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**ADVERTISING** Carol Denhof 678.595.6405 – editor@longleafalliance.org

**COVER** Longleaf Academy attendees exploring Reese Thompson’s longleaf woods during the Understory Diversity 201 Academy in September 2018. Photo by Carol Denhof.

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January in the longleaf woods is a quiet time. The summer birds have been in South America and the Caribbean for a couple of months. The hardwoods have dropped their leaves so their rustling has been replaced by the moaning of the wind in the pines. But January is also a very busy time for the landowner. Tree planting and prescribed burning are in full swing and this winter, unfortunately, there are the salvage operations for those impacted by Hurricane Michael in Florida and Georgia and road and culvert repair for those flooded by Florence in the Carolinas. The burning and planting are regular winter pastimes most of us enjoy, but the catastrophe of a powerful hurricane is hard to imagine. Our hearts go out to our friends in the impact areas as they work to rebuild their lives, homes, and forests.

Even with the pounding that some areas took in September and early October, 330 participants traveled to Alexandria, Louisiana for the 12th Biennial Longleaf Conference. Over 48 scientific papers were presented, and the field trips to Kisatchie National Forest and Mr. Daigle’s longleaf woods were a special treat. We will have all the presentations up on our website so those that missed a talk, or the Conference altogether, will be able to hear what was discussed. The knowledge gained, and the food and fellowship shared were unmatched, and this issue contains photos that many of us snapped during the week.

We also pulled together photos and descriptions of the projects the LLA staff completed in 2018. We taught classes and Longleaf Academies across the range and talked and met with landowners in every state. We translocated red-cockaded woodpeckers and worked with the University of Georgia to head-start hatchling gopher tortoises. Our staff members worked with the US Forest Service, NRCS, State Forestry Commissions, non-profits, and also private landowners to help them establish and manage their longleaf forests. I would like to thank all the donors, sponsors, and friends of The Longleaf Alliance that helped fund these projects. Without your support, we could not carry on the work to restore and manage the longleaf ecosystem.

So, get out and enjoy the quiet and busy time of the year that is upon us. You never know what old relic you might stumble across while out “tromping in the woods.” Have a wonderful winter.
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Staff
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President
robert@longleafalliance.org

Ad Platt
Vice President of Operations
ad@longleafalliance.org

Anne Rilling
Vice President of Business
anne@longleafalliance.org

Charlie Abeles
Wildlife Biologist
charlie@longleafalliance.org

Emily Bagby
Wetland Ecosystem Support Team Member
emily@longleafalliance.org

Nicholas Barys
Wetland Ecosystem Support Team Member
nicholas@longleafalliance.org

Lynnsey Basala
Development Director
lynnsey@longleafalliance.org

Ryan Bollinger
Local Implementation Team Consulting
ty@longleafalliance.org

Karen Zilliox Brown
Technical Assistance & Training Specialist
karen@longleafalliance.org

Emma Browning
Biological Technician
emma_b@longleafalliance.org

Vernon Compton
GCPEP Director
vernon@longleafalliance.org

Carol Denhof
Understory & Media Coordinator
carol@longleafalliance.org

Bobby Franklin
SoLoACE Partnership Coordinator
bobby@longleafalliance.org

Lucas Furman
GIS Support Specialist
lucas@longleafalliance.org

Lisa Lord
South Carolina Field Project Coordinator and Savannah Watershed Project Director
lisa@longleafalliance.org

Emma McKeen
Wetland Ecosystem Support Team Member
em@longleafalliance.org

Ryan Mitchell
Outreach & Technical Assistance Coordinator
ryan@longleafalliance.org

Edward O’Daniel
Wetland Ecosystem Support Senior Team Member
edward@longleafalliance.org

Jessica Sandoval
Biological Technician
jessica@longleafalliance.org

Brian Schumann
Ecosystem Support Team Member
brian@longleafalliance.org

Kaiden Spurlock
Ecosystem Support Team Supervisor
kaiden@longleafalliance.org

Randy Tate
Ft. Stewart/Altamaha Longleaf Restoration Partnership Coordinator
randy@longleafalliance.org

Ben Tuttle
Ecosystem Support Team Member
ben@longleafalliance.org

Donna Vassallo
Ecosystem Support Senior Team Member
donna@longleafalliance.org

Casey White
Administrative Assistant
office@longleafalliance.org

Bob Wilken
Fire Specialist
bob@longleafalliance.org
UPCOMING EVENTS

2019 Calendar

January 15-17
Longleaf Academy: Fire & Longleaf 201
Guyton, Georgia

January 26
Flatwoods Fire & Nature Festival
Austin Cary Memorial Forest
Gainesville, Florida

February 12-14
Longleaf Academy: Herbicides & Longleaf 201
Columbia, South Carolina

March 19-21
Longleaf Academy: Fire & Longleaf 201
Woodworth, Louisiana

April 16-18
Longleaf Academy: Herbicides & Longleaf 201
Florida – Location TBD

May 14-16
Longleaf Academy: Longleaf 101
Florida – Location TBD

June 11-13
Longleaf Academy: Herbicides & Longleaf 201
Jones Lake State Park, North Carolina

July 16-18
Longleaf Academy: Longleaf 101
Florida – Location TBD

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

WINTER 2019 MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST

Site Prep Burns: Sometimes it is important to conduct a site prep burn prior to planting longleaf. Site prep burns can remove logging slash, lead to better planting jobs, stimulate early growth by increasing available nutrients, and decrease hot spots that may kill young seedlings in subsequent burns. On deep sands or sites with little logging slash, site-prep burns may not be needed; better delayed to save fuels to manage wildling loblolly or sand pine seeding in during the first or second-year burn.

Planting Longleaf: To take advantage of the winter precipitation and maximize survival, planting early is almost always better than late planting. Remember to keep an eye on planting depth.

Prescribed Fire: Winter is a prime time to conduct fuel reduction burns in mature or sapling stands. Late December through the end of winter is a good time to introduce fire in young, healthy longleaf stands to help control unwanted pine seedlings and other competition. Use caution or wait when planning to burn in drought stressed stands.

Evaluate Young Stands: Evaluate young stands to determine one-year survival and insure adequate stocking using 1/100 or 1/50 ac plots. Wait until after the first frost when the grass stage longleaf is more easily seen.

Prune Longleaf: In some stands that lack fuels or have a low stocking rate, mechanical pruning may be an option to avoid the “Old Field” growth form. Winter is the easiest time to prune and should be finished before the spring green-up. Pruning may not be practical in a large stand.

Plant Native Warm Season Grasses: Later winter through early spring is the recommended time to plant our native understory species. Some plants require a cold-stratification period and need to be planted earlier.

Herbicide Treatments: Basal bark and stem injection herbicide treatments are typically most effective at controlling unwanted or invasive trees and shrubs during the dormant season.

RMS
Resource Management Service, LLC is proud to support the work of The Longleaf Alliance and its partners.
Q. Dear Longleaf Alliance,
I have a question about planting longleaf pine after site preparation. I completed my site prep herbicide application in late September using a tank mix that included 20 ounces per acre of 4 lb imazapyr herbicide. I’m told that I need to wait several months before planting my containerized longleaf seedling to avoid any potential stunting or mortality to the seedlings. Can you provide some guidance?

Thanks in advance for your help!
Concerned in Georgia

A. Dear Concerned,
You were given good advice to delay planting after your site preparation. Newly planted longleaf seedlings can be adversely affected by planting too soon after a site prep herbicide application containing imazapyr herbicide. The reference we use for guidance in this is a 2012 University of Georgia Extension Publication: A Guide to Using Imazapyr for Chemical Site Preparation in Southern Pine Establishment by David Dickens, Pat Minogue, and David Moorhead available online at https://www.bugwood.org/Imazapyr_Site_Prep_4-2012.pdf. If you look at the reference chart within this publication for 4 lb imazapyr sprayed in September at a rate of 20 ounces, it recommends delaying planting until December or January. Since you mentioned the application was made in late September, we would recommend a late December or January planting date. This is assuming normal rainfall and correct application of the herbicide by the sprayer. One other caution in the article is to allow an additional month if your site has a sandy, loamy sand, or sandy loam surface soil texture, is moderately well, or well to excessively well drained and has an organic matter content < 2% to avoid damage. If you have additional questions about this, please contact us.

Sincerely,
The Longleaf Alliance

Q. Dear Longleaf Alliance,
I have a 100-acre stand of 20-year-old longleaf that was removed from the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) five years ago. We were limited to 400 trees per acre when establishing the stand, but were able to plant it creatively with multiple bands of trees planted on 12 x 5 rows, interspersed with extra wide middles for access and to stay within the 400 trees per acre limitation. Since we left CRP, we have harvested pine straw from this stand, and it does provide a significant income stream each year. However, survival was not great from the start, the tree form of many stems is often rough, and there is a lot of fusiform rust, perhaps from excess fertility from surrounding crop fields. Each wind storm seems to drop a few more stems, and the stand is getting patchy in places. My goal was always to have a stand of open pole-sized timber and a place for bobwhite quail, but when I talked to a couple of foresters I know, their advice was “just clear-cut it and start over.” I’m a little old for that. Your thoughts?

Holding On To My Dream

Dear Holding,
We do wish you could have heard Dr. John Willis at our Conference this fall, who spoke on the topic of “playing the dealt hand.” His presentation emphasized the importance of managing the stand that you have, not the stand you wish you had, and also managing to the markets you really have, not managing to markets that are out of your reach. We should also stress that we do not wish to contradict the judgment of foresters who have seen the stand, since we have not, at least not yet. These kinds of decisions are improved by professional forestry advice.

But you did mention your personal goal and objective. And it is important enough to you that you are seeking another perspective. You referred to an age that might preclude reaching your objective if you were to start over. You further mentioned a significant income from pine straw, annually. We didn’t learn where your property is, but we should probably talk directly so we could ask additional questions in conversation and maybe see some photos or arrange a site visit.

