nursery Seedling Contributions and Nursery Conservation Partnership support is an irreplaceable portion of our budget and of significant importance to the overall goal to restore longleaf forests across the range.

For the past six years, The Alliance has worked closely with nursery managers to track seedling sales and availability across the range, as well as expand the evolving nursery list. Together, we continue to increase participation, improve methods and the level of customer service for our biggest supporters. Thank you to the wonderful nursery managers for helping us maintain a strong line of communication with our partners and for providing updates for the nursery list in recent months. If you wish to provide updates or learn more about the role of nurseries as part of our Nursery Conservation Program, contact Development Director, Lynnsey Basala, at lynnsey@longleafalliance.org or (314) 288-5654.

In 2016, we worked with partners and landowners to assist with the planting of approximately 1.6 million longleaf seedlings on nearly thirty-two hundred acres. We are committed to achieving our vision of eight million acres of longleaf pine by 2025!
PRT Joins the Alliance’s Nursery Conservation Partnership Program

By Lynnsey Basala, The Longleaf Alliance

In the Fall, PRT USA Inc. (PRT) announced immediate construction of a containerized forest seedling nursery in Atmore, Alabama, in order to serve forest landowners and other customers in the Southeastern U.S. Construction will be completed in early 2017, and sowing of seedlings will occur this Spring for shipping to customers for the 2017/18 planting season. The nursery will be established at the former E.A. Hauss Nursery site in Atmore. PRT will construct container growing facilities on the site, which it intends to expand over time in response to customer needs. PRT’s forest seedling product offering will include longleaf, slash and loblolly pine, and other species.

PRT committed to the Alliance’s Nursery Conservation Partnership Program shortly after the New Year, joining twelve other wonderful nursery partners across the range. We look forward to growing this relationship as they aspire to work closely with our partners throughout the Southeast U.S. and be an integral part of their successful restoration efforts now and in the future.

Established at the former E.A. Hauss nursery site on a long term lease with the Alabama Forestry Commission. The nursery will begin sowing in March with seedlings ready to be shipped for the 2017/2018 planting season.

PRT will offer native and piedmont longleaf seedlings utilizing local seed sources from all across the longleaf region. We will also offer improved seed for longleaf and will grow loblolly, slash and shortleaf.

PRT is North America’s largest grower of containerized forest seedlings with a network of 15 nurseries in the US and Canada.

For more information contact:
Flynn Miller
Flynn.miller@prt.com / 706-714-4108

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South Carolina Tree Farm Stewardship of the Land...

South Carolina’s Tree Farm program consists of a community of individuals and families representing over one million acres of private forestland in the Palmetto State. Tree Farmers are joined by their desire for excellence in forest stewardship. They share a commitment to protect watersheds and wildlife habitat, to conserve soil and provide recreation for their neighbors and produce the wood our state and nation needs to grow. Won’t you join us?

We offer great educational events such as our Nov 2 Forest Owners Program on Longleaf Pine Management -- to be held in conjunction with the SC Forestry Association’s convention at the Isle of Palms, SC. Coordinator is Walt McPhair, 2012 National Tree Farmer of the Year (864/299-7616 or TreeFarmSC@gmail.com).

For more information: SC Tree Farm, P.O. Box 211173, Columbia, SC 29221 803/367-4170; treefarm@scforestry.org or scforestry.org

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The Deepest Container on the Market!
Introducing our new 6.5” deep, lower density container for longleaf seedling production. Each cell holds 8.2 cu.in. (134 ml) of soil to help develop a larger root system for a superior stand of trees. The longer plug and greater soil capacity should result in a seedling with a higher survival rate than those with shorter plugs.

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1 MILLION plants.

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1 perfect day.

Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens is a partner of the Longleaf Pine Alliance - helping ensure a sustainable future for longleaf pine ecosystems.

NOT ALL SEEDLINGS ARE CREATED EQUAL.