Right now, with most regional markets currently offering historically low timber prices, it is hard to get excited about cutting a longleaf stand at age 20, before it has time to grow beyond the pulpwood category. The professional assessment of stem form or quality, in addition to stocking and current growth, would probably greatly help your comfort with the next decision. Is this stand still growing in volume or is it breaking up? You need an inventory. If stem defects or disease precludes having enough quality stems to successfully manage for products, then pulpwood or bigger pulpwood, along with pine straw, is realistically what you are growing. If this is the case, your question might be finding the economic peak to make the best of a bad situation. At 20 you have time to make this assessment. Markets may even improve (but could drop further) while you harvest straw, get some hard numbers, and grow a few more tons.

You were not satisfied with the unquantified recommendation, and your original objective still lingers. Let’s find out just how variable is the stand? Are there manageable parts of the stand that are decent, maybe 20+ acres even though the stand overall is disappointing? Is there a way to retain a piece that provides some of what you wanted, while liquidating the bad parts and starting a much better new stand for the future? If so, could you accelerate the appearance of what you desire by some judicious, recreational pruning, shaping up that first log and a half of your best crop trees? It may not have to make financial sense if it increases your satisfaction as a landowner. Sort of like owning boats or horses, what you want doesn’t necessarily have to make perfect economic sense.

Sincerely,
The Longleaf Alliance
PLANT SPOTLIGHT

EPIGAEA REPENS (L.) TRAILING ARBUTUS

Description
Trailing arbutus is technically a shrub but has the appearance of a woody vine. The stems that are covered in stiff, brownish hairs grow prostrate along the ground. It’s sometimes hard to spot this plant because it is often obscured by leaf litter. The leathery oval-shaped leaves are evergreen and measure up to 3 ½ inches long and 2 1/3 inches wide. This is an early flowering plant with flowers appearing from late February to early April. The white-pink flowers grow from the leaf axils and are extremely fragrant.

Distribution & Habitat
This member of the Blueberry family (Ericaceae) prefers acidic soils in dry longleaf pinelands and oak-hickory woods. It has a wide distribution. Trailing arbutus can be found from Canada all the way down to north Florida and west to Mississippi.

Wildlife Uses
Trailing arbutus may provide limited forage for deer during winter. It is of some importance for several insects. Its flowers attract bumblebees, and ants are said to be attracted to the berrylike capsule. Trailing arbutus is a larval host for the Hoary Elfin butterfly.

Commercial Sources
Seeds and plants of trailing arbutus can sometimes be acquired from specialty native plant nurseries.

References


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2018 was a great year for The Longleaf Alliance and our partners. From Texas to Virginia, Alliance staff assisted landowners, both public and private, with planting longleaf, managing stands with prescribed fire and restoring wildlife species such as the Federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker and the state listed gopher tortoise. We advised over 600 landowners with planting and management recommendations, lined up cost-share and introduced landowners to partner organizations such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and state forestry commissions. Our staff worked with partners to help tell the story of longleaf with “Story Maps” and help develop GIS tools to map longleaf. We attracted funding to plant longleaf across the range and introduced the world to Burner Bob, the bobwhite quail with the prescribed fire message. And this past October, we hosted the 12th Biennial Longleaf Conference in Alexandria Louisiana. All in all, a very full year for The Longleaf Alliance and all of our partners. We are proud to share with you some of our successes.

**Education**

**Academies**

In 2018, LLA achieved a milestone for the Longleaf Academy Program by surpassing 90 academies conducted since the inception with over 2,300 graduates. These intensive multiday courses now cover six different aspects of longleaf ecosystem restoration. Over the last year, The Longleaf Alliance conducted a total of ten Longleaf Academies in Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Texas, respectively. In response to requests from the field, LLA staff developed and held the first Longleaf Academy: Groundcover Restoration 201 in Aiken, SC. This new curriculum covers all aspects of artificially restoring the longleaf pine habitat through seed and live plant materials. You can find the most up-to-date schedule for upcoming Academies on our website.

**Biennial Conference**

The 12th Biennial Longleaf Conference was held October 23-26, 2018 in Alexandria, Louisiana. This event has become the biggest longleaf focused event and is attended by a wide variety of individuals who are involved in different aspects of longleaf management and restoration. The conference offers something for all who love longleaf, including private landowners, government agency personnel, non-profit staff, and industrial representatives. We were proud to host approximately 340 attendees over the course of the conference, and provide them with an educational, social, and interactive experience through speakers, receptions, and field tours.

**Restoration & Management**

**Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership Landscape Restoration**

The fifteen GCPEP Partners successfully worked together to secure funding and add staff to increase our restoration progress. The highest priorities in the GCPEP Conservation Plan include prescribed fire, invasive species control, and recovery of rare species. Rare species work continued with the red-cockaded woodpecker, gopher tortoise, eastern indigo snake, and
reticulated flatwoods salamander and additional funding and staffing allowed us to also advance habitat restoration for the flatwoods salamander, and to begin captive rearing. The four members of the WEST and three new biologists began their work with the LLA in 2018 and are centering their habitat and species recovery assistance on Eglin Air Force Base and/or Escribano Point Wildlife Management Area. This additional new capacity provided by the Ecosystem Support Team (EST), Wetland Ecosystem Support Team (WEST), and LLA biologists is really making a difference with recovery efforts and restoration and management of the longleaf ecosystem overall.

The Ecosystem Support Team (EST) is a driving force behind the restoration work that is being done in the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP) landscape. The team supported prescribed fire on 37,204 acres of partner lands in Alabama and Florida. Invasive species control efforts centered on cogongrass, Chinese tallow tree, Chinese privet, and Japanese climbing fern, totaling 27 acres. Although the acreage was small, the control efforts were important as they emphasized areas along roads and in forests where equipment could easily spread the species. Mid-story treatments of 1,486 acres included improving red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) habitat and preparing sites for prescribed fires. The EST was also able to provide 57 days of rare species recovery support through habitat restoration and management activities with major priorities including RCW nest checks and cavity maintenance, placement of cavity inserts, and gopher tortoise surveys and pen construction.

**Geographic Information Systems Support**

The Longleaf Alliance has been hard at work providing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) support to longleaf projects across the range. GIS is an invaluable tool for scientists, planners, land managers, and especially funders, as it provides context through mapping and spatial reasoning and facilitates data exploration and sharing of location-based insights. Simply put, we’re excited to see how GIS-based tools are supporting and accelerating longleaf conservation objectives.

Since the LLA officially launched a dedicated GIS program in 2017, our staff has greatly increased its capacity to assist Local Implementation Teams with conservation planning efforts, work with stakeholders on developing outreach tools such as “Story Maps” and serve as a hub to facilitate more effective communication between mapping efforts. Reflecting on the past year, it’s been a bustle of activity providing GIS support to conservation planning projects in three different states and developing several tools to support education and outreach across the range.

**Recovery of Rare Longleaf Species in South Carolina**

Private landowners are an integral part of the restoration of the longleaf ecosystem and the conservation of rare species that reside in those forests. As a natural extension of the landowner outreach in South Carolina, and in response to private
landowners that have requested assistance over the years to help ensure their forests are well-managed for rare species. The Longleaf Alliance expanded its outreach with several unique ongoing private lands projects. These initiatives include technical assistance, financial assistance in the form of cost-share for landowners, and in some cases, species reintroductions.

Starting in 2015, The Alliance began translocating red-cockaded woodpeckers to private lands in the Safe Harbor Program. Translocation addresses certain challenges within small populations and creates long-term conservation opportunities. The recipient populations contribute to range-wide recovery and increase forest biodiversity because of the RCW’s role as a keystone species. Hitchcock Woods, an urban forest in Aiken County was one of the first private land RCW recipients. In 2015 there were no RCWs in the Woods, and by 2018, there were 11 clusters with 21 birds.

Then, in 2017, LLA began a partnership with the University of Georgia's Savannah River Ecology Laboratory (SREL) to “head-start” gopher tortoises. The gopher tortoise is currently listed west of the Mobile/Tombigbee Rivers in Alabama, and being reviewed for listing to the east. To bolster low populations, tortoise eggs are collected, raised in captivity to increase survival, and released back to the wild in areas of suitable habitat. In the summer of 2017, eggs were collected at Aiken Gopher Tortoise Preserve in Aiken County, and 59 tortoises were released in November 2018. Eggs were also collected from private land in Jasper County in 2018, and the 19 tortoises being raised at SREL will be released back on the same property in the fall of 2019.

In 2018, LLA again teamed with SREL to survey private lands for gopher frogs. Gopher frog populations are declining due to loss of their terrestrial uplands and breeding sites. They are now listed as endangered at the state level and being considered for federal listing, so there is a critical need to locate existing populations and ensure proper management of both the wetlands and uplands.

A critical component of these rare species initiatives is providing technical and financial assistance to private landowners to help them overcome certain barriers to managing for rare species. Funding for these projects as well as cost-share for the landowners to help with the enhancement and management has been provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and International Paper through their Forestland Stewards program, American Forests, and USFWS Coastal Program.

Fort Stewart/Altamaha Longleaf Partnership celebrated its 5th Anniversary

During the year, non-Department of Defense partners burned 3,415 acres on priority private lands and 3,193 acres on priority public lands. Eighty-five acres of hardwoods were treated with herbicide in preparation for planting longleaf at Alligator Creek Wildlife Management Area in Georgia. Twenty acres of native groundcover seed were planted on the Orianne Indigo Snake Preserve and Moody Forest Wildlife Management Area. An Understory Diversity Academy was held at Little Ocmulgee State Park with 20 people in attendance.
**Tree Planting Projects**

Each year, The Longleaf Alliance is able to work with several funding entities to provide assistance to partners across the range with tree planting projects. For the 2018 planting season, we acquired funding from American Forests, Arbor Day, and Appalachian Mountain Brewery to help offset costs associated with planting longleaf seedlings. This equates to 492,158 longleaf seedlings planted on approximately 575 acres in Georgia, North Carolina, Mississippi, and South Carolina. These programs provide much needed funds to our partners that are busy restoring longleaf to the southeast.

**Landowner Outreach**

**Storymaps**

Storymaps combine the power of information sharing from multi-layered smart maps with compelling photographs, graphs, short videos, and narrative to provide an immersive, tour like experiential learning tool. They are constructed to provide access to as much information on a subject as a user might want, and the opportunity to explore the subject at the user’s own pace, to as much detail as desired, which leads to greater comprehension. The Alliance has found this a particularly intriguing new method for Outreach and for connecting to more tech savvy audiences.

The LLA developed three “Story Maps” providing interactive web content and maps to support education and outreach. The “Longleaf Road Map” story introduces America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative and showcases how the 17 LITs are working within their own geographies and communities to better educate the public about the history and future of longleaf. The “Talladega Longleaf” story discusses current forest management challenges and explores longleaf pine’s southern heritage, intrinsic benefits and some of the great incentives and resources available to landowners in Alabama’s Clay, Coosa and Chilton Counties. The “SoLoACE Longleaf Partnership” story provides background information about the origins of the collaborative conservation initiative and showcases some of the many accomplishments and goals for the future. Links to these Story Maps can be found on the LLA website (www.longleafalliance.org).

**Burner Bob**

The brainchild of Reese Thompson, Burner Bob is an iconic mascot promoting greater prescribed fire use. Bob is a bobwhite quail who lives in the longleaf forest with other animal friends such as gopher tortoises and red-cockaded woodpeckers. He devotes his life to explaining to people that the longleaf forest, with its many plants and animals, has evolved over time to being burned on
a regular basis. The forests need fire to survive. He goes about the land telling the story and showing people how to control burn safely.

Burner Bob works with The Longleaf Alliance to raise public awareness of the need for regularly scheduled, controlled fires to encourage healthy forests for the wellbeing and preservation of sensitive species of plants and animals. He has tremendous appeal with young people of any age, and is particularly focused on helping children become more aware of their native environment through educational products including a coloring book. Burner Bob is regularly sought for appearances at longleaf and prescribed fire related events around the Southeast. Throughout 2018, Bob was very busy spreading the word about prescribed fire. He traveled to eight events in Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, and South Carolina. We hope to make his message known to an even wider audience in the coming years!

Technical Assistance

The Longleaf Alliance is the go-to source for technical assistance across the natural range from Virginia to Texas, and sometimes beyond. These requests come daily by phone, email, website question line, or in direct contact. Technical assistance has been a hallmark of The Alliance since our founding, and has been instrumental in helping private landowners and other longleaf managers reach their own objectives. We answer all requests for assistance but have historically been challenged by limited staff time and travel funding in reaching more distant states. Today, we provide direct one-on-one assistance by the most appropriate means, and increasingly are using technology where it can be more efficient and practical than would be possible using traditional site visits. In 2018, our staff was able to respond to over 600 technical assistance requests, on topics ranging from site preparation to planting to harvesting, and from cost share incentives to ecosystem restoration.
NOT ALL SEEDLINGS ARE CREATED EQUAL.

VISIT US ONLINE
INTERNATIONALFOREST.CO/LONGLEAF
The 12th Biennial Longleaf Conference in Alexandria, Louisiana October 23-26, 2018 was a great success. The conference was attended by over 300 people and was a week filled with opportunities to learn about the latest in the efforts to grow and restore longleaf, to visit longleaf forests unique to central Louisiana, and to meet new friends and catch up with old ones. Here are a few snapshots from the week.

Longleaf Reflections: Looking Back, Taking Stock, Moving Forward

Wildflowers blooming at the Daigle property. Photo by Casey White.
1. Attendees enjoying lunch during the Field Tour. Photo by Lynsey Basala.
2. Beautiful display at the pre-conference dinner at the Southern Forest Heritage Museum. Photo by Casey White.
3. Brady Beck holding pine snake during the field tour. Photo by Randy Tate.
4. Delicious lunch during the field tour. Photo by Randy Tate.
5. Field tour stop in the Kisatchie National Forest. Photo by Randy Tate.
6. Exhibitors provided great information for attendees. Photo by Chrrissy Spurlock.
7. Burner Bob was a huge hit at the conference! Photo by Chrrissy Spurlock.
8. Plenary sessions were entertaining and informative. Photo by Chrrissy Spurlock.
9. The silent auction offered many unique longleaf related items. Photo by Chrrissy Spurlock.
10. Over 25 posters were exhibited at the conference. Photo by Chrrissy Spurlock.
11. The conference is always a great time to network and catch up with both old and new friends. Photo by Chrrissy Spurlock.
12. Speaker sessions were focused on four tracks this year: Partnerships, The Groundcover, The Tree, and The Ecosystem. Photo by Chrrissy Spurlock.
13. A fun time was had by all at the party held at The Hotel Bentley. Photo by Chrrissy Spurlock.
14. The Longleaf Alliance team. Photo by Chrrissy Spurlock.
15. Longleaf Alliance staff with tour host David Daigle. Photo by Randy Tate.
As we make progress in longleaf restoration, it is increasingly unlikely that any storm hitting the southern United States does not impact our progress somewhere. For every hurricane season, a 'wheel of misfortune' spins, slows, and someone's number comes up. Major events in 2018 included Florence’s epic flooding in the Carolinas and Michael striking the Florida panhandle as a Category 4 and carving a catastrophic trail deep into Georgia, continuing across the Carolinas and with continuing impacts in southeastern Virginia. Hurricane Florence primarily brought devastating flooding; Michael’s power was devastating winds. When such events occur, the support of numerous partners makes a vast difference in the recovery.

Michael was the strongest storm to hit Florida in 50 years, the strongest ever recorded to hit the Gulf Coast, and the third-strongest hurricane on record. Michael made landfall between Tyndall Air Force Base and Mexico Beach in Florida as a Category 4 with recorded windspeeds measured from 111 to 156 mph.

This was a catastrophe for people and property. From an environmental perspective it was an extreme natural disturbance, not the first and certainly not the last, but stronger than the ones healthy ecosystems must routinely absorb. A big hit. Perhaps also an opportunity. We continue to receive questions about the impact of these storms and are partnering to combine the best mapping information we can compile from several platforms to better characterize the impact of these events on the longleaf restoration efforts and to better guide the recovery that follows.

The preliminary estimate of Michael’s impact to timber was estimated to exceed $2 billion over an area of 5.4 million acres in Florida, Georgia, and Alabama. Damage surveys attempted to evaluate impact according to damage classes of catastrophic (95% damaged), severe (75%), moderate (25%), or light damage (10% does not warrant salvage) classes. Stands with moderate damage will need further assessment to determine whether partial or complete harvesting is warranted, and landowners are urged to utilize the services of a professional forester to determine the
best action. Stands with severe or catastrophic damage should be salvaged if possible for whatever value can be recovered, with consideration for future reforestation.

Across the impact area, forest landowners and the forest industry now face significant costs and impacts including direct loss of timber investments that typically are not insured, and often cannot be written off as a tax loss. There may also be additional timber lost to pine beetles or reduced value of remaining timber because of poor form and wind sweep. Debris removal costs of wasted timber to restore lands to productive use will be significant, and reforestation costs in these devastated areas significantly higher. Both the wildfire threat and the cost to suppress wildfires has increased in areas with upwards of 100 tons per acre of forest fuels on the ground, often strewn with unknown and hidden hazards. Because these local economies were heavily based on forestry, any potential loss or reduction of jobs in the forest industry could be a storm impact that would last for decades.

We have past evidence that longleaf is a tougher and more resilient pine in moderate damage zones. Once winds reach the catastrophic level, however, all bets are off, and damage to structures or timber are also likely catastrophic. Outside of the catastrophic wind zone of Michael, the pattern of damage from the storm is similar to that of other less severe storms we have experienced, with varying levels of damage correlated to how easily the wind could enter a particular stand. The most severe impacts are observed on field edges or stands open to a long ‘fetch,’ the distance winds blow unimpeded prior to impact. As is often seen, recently thinned stands with lower densities often had significant damage.

Tyndall Air Force Base was essentially ground zero, experiencing the eye wall passage. Access is still restricted only to essential personnel as we go to press, with many roads still blocked, but Melanie Kaeser, USFWS Ecologist, gained entry the last week of October to begin initial Threatened & Endangered (T&E) assessments and plan the recovery. Pine tree damage is estimated to be 95%, mostly slash pine, that was snapped. Buildings in these areas suffered a lot of structural damage. The slash pine timber formerly provided the revenue used to fund longleaf restoration on base. Because of the way timber was snapped, salvage operations will be minimal and below market price. Planning is underway with foresters and the wildland fire center at Eglin for restoration of the vast area of damage, which will likely require heavy mechanical treatments of shearing, raking, and burning at specified spacings as restoration funding can be made available. With the loss of an estimated $14 million dollars in revenue and no remaining timber to harvest to finance restoration, it may necessarily progress very slowly.

Considering the entire area resembles a war zone, people did amazingly well. Melanie and most of her neighbors stayed, though just a few blocks from the bay. Several natural features made a significant difference. The barrier islands absorbed the storm surge, though they suffered extreme erosion. Where dense live oak canopies deflected a lot of wind, neighborhoods fared much better. Where yards had open tree canopies, much more damage is obvious. Cell service was mostly restored within ten days; internet service is taking longer.

Species affected at Tyndall are primarily the coastal federally listed T&E species. The barrier islands protected Tyndall from surge impacts, though Crooked Island East and Crooked Island West appear to have suffered a lot of washover and beach erosion. Gopher tortoise burrows are still here and for the most part fine, unless impacted by fallen timber. The plan forward is a full base
assessment of populations. Previous GPS locations, rebar, and flagging, will help ensure machinery in the shearing and raking can see and stay at least 25’ from burrows to avoid burrow collapse. The reassessment of two federally listed plants, Godfrey’s Butterwort (Pinguicula ionantha Godfrey) and Telephus spurge (Euphorbia telephoides Chapm) will have to await access. Fortunately, a good baseline exists through previous annual population counts. We will be better able to assess the impact to native understory in the spring, and partners will be a big help in the assessments.