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Sixteen years have passed since *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* was first published. These sixteen years, I’ve had the opportunity to meet a lot of people crazier about longleaf pine than I. After we met in Moody Forest, Cody Laird mailed me a heartpine walking stick and a set of heartpine coasters. He wanted me to help him construct a letter to his children and grandchildren about why they should continue his restoration work at Oakridge Farms. Lynda Beam invited me to Too Hollie and served a lovely farm breakfast – real grits – before showing me her stunning forests. Bob McCartney of Woodlanders showed up at our farm one day – we were teaching a chicken workshop and we thought he’d come to learn about keeping chickens, but no, he had stopped by to bring me a catface he’d found.

One winter solstice when we were marooned in Vermont, Johnny Stowe of the Carolina Sandhills, in deep sympathy, sent a box from the south – twigs of sweet shrub; an eastern box turtle shell, colored with pokeberries; an alligator jaw; a PBR can from his farm, drunk long ago by one Bunyon McCurry, old-timey dairy farmer; a deer scapula; a turkey wing-feather; a “liter” knot.

There were others, many others – from people whose lives have been touched by this magnificent ecosystem, all the way to people who have designed their existence around the flatwoods, people who have devoted their lives to the study and restoration of the longleaf pine flatwoods.

In that time, longleaf has inspired a wave of fine art: Philip Juras’s breath-taking paintings of fire, Beth Maynor Young’s photographs; P.L. Parke, Grant Livingston, and Wilma’s recordings of original songs; Dan Corrie’s poems; a book by Lawrence Earley and the Sutter-Way book detailing Leon Neels’s method of single-tree selection. And how many beautiful films – now Rex Jones’s “The Heart of Longleaf.”

In that time, we have managed to ensnare the government in our huge desire to see the longleaf pine system restored. We now have

America’s Longleaf Restoration Initiative.

Longleaf Partnership Council and the Range-Wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine, with its goal to restore 8 million of the original 93.

Longleaf Stewardship Fund of the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation.

Georgia Forestry Commission’s commitment to longleaf. Imagine!

The Nature Conservancy is still going strong with its longleaf initiative, and the amazing Longleaf Alliance is stronger than ever. I remember giving out longleaf pine seedlings at the Tree Fest in Baxley almost twenty years ago. We’ve come a long, long way from those days.

Last, because of *you* -- because of your devotion to the majesty and utility and astounding beauty of this ecosystem – because of your passion and fascination for it – because of your daily labors on its behalf -- the numbers are rising. In these sixteen years, the face of the longleaf landscape has been transformed!

The upland forests of the South have endured onslaught after onslaught -- from turpentining to timbering the old-growth, from ship-building to chipping for pulp, from tree-farming to biomass. The plants and animals associated with longleaf have the misfortune of joining our pine flatwoods in their demise, which is a disappearance from the face of the earth. Even in my short lifetime I have borne witness to this. With the loss of our forests, our rural economies suffer (we are exporting our jobs), our communities suffer, our cultures suffer, our landscapes suffer, our health suffers.

I have lived my life surrounded by forests that were Clear-cuts.

Beloved, thing longed for. I call it them clearances. A largess of beauty, removed. Even the people gone. The beautiful people. *Another* clearance, I say, surrounded by clearances. The dementia of it, the amnesia. Great pockets of silence, holes.

The most powerful word in my glossary is gone. My heart breaks, saying it. Breaks and breaks and breaks.

Lonely, bereft, we swallow our bitters.

But grief in its final stages is reconciliation. Graves are lovely too, it has been said, the scar across the breast, the hairless child, smoking rubble. No. Do not misread this. This is an elegy but we remember our land, and the mourner within us is also the warrior.

And we are not without hope.

I have been asked umpteen times: Am I hopeful? If so, where do I find it? What gives me hope?

I have a problem with this idea of hope.

I have come to ask of hope -- Who needs it? Hope is not a prerequisite for the great work. In hundreds and thousands of situations we do what needs to be done even when the future appears hopeless.