Cavity nesters in trees suffered significant losses. Tyndall did not have any RCWs, but they were all at risk on adjoining partner properties. Some RCW colonies were eliminated, and others had significant loss of cavity trees, but prompt actions by all partner agencies to inspect colonies and replace cavities helped to reduce losses and depredation for suddenly homeless birds near the storm centerline. The USFS alone expects to replace more than five hundred cavities in the Apalachicola National Forest to make up for the losses from this storm.

Much further inland, Michael still dealt a major blow to the Jones Ecological Research Center in Baker County, Georgia. Kevin McIntyre, Education Coordinator at the Jones Center, noted that they considered themselves lucky. Structures still sustained a lot of minor damage, with trees on the corners of some buildings, and a lot of variability in the damage to timber stands, often ranging from ten percent to half the stems downed. One logging crew immediately went to work on the salvage operations, focusing on the more damaged areas, but two others planning to assist have yet to arrive. Slash pine seemed to take it hard, with a lot of the damage seeming to be associated with fetch - - an ‘open door’ allowed more damage from winds which were still up to Category 3 levels. Their restoration plan includes revisiting the 864 permanent upland management plots to better assess the change and damage. There are some locations where plantations of loblolly, slash, and longleaf can also be compared.

**Focus on recovery**

Individuals, state and local government agencies, church and civic groups, non-government organizations and partners of all kinds immediately jumped into recovery mode and responded quickly to help restore access, clear the path for reconnecting utilities, and facilitate the search and rescue efforts for friends, family, and neighbors. Governments are getting better at this, having learned from previous major storms.

Information is most critically needed following a crisis, even if it is just sharing what we don’t yet have answers to, but where and how we plan to get them. In the absence of information, rumors proliferate. Following Michael, coordinated “Recovery Assistance Meetings” were quickly organized and rapidly held at locations across the impact zone in Florida and Georgia, and the numbers attending were at or exceeded meeting room capacity. At these community meetings, citizens had opportunities to hear from agency leaders of state and federal agricultural and forestry agencies on assistance that was already committed and to begin their applications even as assessments were continuing. Given the magnitude of the losses, additional programs and assistance are being created and assistance is expected.

Landowners are moving quickly to recover whatever value they can through prompt salvage harvests, but both loggers and markets are limited. The use of a registered consulting forester is highly recommended in assessments and can help reduce both hasty judgments and include consideration of all or any options that may be available. But with the continuing warm fall weather, speed is of the essence since blue stain fungus will deteriorate the wood in a few short weeks. With pulp mills damaged and pulp inventories high, the initial focus is on salvaging as much of the higher valued sawtimber as possible.

Following Hurricane Hugo, almost as significant an event, only about 15% of the damaged timber was salvaged in time, most at 20 cents on the dollar. The magnitude of this storm, and the cumulative loss of value so many have experienced, has led to a bipartisan, multi-state proposal for a Forest Recovery Act to help with cleanup efforts, special tax relief for timber casualty losses (usually not applicable under current rules), and funding for reforestation.

Some of the evident improvements include a lower human casualty count, both from the storm and so far through the also dangerous recovery period. Faster response and restoration of essential services and organizations, in spite of damaged office locations, having a presence to assist those in need. Sometimes
folks are frustrated by processes which can seem bureaucratic, but it is evident that agency partners are giving their all and doing all they can, and more smoothly this time around.

**Opportunity following this crisis**

One thing that we’ve definitely learned is to be site-specific in the cleanup and restoration efforts, and to ensure that contractors are informed how to avoid accidentally causing more damage to the things that matter as we go about restoring sites. This guidance could include avoiding impacts to animal populations like gopher tortoise, or to minimize damage to healthy native understory, and guarding against spreading noxious invasive species as we restore sites.

Owners are advised to continue to monitor pine stands with moderate or light damage and to be on guard for subsequent pine beetle or disease issues that sometimes follow in the spring. Wind damage from root wrenching also can be expressed in the next growing season. Planning for reforestation closely behind salvage operations should also consider risk from pale weevils in addition to the usual hardwood or invasive challenges.

**Resources for landowners and land managers**

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has a cost-share program called Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) that assists with site preparation and planting costs. They have waived the onsite inspection requirements for this program in the counties impacted by Michael.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has offered additional signup periods for EQIP incentive programs, and it expects additional funding in the wake of this extraordinary event. NRCS leaders are refining assessments to potentially deliver additional funding for longleaf programs to support the recovery in areas hardest hit. For more information, contact your local NRCS office.

The Longleaf Alliance is also engaged, from helping connect people with specific providers of assistance to technical assistance for questions. More than ever, we are sharing the information and resources we have with those impacted, and by participating in planning and recovery assistance meetings, we are guiding resources to where people and species at risk in the longleaf world are most critically in need. Our staff is directly engaged in assisting partners with specialized chainsaw and burn planning assistance. Living where longleaf grows will provide you a number of experiences both with hurricanes and how people respond in the aftermath; examples both good and bad, and we learn from both.

Was it a catastrophe? Yes. And both people and trees come back following all manner of catastrophes, even relentlessly. Our efforts and choices will guide where the future forests will rise and how resilient and how suitable they will be for people and for the diversity of plants and animals that belong there.

A host of information is gathered at www.usa.gov/hurricane-michael.

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**DAMAGE STATISTICS BROKEN DOWN BY STATE**

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<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Acres Timberland Impact</th>
<th>Financial Impact</th>
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<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
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<td>Georgia</td>
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<td>Severe (75% damage)</td>
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<td>Moderate</td>
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You would not want to hear rivets popping out of your airplane’s skin at 30,000 feet over the Southeastern Coastal Plain as you flew between, say, Baton Rouge and Atlanta. That is precisely why Paul and Anne Ehrlich used the rivet metaphor when they described the alarming, bit-by-bit loss of biodiversity (Ehrlich & Ehrlich 1981). A point they wished to make was that even if the loss of one redundant rivet does not necessarily portend dire consequences, losing too many - or the wrong ones - indeed would be catastrophic.

In any case, the metaphor is a good one, in spite of some clear limitations. Rivets are replaceable (if one pops out in flight, it could be replaced once the airplane touches down), whereas species are not (extinction is forever). The metaphor is also limited if it is interpreted (albeit incorrectly) to mean that species are equivalent. In this sense, different species are more like the different components of the airplane. The consequences differ for losing a rivet, the nose cone, or an engine. The airplane does not fly in the absence of a critical component.

With increasing emphasis on restoration of longleaf “piney woods” and their high-diversity groundcover (Kirkman & Jack 2018), it is important to identify the critical components that together constitute functional and sustainable communities and ecosystems. Many would agree that native bunchgrasses are critical components of longleaf plant communities. In fact, the scientific literature contains claims that each of the few select species of native bunchgrasses that physically dominate the high-diversity groundcover is such a critical component of its community that I am compelled to call each one a longleaf piney woods “trinity species,” i.e., a combination foundation species, keystone species, and ecosystem engineer.

Paul Dayton (1972) gave us the term “foundation species” (based on his research on the structural significance of benthic sponges for nearshore Antarctic marine communities): “those which have a disproportionately important influence on the structure of the community.” Hovanes et al. (2018) applied this term to the native bunchgrasses that constitute the physically dominant element of well-managed, high-diversity longleaf piney woods groundcover.

Based on his observations of the outsized influence *Pisaster* sea stars have on rocky intertidal communities along the Pacific Northwest coast, Bob Paine (1969) coined the term “keystone species.” Paine and colleagues defined a keystone species as “one whose effect is large, and disproportionately large relative to its abundance” (Power et al. 1996). Among several others who have referred to piney woods bunchgrasses as keystone species, Clewell (1989) stated that “wiregrass [Aristida stricta] is the keystone species for determining the fire regime.”

Clive Jones et al. (1994) identified “ecosystem engineers” as species that “directly or indirectly modulate the availability of resources to other species, by causing physical state changes in biotic or abiotic materials… they modify, maintain and create habitats.” In addition to “allogenic engineers” such as beavers, which change the environment due to their activities, they distinguished “autogenic engineers,” which change the environment via their own physical structures (i.e., their living and dead tissues). In her master’s thesis, Kaplan (2005) pointed out that ecosystem engineer is an especially apt term for our dominant native bunchgrasses, owing to their combined prominence in the groundcover and their hefty influence on fire behavior.

Although it has been argued in the literature that wiregrass, little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), slender bluestem (*S. tenerum*), and certain other bunchgrasses that physically dominate the piney woods groundcover each meets the requirements to be considered a critical trinity species, relatively little research has been done on the specific roles that these bunchgrasses play. It
has long been known and understood by land managers and restoration professionals that these bunchgrasses are especially influential through carrying fire (see discussion and many references in Noss 2018). In ongoing research, we are also learning how these species in the trinity bunchgrass guild or functional group interact with and influence other members of their associated groundcover assemblages.

For example, trinity bunchgrasses appear to organize into characteristically over-dispersed patterns (Hovanes et al. 2018). This means that individual bunchgrass tussocks tend to be a bit farther from one another than we would expect by chance. Three potential causes seem especially likely. First, inter-tussock competition for light or belowground resources (nutrients or water) could cause tussocks to space themselves on the landscape. Second, plant-soil feedbacks mediated by microbes could result in reduced conspecific recruitment near established tussocks. Third, overlapping biomass between tussocks’ root crowns could create fuel cells (sensu Hiers et al. 2009) with ramped-up local fire intensity and severity relative to the adjacent fuel cells directly over the rooted portions of the tussocks. (As an aside, Gagnon et al. [2010] suggested that especially flammable species, such as our native bunchgrasses, might possess adaptations for flammability to better survive frequent fires. If a plant burns hot, but fast, relatively little heat might penetrate to the belowground organs from which a surviving plant could resprout. Less flammable fuel directly above the roots, but more fuel between tussocks could be the spatially periodic fuel-cell pattern that drives tussock over-dispersion.)

Irrespective of the causes of over-dispersed bunchgrass patterning, the spatial arrangement has consequences for the overall community and ecosystem. At the community level, the interstitial spaces among tussocks provide opportunities for colonization and persistence by smaller-stature groundcover species. At the ecosystem level, over-dispersed bunchgrasses (as long as they are not too far apart from one another) could carry fire across the landscape more readily than randomly spaced or clumped tussocks would.

Any ol’ species of dominant grass simply won’t do. Dominant native bunchgrasses form discrete tussocks whereas exotic grasses that form lawns, sods, turfs, or otherwise densely packed swards or stands, such as bahiagrass (Paspalum notatum) and cogongrass (Imperata cylindrica), render the groundcover depauperate in species. Brewer (2008) provides a clear example of the dire consequences for diversity of substituting non-native cogongrass for native bunchgrass in piney woods groundcover.

My principal objective in this article is not to overshell the “trinity” idea (which I am mostly suggesting just for fun), but to highlight the importance of identifying, understanding, and restoring the critical components of piney woods ecosystems (a subject that warrants continued serious attention). Accumulating research suggests that whether or not native wiregrass, little bluestem, and their ilk meet all the criteria to be considered “trinity bunchgrasses,” they appear to be critical components of natural and well-restored longleaf piney woods ecosystems.

**Literature Cited**


Winston Churchill once said, "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." It's no secret there are incredible difficulties, or challenges faced by biologists, managers, and landowners when focused on increasing wild quail populations across a given property. Mostly attributable to major land use changes and subsequent habitat loss, quail populations in the Southeast have been in major decline since the 1960s. The same factors causing this decline are often what creates the challenges associated with achieving high quail huntably densities (i.e., local population greater than one quail per three acres) today. These challenges can impact habitat conditions both on a large scale (i.e. landscape level) and small scale (site specific conditions at the individual property level).

A plethora of conditions can make or break wild quail populations. Arguably one of the top challenges faced today is landscape context. Landscape context is conceptually defined by the overall habitat quality of the property being managed along with that of surrounding lands. This influential factor essentially dictates the potential for bobwhite management success across a given property and landscape. In essence, landscape context answers the often-asked question of "How much acreage is enough?" to successfully manage for bobwhites. Property size certainly plays a role but is more a function of landscape context relative to habitat availability. In other words, if a property is 3000 acres in size and predominately upland, the influence of landscape context becomes less significant, though still an important factor, than if the property were 500 acres surrounded by lands in poor quail habitat condition. On the other hand, a property that is 500 acres of uplands and surrounded by thousands of acres of intensively managed quail properties has high potential for sustaining wild quail at high huntable densities. Landscapes with land uses not conducive to wild quail pose difficult challenges to managers as they are often out of a manager’s or landowner’s control. That does not mean it’s an impossible challenge to overcome. This is actually an incredible opportunity to expand from source populations of wild quail through habitat expansion across multiple properties as well as an opportunity to further educate neighboring landowners on fire ecology, habitat restoration, and much more. The challenge of poor landscape context is best addressed by forming quail management cooperatives across multiple ownerships.

Landscape context, however, is just the beginning. At a property scale, additional site specific challenges occur that lie between a manager and their objective. Land managers with a quail focused objective in the Southeast are typically charged with finding ways to overcome these challenges to increase wild quail populations and sustain them at high levels. This is nothing new. Managers in the Albany area of Georgia and Red Hills region of Florida and Georgia have succeeded at overcoming many of these challenges for decades. In recent years however, there has been a growing interest in achieving high quail densities outside of the Red Hills and Albany regions. In fact, Tall Timbers’ 10-year strategic plan is partly geared towards complementing these and other growing interests outside of the Red Hills and Albany area in an effort to increase wild quail habitat to beyond 100,000 new acres. Several new challenges accompany this growth and expansion of wild quail habitat. Though many of the fundamental needs quail have are the same throughout their range, there are unique challenges associated with individual properties across these “new” regions. For example, Tall Timbers’ Carolina Regional Quail Project’s primary focus is partnering with landowners, agencies, non-government organizations, etc. to meet this strategic plan goal in the Carolinas. While wild quail hunting objectives in the Carolinas are certainly not anything “new”, there are some challenges unique to this area such as property size, specific hunting objectives, sites with poorly drained soils, and resource conditions.
limitations. These challenges present new opportunities to learn and increase acres of habitat for wild quail, local wild quail densities, and our knowledge base for what it takes to achieve these and other specific objectives.

Areas where habitat has been intensively managed and quail hunting has remained the primary focus, such as the Red Hills region and Albany area, have demonstrated that management success is possible and have facilitated the learning and experience that has developed the knowledge base professionals have for managing wild quail today. Applying what has been learned through decades of intense trial and tribulation for growing high densities of wild quail and adapting that knowledge to areas with unique challenges is allowing managers to overcome these and other challenges, achieving success. Coincidently, Mr. Churchill (quoted earlier) frequented one such property in the Lowcountry of South Carolina, Little Hobcaw Plantation. Back in Mr. Churchill’s day, Little Hobcaw was a wild quail “mecha.” Due to land use changes and factors like those described earlier, Little Hobcaw began to see population declines along with the rest of the surrounding landscape. Today, Little Hobcaw is well on its way to becoming a shining example of how a property can be restored and managed in a way to achieve and sustain high huntable densities of wild quail. This is being achieved through passion driven optimism and by utilizing research-based technical guidance to overcome site specific challenges.

As Mr. Churchill advised, we must remain optimistic in situations where difficulties or challenges are faced and receive these as opportunities to learn and grow. Just as opportunities have provided learning experiences with success in the Red Hills and Albany area that are now being applied in other regions, growing opportunities in the Carolinas will provide experience and success that might prove useful beyond those.
Greetings from southeastern Arkansas! I am the Project Leader for the USDA Forest Service’s longleaf pine research work unit, having been promoted to this position in the summer of 2017 when Jim Guldin was “kicked upstairs” into his new roles as the Southern Research Station’s Station Silviculturist and member of the Station’s Research Advisory Board. As a relative newcomer to the longleaf pine community, I know I have a long way to go to earn my novice stripes (let alone take a leadership role). In my previous 17+ years as a Research Forester in one of the Station’s other southern pine units, I had nibbled around the fringes of longleaf pine, contributing to a scientific publication or two on this iconic species. Rather suddenly last summer I found myself leading a unit with a storied history of silvicultural and ecological work in longleaf, toiling with scientists and practitioners with vastly more experience than I... This means I must develop new relationships in an ecosystem spread across millions of acres—with the closest of those longleaf forests hours from my duty station.

Further complicating my promotion was the need to update the longleaf unit’s Research Work Unit Description—the document that charts our plan for future research. Forest Service research units are required to periodically reevaluate our programs following a process that includes seeking feedback from those interested in our research and knowledge transfer. Some of you may recall the efforts of then-Project Leader Kris Connor and the rest of her unit staff engaged in this effort, which involved a lot of in-person visits. Needless to say, much has been learned since this last chartering effort, circumstances of the longleaf unit have changed (between retirements and a new Project Leader), new longleaf-related initiatives have emerged, and new research directions have arisen. This combination of circumstances has provided for a natural opportunity—we needed to update our foundational charter, and I needed to introduce myself. To this end, we have been reaching out to people and groups, while developing a “story map” to illustrate the extent and nature of our work to date.

So, I now ask for your assistance. We seek your suggestions to ensure we remain useful and relevant to the longleaf community’s research needs. While retirements have thinned our ranks over the years, longleaf pine research by the Forest Service is still going strong, and we are constantly seeking out new opportunities to support public and private landowners improve this resource. Our scientists and professional staff look forward to working with The Longleaf Alliance, America’s Longleaf Restoration Initiative, and the National Forest System to help them meet range-wide restoration efforts such as the Million Acre Challenge. We also will continue to support the efforts of small private landowners and local interest groups whose contributions to the recovery of longleaf and affiliated species will be just as vital. Forest Service research on longleaf pine must carry our successes from the past to address the challenges of the present, so we better know what questions to ask for the future—and serve all of the interested constituencies in the process with their specific needs.

And expect to see more from me in the near future in The Longleaf Leader and elsewhere!

Send suggestions to Don Bragg by email, dbragg@fs.fed.us, or by mail to the following address:
Southern Research Station
USDA Forest Service
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Monticello, AR 71656
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Our landowner spotlight this issue features the Hitchcock Woods Foundation (HWF) for their stewardship of the 2,100 Hitchcock Woods, a longleaf forest on the fall line sandhills in the heart of Aiken, SC. The Foundation is governed by a Board of Trustees led by Chairman Patricia Corey and guided by board members: Lehr Brisbin, Larry Byers, Elizabeth Carey, Courtney Conger, Nancy Francis, William Hitchcock, Jane Hottensen, Anne Kiser, Lucy Knowles, Dana Massey, Linda McLean, Sara McNeil, Greg Paschal, Joanna Samson, Harry Shealy, Jr., Timothy Simmons, Randolph Wolcott, and Sarah Wood. There are currently two full-time staff members, Bennett Tucker, Woods Superintendent and Joanne Gunnell, Executive Assistant, as well as two part-time staffers.

As directed by the Board, the staff’s mission is to protect and preserve the Hitchcock Woods in a natural and ecologically healthy state, maintain and manage historic and traditional equestrian and pedestrian uses and foster education and research on the history and resources of the Woods. The staff and trustees strive to maintain and restore the ecological integrity of the Hitchcock Woods and to serve as a model for sustainable urban forestry, balancing stewardship of forestland natural resources with compatible human uses.