Do you realize that we may not get back 93 million acres and you sit down? Do you understand that the red wolf may be gone forever from the southlands and stop working? Do you
HEARTPINE

quit planting because the carbon numbers continue to rise?
What about love? Why doesn’t anybody ever talk about love as motivation? Why don’t we recognize that we do what we do because we love?
So the question How do I stay hopeful? becomes as ludicrous as How do I stay love-filled?
I’ll tell you how.
I wake every morning listening to the great-crested flycatcher call from the red maple and I watch that fat old orange sun, always burning, rise flamboyantly over the neighbor’s swamp. I watch hummingbirds in the red valentines of buckeye. Bottle-feeding the new calves at dusk, I watch bats hunting insects. In the evening I walk outside and gaze up through the bare limbs of the swamp chestnut oak into the starry, starry sky above our farm and watch a meteor blaze a trail to earth.
My sister comes to visit and wants to see a longleaf forest, so my brother and I walk her through the golden meadows of fall grasses at Moody Forest. We show her the circular leaves of wild indigo, point out the resinous holes of red-cockaded, praise the blazing star. In this wild tangle, I say to my sister, seeking words for how I feel, in these old trees, these knots, unable to say exactly what I am trying to say. This is our story, yours and mine.
It is more than our story. This is love. There is no place on earth more full of love than this.
Yes, we are living on an edge—lots of edges, in fact.
I think first of the fencerow, which modern chemical agriculture has been destroying, place where birds pooped out wild cherry seeds and wild cherry trees grew; and the edge between forest and field, or between ecosystems, the most exciting place ecologically.
We are on many edges: balancing the needs of the wild with the need to nourish, balancing urban life with the need to eat, human health with the need for productivity, weighing input against output, and making decisions based on both ecology and economy.
There is also a psychological edge. We know that we’re living in a world that is being devastated but also one replete with the beauty and power of life. We live on the boundary of deciding to make positive contributions although we know we are implicit in the destruction. We skate between apathy, because the truth of what’s happening is painful, versus action, any kind of action; and we skitter between the paralysis caused by grief and fear versus action.
Every decision we have to make, whether it’s a life-sustaining or a life-destroying one, is an edge. Our very psyches are on the edge, between dropping out and dropping in, between selling out and fighting back. Every single one of us.
The verge is a dangerous and frightening place. It’s important to know that one is not alone on it. The edge holds a tremendous amount of ecological and cultural as well as intellectual power. I believe that we have to get comfortable with it.
How shall we live?
We’re going to have to live as if we believe in the future -- the future of life on earth.
We’re going to have to fall in love with place again.
To fall in love with each other.
To stay put.
We’re going to have to ignore that many of our good ideas have been marginalized, and bring them to the center of attention.
We’ve got to teach ourselves and our children that we cannot spend and consume endlessly. We have got to learn to save and conserve.
We’ve got to live with our hearts wide open.
The writer Bill Kittredge said, "We all lose much of what could have been ours because we don’t pay much attention while we invent the future." It seems fitting that creatures of privilege, gifted beings, able to use language, to pass messages across geographies and generations, should speak and act on behalf of those who cannot.
We use our American traditions — of courage, frugality, open-mindedness, belief in freedom, resistance, and willingness to serve humanity instead of our own desires — to frame a new vision for a sustainable world. We use our language and our resources in the highest and best ways to repair the fabric of life, both human and wild. Through the work of preservation and restoration — not just of nature but of family, of community, of the climate — we elevate the dignity of our humanity.
A friend some time ago sent me a quote from poet Adrienne Rich:
My heart is moved by all I cannot save:
so much has been destroyed
I have to cast my lot with those
who age after age, perversely,
with no extraordinary power,
reconstitute the world.
And so, my longleaf friends, old and new, with you my lot is cast, you who with few extraordinary powers, with hearts full of love, continue the work required to reconstitute and heal ourselves, our relationships, and the world. Thank you for all you do and have done for the wild broken world, and for all that is before you. Thank you.
Because life is utterly fragile.
Unendingly fascinating.
Ceaselessly beautiful.
Humbling.
Awe-inspiring.
Divine.