The Hitchcock family acquired the property in the late 1800s to use as a winter retreat from their native New England, primarily for the enjoyment of fox hunting and horseback riding. During that time, the Aiken area was becoming a “Winter Colony” of wealthy northerners and a haven for those who enjoyed equestrian sports. In the 1930s, the Hitchcock family established a foundation to care for the land and left it as a gift to the people of Aiken for their enjoyment in perpetuity. The original gift of property was just over 1,100 acres, but over the years the tract has grown to its current size. The property includes more than 70 miles of trails open to horseback riding, hiking, jogging and related outdoor uses. The property is a mecca for the “horsey” set in the region and hosts the 104-year-old Aiken Horse Show in March as well as other equestrian events during the year.

Bennett Tucker, an Aiken native who grew up rambling about the Woods, is the Woods Superintendent and is tasked with fulfilling the above-mentioned objective of the Foundation. HWF also strives to foster education and research on the property in order to learn more about the natural and cultural history. Bennett follows Gary Burger, HWF’s first forester who began implementing the Stoddard/Neel method of management on the property in the mid-1980s.
Bennett’s connection is up close and personal. “I grew up on this land volunteering, riding horses, helping with prescribed burns in college and planting longleaf as a teenager, so my connection to the land is deep and that’s why this property is so special to me.” The Woods contains some of the last remaining old-growth longleaf in the area, with some stately, flat-topped trees as old as 400 years. Longleaf Alliance cofounder Rhett Johnson called it a “Legacy Forest.” He said, “You just don’t see many tracts of longleaf like this anymore.”

The HWFs efforts to restore the longleaf ecosystem centers around returning fire to the landscape. This can be a daunting challenge given that the town of Aiken has literally grown around the forest. They have an excellent prescribed burn program, using a combination of Foundation staff and local volunteers combined with state-of-the-art equipment. This, with a continuing outreach and education program, keeps townspeople informed of prescribed burning and other land management activities such as trail maintenance and timber harvesting. The combined effort has led to a growing acceptance of prescribed burning in the Woods and support of the effort to restore the ecosystem.

Bennett enjoys burning. “My favorite activity is prescribed burning. The most gratifying thing is to see the groundcover after each prescribed burn revealing new life and bringing back native grasses and wildflower species that haven’t been exposed in decades due to the long fire suppression history on this land. It changes yearly, and I like having a hand in that.”

It took time to get to this point. In the late 1980s – early 90s, cutting of trees and using prescribed fire was a foreign concept to many Aiken citizens. It took the HWF Board actively going out into the community and explaining the Stoddard/Neel method of management, which uses careful single-tree selection and prescribed fire to manage the ecosystem, not just the trees. The community education is still an ongoing process. Bennett still gives programs in the community on “Good Fire vs Bad Fire” while recruiting volunteers to assist with their prescribed burns. According to Bennett, it’s an easier job than 30 years ago when the Board first started the effort. “It’s not ‘IF’ a fire will burn through the Woods, it’s ‘WHEN’ and we want to choose the ‘WHEN’ and do the burning on our time and keep the fuels in check.” Bennett added, “I still go out into the community and talk about prescribed burning whenever I’m asked. I’m sold on it; now it’s my job to go out and share the story of ‘good fire’ with others. It’s now much easier to tell the story because we’ve been burning for 30 years. Folks can see the fruit of our work, and the process speaks for itself.”

As one can imagine, none of this management is inexpensive. It cost money to burn and maintain 70 miles of trails. While some revenue is generated from the harvesting of timber, that is not annual income. To offset expenses, HWF has used cost share programs from the Aiken County Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). They are active participants in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). According to Bennett, CSP helps with prescribed burning and timber stand improvement practices, such as controlling competitive, off-site hardwoods in longleaf stands. CSP provides an annual payment to assist with those annual conservation practices. EQIP has provided help with funding for fireline construction as well as water bars, trail improvements, and pollinator plant establishment.
The CSP program allows HWF to invest more money in restoration work. This is very helpful because it offsets costs for practices the Foundation is already conducting. It is a great program for helping landowners maximize the potential on the land whether it’s for wildlife, timber or ecological restoration. In addition, HWF has worked with The Longleaf Alliance through the SoLoACE Longleaf Partnership cost-share programs as well as reintroducing red-cockaded woodpeckers (RCWs) on Hitchcock Woods. To date, they have released 28 RCWs in 11 clusters over the past three years. These birds have raised young and seem to be doing well in the Woods.

When asked what he’s learned during his tenure at Hitchcock Woods, Bennett responded, “I’ve learned in restoring longleaf you need to be patient, especially if you are dealing with old-growth trees that have been fire suppressed for a long time. If you are a manager or landowner, realize that it has taken a while to get in this condition, and you need to be careful and conservative in reintroducing fire into those stands. Seek wisdom from The Longleaf Alliance and others with like experience to do it right. The end results can be hugely gratifying. It’s a long road, but it’s worth it.”

*Old-growth longleaf in Hitchcock Woods. Photo by Hitchcock Woods Foundation.*
A new project is underway to develop a sharable GIS database of longleaf pine ecosystem occurrences (LEO) across the range. The Southeast LEO database project is assembling “pieces of the puzzle” - as one forester in Alabama described it – to provide a comprehensive view of existing longleaf in the U.S. This effort is modeled after the Florida Longleaf Pine Geodatabase created by the Florida Forest Service and the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI), which houses geographic data for almost 2 million acres of existing longleaf pine in Florida.

FNAI is building the Southeast LEO database in cooperation with the Longleaf Partnership Council, The Longleaf Alliance, and numerous other partner agencies and organizations. The database will enable partners to track longleaf acres and condition and will be useful for conservation and cost-share planning at local and regional levels.

The project’s first phase includes database design and gathering and integrating existing longleaf pine data from many different sources across the range. The second phase includes identifying data gaps for field assessment and developing a field data collection protocol and mobile app for data collection in focal areas. The final phase includes integration of the new field data and development of an interactive web map for query and display of data.

**The Search for Existing Longleaf Data**

Local mapping and field data for longleaf pine and its habitats are the foundation for this effort. FNAI is currently soliciting spatial data from partners across the range. FNAI will integrate existing data into a standardized format that will enable display and tally of longleaf acres and, when data are available, vegetation structure and condition.
Spatial data sharing by partners – governments and private sector alike - is vital to building this range-wide understanding of longleaf. Examples of data needed are forest stand inventories, plant or animal species’ locations where longleaf was observed, vegetation maps, and boundaries for conservation lands that are primarily longleaf pine habitats. Read below for how you can help.

**Why Measure Condition**

While mapping acres of existing longleaf is valuable, knowing the condition of those acres is also important in tracking progress toward longleaf conservation goals. The America’s Longleaf Restoration Initiative 2009 Range-Wide Conservation Plan established a goal to increase longleaf acres from 3.4 to 8.0 million acres by 2025. The plan also outlined three levels of management to use in classifying the longleaf acres - maintain, improve, or restore - with a goal of 3 million acres in or moving toward maintenance condition. Tracking vegetation condition can assist partners in measuring progress toward ecological and conservation planning goals.

**Working with LITs to Fill the Gaps**

A comprehensive look at existing data also helps identify remaining gaps in our knowledge of longleaf occurrence. To address these gaps, the LEO project will include field surveys using a Rapid Assessment method for canopy, midstory and ground cover conditions. The initial field surveys are planned for LITs within the range of gopher tortoise, a priority for the NRCS Working Lands for Wildlife Gopher Tortoise initiative which supports this project. FNAI is developing a rapid assessment protocol, training, and mobile data collection app, with field teams expected to start by spring 2019 in the Camp Shelby-Desoto LIT.

**How to Help**

The Southeast LEO project needs and will appreciate your collaboration in building a database that will enhance your work and that of others throughout the longleaf range. For more information contact Amy Knight (aknight@fnai.fsu.edu) or Carolyn Kindell (ckindell@fnai.fsu.edu), phone 850-224-8207 ext 214 and 229 respectively, or visit the LEO project webpage at www.fnai.org/se_longleaf.cfm where you will find links to Frequently Asked Questions and Data Request information.

FNAI is housed within Florida State University and is a NatureServe Natural Heritage network member. Since 1981, FNAI scientists, GIS analysts, and conservation planners have provided independent, objective, scientific information to government agencies, private firms, conservation groups, researchers, and the general public. Learn more at www.fnai.org.
By Gary Burger, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

The State of the Longleaf Partnership Council

Having just held our bi-annual Longleaf Partnership Council (LPC) meeting in conjunction with the Longleaf Alliance Conference in Alexandria, Louisiana, now is a good time to reflect on all of the great things that the LPC and its many partners continue to accomplish for longleaf restoration around the range, and some of the ongoing challenges that we face. Our fiscal year 2017 Accomplishment Report details all these things, and our soon-to-be finalized 2018-2021 Strategies and Actions document (the third iteration of the S&A document) will lay out how we intend to keep the America’s Longleaf Restoration Initiative (ALRI) current, relevant, and moving forward towards the 8-million-acre goal in 2025. Turning the decline of longleaf acres across the range into a now increasing amount is truly a success story, but there are still challenges and much work to be done. With the help of the many dedicated ALRI partners, including The Longleaf Alliance, the future of longleaf and its ecosystem(s) are excitingly positive.

Longleaf establishment across the range continues to be strong with 131,000 new acres of longleaf being planted in FY17. Unfortunately, that number is down a little bit from FY16 and continues a slightly downward trend of establishment over the past five years (151,000 acres in FY13). This seems to be counterintuitive given the amount of effort and resources flowing into longleaf restoration. Closer coordination with seedling nurseries has been initiated and will hopefully shed some light on this perplexing situation. This seedling supply coordination will be one focus for the LPC over the next few years. More importantly, though, the trend of overall longleaf acres continues to increase, just what we all are working so hard to make happen.

Prescribed burning numbers last year followed a similar pattern, being down a fair bit from FY16, but overall again posting a really substantial accomplishment of over 1.3 million acres. A wet spring and busy western wildfire season contributed to this lower yearly total. One thing the LPC is working on, however, is more accurate reporting of longleaf burning acres. Several state forestry agencies are now tracking these numbers through their burn notification/permitting systems, and we hope to expand this method to other states. The LPC has also recently streamlined its overall partner accomplishment reporting methods. The FY18 roll-up is in progress now and look for a new and improved 2018 Accomplishment Report in the near future.

Another new and exciting project is now underway to map longleaf across the range at the stand level and to capture condition information about as much of that as possible. Thanks to funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Gopher Tortoise Initiative and the US Endowment for Forestry and Communities, the LPC have partnered with the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) to expand the highly successful work done by FNAI and the Florida Forest Service across Florida. A range-wide database is being developed, and a combination of digital data gathering and rapid field assessments will be used to populate the database, beginning in four of the Longleaf Implementation Team areas. The Florida work and new analyses of FIA data indicate that there is a lot of potentially restorable longleaf out there that may not necessitate complete replanting. Identification of mixed species stands with a restorable component of longleaf, coupled with strategies to restore these stands, will be a key focus for the LPC in the coming years.

The US Forest Service continues to be a leader in the ALRI, having developed and embarked on its Million-Acre Challenge this year. An effort to put another million acres of National Forest lands “on the path” to longleaf restoration by 2025 is a huge commitment to the longleaf community. Just putting up big numbers like this is crucial to the 8-million-acre-goal, but also serving as an example of how other public lands partners might make similar commitments is also very important, and something the LPC will be building on.

Not to be outdone, on the private lands side of things, NRCS and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation both made available record high levels of funding in 2017. Their commitments of $5.5 million and $15 million respectively are available record high levels of funding in 2017. Their commitments of $5.5 million and $15 million respectively are going to be matched or exceeded again in 2018. These funds are critical for the support of the LITs and non-industrial private forest (NIPF) landowners. Landscape-scale restoration on large landholdings is certainly important for a variety of reasons, one amongst them being threatened and endangered species recovery. Equally important, however, is changing the inherent culture around and acceptance of longleaf, and there is no better way to do that than by engaging the smaller NIPF landowners who will carry the grassroots message. Opportunities to engage large private landowners, particularly institutional forest landowners, is more of an ongoing challenge for the LPC, but there is some encouraging movement in that arena as well.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of the many partners on the LPC, we have continued to build the momentum of the ALRI. There continues to be a whole lot going on in the longleaf world. I am excited about our progress and optimistic about the future of longleaf. Keep up the great work everyone!
On October 10th, Hurricane Michael made landfall directly on top of Tyndall Air Force Base, plowed across Bay, Calhoun, Jackson, and Seminole County (GA) before leaving the ARSA LIT region and devastating an unprecedented amount of inland agricultural and forestry lands. While partners across ARSA are grateful that few were injured or killed, the impacts to the natural resources in the area will be felt for a generation or more. According to one mill operator, “we process about 1 million tons of timber per year, there’s over 70 million tons of timber on the ground right now.” Landowners at a recent Florida Forest Service listening session brought a painful human lens to the issue, with many losing their retirement and life savings as timber was snapped and uprooted. Folks will replant as much as they can afford, with the help of new and existing aid packages promised by the state and federal staff in attendance at the session. But how did longleaf fair? A monitoring effort, led by the Joseph W. Jones Center, will hope to answer that question in time. For now, ARSA is digging out and prepared to plant just over 300,000 seedlings and 300 acres of native groundcover this winter.
REGIONAL UPDATES

Learn & Burn Workshop for Private Landowners Conducted on the Chattahoochee Fall Line

By LuAnn Craighton, The Nature Conservancy and RT Lumpkin, Georgia Forestry Commission

During October the first “Learn & Burn” prescribed fire training workshop for private landowners was successfully executed on the Chattahoochee Fall Line landscape of west-central Georgia. The goal of the workshop was to provide hands-on learning that allows landowners to build their skills and confidence in using prescribed fire as a management tool. Organized by the new Chattahoochee Fall Line Prescribed Fire Cooperative the workshop was made possible by partners including the Georgia Forestry Commission, The Nature Conservancy, Tall Timbers, and the Chattahoochee Fall Line Conservation Partnership collaborating to provide the teaching cadre, program equipment, and support logistics. The majority of landowners who participated in the Learn & Burn workshop completed the Georgia Prescribed Fire Certification class earlier the same week. During the workshop, landowners were teamed with experienced prescribed fire mentors. The day launched with a comprehensive safety briefing and demonstration of firing techniques. Then, each team moved to their burn unit and, guided by mentors, did reconnaissance of the burn unit, obtained a permit, developed/reviewed the burn plan, checked the weather, secured appropriate resources, burned the unit and completed the mop up. After the burns, the teams came back together for an in-depth discussion of the day and lessons learned. The workshop provided landowners with valuable hands-on experience, expanded their knowledge of prescribed fire technical assistance available in the area, and built a stronger peer to peer network across the region. More Learn & Burn workshops will be scheduled in the future on the Chattahoochee Fall Line.

Fort Stewart/Altamaha Local Implementation Team Holds First Groundcover Diversity Academy

By Randy Tate, The Longleaf Alliance

Partners came together at Little Ocmulgee State Park in Helena, Georgia at the end of September to host an Understory Diversity 201 Academy. Twenty folks attended and learned all about the importance of a healthy understory to longleaf restoration and maintenance. This was the second Understory Diversity Academy held in our LIT. The purpose of this course is to provide continuing education about the diverse longleaf understory, with an emphasis on native warm season grasses, composites, and legumes. Partners in the Fort Stewart/Altamaha LIT have a strong focus on native groundcover restoration and have seeded 20 acres over the last year to serve as donor sites in the future. Also, of importance to our LITs longleaf conservation efforts, as well as the entire state, nearly 83 percent of voters supported the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Amendment, approving the Nov. 6 measure by a wide margin. Amendment 1 authorizes the state to dedicate for land conservation up to 80 percent of existing sales taxes on outdoor sporting goods. Passage will provide an estimated $20 million a year to acquire, protect and improve lands critical for clean water, native wildlife and public recreation. This bodes well for our LIT since there is so much priority conservation land within our boundary. Also, the military mission was singled out in the legislation authorizing the amendment, and our LIT is home to both Fort Stewart/Hunter Army Air Field and Townsend Bombing Range (US Marines).
Cogongrass is a major threat to the restoration of the longleaf ecosystem in the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP) landscape of northwest Florida and south Alabama. It is an aggressive invader of both natural and disturbed areas and impacts landowners in a variety of ways. These include reducing wildlife habitat, disrupting ecosystem function, decreasing tree seedling and native plant growth and establishment, and altering fire regimes and intensity.

GCPEP partners continue to aggressively fight the spread of cogongrass, and together with the Six Rivers Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA), are having an impact. Several of the GCPEP partners, including the Navy, Conecuh National Forest, and Gulf Power, have provided funds to intensify the control efforts through the work of the Ecosystem Support Team (EST), and over the past year, the team has been treating known locations. But the greatest threat for continued spread of the species exists along road corridors, in borrow pits, and on private lands, where greater funding and increased landowner treatment assistance is needed.

The important role private landowners play in the recovery of the longleaf ecosystem is recognized by many. But if allowed to spread, cogongrass can severely impact recovery opportunities on private lands. GCPEP partners are committed to stopping the advancing front of cogongrass and support a more comprehensive and landscape-level approach to controlling this invasive species. Plans call for all vectors of movement for cogongrass to be addressed, helping to reduce infestations from occurring. Most important to control measures is early identification of infestations and treatment when infestations are of a small size.

Mississippi Longleaf Implementation Team

Over 1,200 acres within the DeSoto-Camp Shelby Significant Geographic Area (SGA) were recently protected along the Pascagoula River. The acquisition was made possible through the Mississippi Forestry Commission using USDA Forest Legacy Funding in partnership with The Nature Conservancy. The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality provided match for the project through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Gulf Benefit Fund. The property will be managed by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks as part of the Pascagoula River Wildlife Management Area. Although the majority of the property is bottomland hardwoods, there is longleaf restoration potential in the uplands. In addition, the property contains a small cemetery that dates to the early 1800s and includes a Revolutionary War Soldier’s grave. This purchase was an integral link in the over 80-mile river corridor connecting the Pascagoula headwaters to the Gulf.
Ensuring the conservation of longleaf pine forests entails some type of permanent protection of lands, whether through conservation easements on private land or fee acquisition by public agencies or private conservation groups. These activities have been an important strategy by the many partners that comprise the three North Carolina Local Implementation Teams (LITs) - the Cape Fear Arch, Onslow Bight, and Sandhills.

More than 5,000 acres were permanently protected in late 2017 and 2018 in the NC longleaf region. Approximately half of these acres are lands that either have longleaf or are suitable for longleaf restoration. These range from the sandy soils of the fall line sandhills to the wet savannas nearer the coast. Many are rich with rare species and will be enhanced through the reintroduction of controlled burning. Within the longleaf landscape are significant river and wetland communities, such as the Black and Waccamaw Rivers, which enhance the overall diversity. The oldest trees in eastern North America, bald cypress dating back to 364 A.D. and likely older, were protected in 2018.

Most of these newly protected lands will provide hunting, boating, and other recreational opportunities for the public. Conservation is also occurring on private lands with 321 acres placed under conservation easements that will protect and promote longleaf restoration. All these projects strategically protect and connect the many significant longleaf areas of eastern North Carolina, however much more work is needed to fulfill our longleaf conservation vision.

Three generations of the Ammons family recently hosted the second stop of the NC Sandhills Prescribed Burn Association’s (PBA) Fall Forestry tour. The Forestry tour wraps up a year of activities coordinated by the PBA and supported by the North Carolina Sandhills Partnership to engage private landowners in returning prescribed fire to the Sandhills landscape. Starting with “Why Longleaf 101” community meetings last fall, followed by workshops, field days and a series of certified burn courses, the PBA has been able to train and equip a cohort of private landowners with the skills needed to carry out their burn programs.

The Fall Forestry tour was created to showcase the successes landowners are having in restoring longleaf in a variety of landscapes from old agricultural fields to mature stands that have experienced fire exclusion for decades. These “peer-based learning” opportunities have proven to be critical in moving private landowners from interest to action in using prescribed fire.

As a result of the skills learned through restoring longleaf on his land and his work with the PBA, second-generation longleaf grower Thomas Ammons, along with his son, announced during the tour that they are starting a new family business to assist other families who are interested in restoring longleaf on their lands. Growing the capacity of contractors needed to assist newly motivated families will play a crucial role in achieving our 8-million-acre goal by 2025.
Learning and Representing at the Longleaf Conference: Ocala Longleaf Pine Local Implementation Team (OLIT) By Cheryl Millett, The Nature Conservancy and Ivor Kincaide, Alachua Conservation Trust

The Ocala LIT is now officially represented on the Longleaf Partnership Council by Ivor Kincaide as one of two LIT representatives around the table of 23 official members, and he participated in the October meeting in Alexandria, Louisiana. Following that meeting, Ivor and Cheryl Millett presented, “The Ocala LIT: Growing longleaf on the ground and through partnerships in the north-central Florida” during the Restorations through Partnerships session of the Biennial Longleaf Conference.

On the ground, Wildland Restoration International has completed 31 acres of hardwood removal and controlled burning on public and private lands. Through the Florida Forest Service’s private landowner incentive program, 36 acres of longleaf pine were planted, and 6.2 acres of understory plants were established as part of 15 acres enhanced or maintained.

New Longleaf Partner in South Carolina
By Charles Babb, Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership

The SC Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership (SLPCP) recently gained a new partner in its efforts to restore longleaf on private lands. Duke Energy, through its Duke Energy Foundation, announced plans to fund the Partnership with $25,000, specifically to provide landowner cost-share to establish and manage longleaf pine habitat within the LIT. While Duke has funded many projects to protect and improve the environment, this is the first time the Foundation has funded a project to restore the longleaf ecosystem.

“South Carolina is home to beautiful and treasured natural resources,” said Mindy Taylor, government and community relations manager for Duke Energy. “We are proud to invest resources and work alongside community partners to ensure future generations enjoy the immeasurable benefits of the nature around us.”

According to Charles Babb, LIT Coordinator, “This grant will allow the SLPCP to stretch our existing funds and be able to assist landowners establish or enhance approximately 150 additional acres of longleaf habitat. We are thrilled to have Duke Energy as a partner.”

Bret Beasley (US Fish and Wildlife Service) is the SLPCP partner who initiated contact with Duke and was the lead author for obtaining the grant. “Hopefully this will be a long-term relationship,” he said, “in our efforts to expand our capacity to serve landowners.”
Fall was busy in the land between the Edisto and Savannah Rivers. Our conservation plan and priority map were finalized and will guide our future restoration efforts. Special thanks are due to Ryan Bollinger and Rob Sutter for guiding us through the project.

In November, the first 59 gopher tortoises hatched at the Savannah River Ecology Lab (SREL) from eggs collected in 2017 and were released at the Aiken Gopher Tortoise Preserve. SREL “head-started” the hatchlings for a year to allow them to reach a larger size to better survive predation. We are also doing red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) work within the project area. Fall is translocation season for RCWs, and thus far we have translocated 24 birds and installed 44 nest cavity inserts on public and private land within the region. NFWF and American Forests are supporting this work. Site preparation season is in full swing for what hopes to be a busy planting season. Prescribed burning season will begin soon for what will be another busy season getting fire on the landscape.


Landowners are asking about longleaf plantation thinning strategies to meet objectives for developing quality poles and saw timber. East Texas has relatively few longleaf plantations older than 15 years old for demonstration areas. Recently, I led colleagues with the US Forest Service, NRCS, and Texas A&M Forest Service to locate and examine several older, well-established plantations. We will be looking for a cadre of experienced consultants and pole buyers to provide guidance and discussion in a 2019 workshop.

NRCS State Forester, Mike Oliver, and Dr. Eric Taylor, Texas A&M Forest Service, have been collaborating to provide training about the “open pine” condition class for their agency field staff. Forty employees (TFS District Foresters and NRCS District Conservationists) assembled to learn about ground cover associated with open pine stands in east Texas.

The second of several training efforts was completed last summer at the Fairchild State Forest outside Rusk, Texas. This beautiful working forest has an older stand of shortleaf pine undergoing enhancements through thinning and burning that has provided an open pine structure. Participants observed the ground cover response to the more open conditions. Training modules were provided across the stands by subject experts. Specialists from Texas AgriLife, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department also assisted.
The Kisatchie National Forest in Louisiana forms the core of the Kisatchie/Fort Polk Significant Geographic Area (SGA) where the local longleaf implementation team, the West Central Louisiana Ecosystem Partnership, composed of the U.S. Department of Defense, state and federal wildlife agencies, conservation NGO’s and others, have united to restore longleaf pine and other native ecosystems within a six-parish conservation area. Kisatchie plays a key role in area red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) recovery efforts under the Western Range RCW Translocation Cooperative (WRTC). The cooperative is a productive working partnership which includes state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private interests from Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas. The goal of the effort is to translocate RCWs from larger donor populations to smaller recipient populations that are unlikely to increase on their own. The recipient sites consist of 29 populations on 17 different state, federal, and private properties. Only RCWs fledged earlier within a year and that have a lower chance of attaining their own territory in the following year are translocated, thus not adversely affecting the source population. In October 2018, the WRTC moved 5 pair from the Calcasieu Ranger District of Kisatchie National Forest to the McCurtain County Wilderness in Oklahoma (a population that overlaps with the Oklahoma Ranger District, Ouachita National Forest). In addition, 2 pair from the Sam Houston National Forest in Texas were moved to the Jones State Park in Texas, and 11 pair were relocated to the Kisatchie Ranger District, Kisatchie National Forest.
Polly, the gopher tortoise, and Burner Bob have a friend named Indi, an Eastern indigo snake. Indi and his many relatives live in the southern parts of Alabama, Georgia, and most of Florida. Typically, they like open, dry, sandy regions dominated by longleaf pine, very much like the Ideal Pine Forest. The indigo is the longest snake in North America. Its skin is smooth, shiny black and without any markings, and in the sunlight, his black scales shine bluish-purple.

Indi is a good friend; he is harmless and remains calm unless he feels threatened. Indi eats just about anything that he can grab and swallow, things like small mammals, toads, frogs, lizards, and other snakes.

Indi often visits Polly’s burrow, especially in the winter to escape the cold. In the summertime, he likes cooler areas along streams and swamps. Every year, Indi enjoys taking many long trips, each of which is several miles from his home.
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Caroline Dormon: The South’s Exceptional Forest Conservationist and Naturalist


Caroline C. “Carrie” Dormon was a renowned forest conservationist and one of the most influential American naturalists of the early 20th century. In an era when women had no role in forestry, she led the effort to establish the Kisatchie National Forest, developed forestry education materials for schools, and promoted support for forestry among civic and community leaders. In addition to her passion for forestry, Carrie advocated education and support for indigenous peoples, wrote important books and articles on native plants, promoted highway and landscape beautification using native plants, cultivated and hybridized native irises, and led the establishment of a State arboretum. (Abstract).

Caroline Dormon: The South’s Exceptional Forest Conservationist and Naturalist is a recent profile of Louisiana leader Caroline “Carrie” Dormon (1888 – 1971) compiled and written by USDA Forest Service emeritus scientist James Barnett, along with Sarah Troncale, science teacher in Rapides Parish, Louisiana and published as a General Technical Report. Richly embellished with vintage and current photographs along with sketches, paintings, and drawings by Caroline Dormon herself, readers are quickly drawn into the world of her profound lifelong love of nature and commitment to her studies, observations, writings and educational programs, and her active promotion of the natural world. One poignant illustration is titled The life of a lady forester – as told in brief, by one — where she depicts herself on the go: discussing trees, addressing schools, writing letters, and always dreaming of creating a “Kisatchie Wold Park” (‘wold’ an old English term for a forest or a high, rolling, open countryside). To Dormon, the Kisatchie Wold was special because it was covered with towering longleaf pines. Indeed, her favorite tree was a huge longleaf on her Louisiana estate, Briarwood, which is now a nature preserve. Because of her significant contributions to forestry, W.W. Ashe, noted forester and botanist, proposed and organized support for her election in 1930 as the first woman associate member of the Society of American Foresters. She is known as the “Mother of the Kisatchie.”

A beautifully written profile that engagingly conveys “Miss Carrie’s” personality and determination, you will read of the many passions and paths she followed for her hard-earned knowledge and successes. You will be inspired to learn further about her remarkable life. Her published works include Wild Flowers of Louisiana (1934), Forest Trees of Louisiana (1941), Flowers Native to the Deep South (1958), Natives Preferred (1965), Southern Indian Boy (1967), and Bird Talk (1969).

You may download this publication at www.srs.fs.fed.us/pubs/56076 or request a printed version. Please make any requests to pubrequest@fs.fed.us.
Laurelin Sitterly was our featured artist at the recent 12th Biennial Longleaf Conference in Louisiana. Over the course of the week, she created an original work that was inspired by the longleaf ecosystem. The final product which featured longleaf, the red-cockaded woodpecker, fire, and native grasses and wildflowers was auctioned off to the highest bidder at the end of the conference.

Laurelin grew up on the coast of Maine, splitting her time between exploring outdoors and making art. She moved south for school and holds a BFA in Illustration from Rhode Island School of Design. While at school she spent as much time as possible at the Edna Lawrence Nature Lab and got her first taste of the sheltering world while volunteering at the Providence Animal Rescue League. After graduating RISD in ’03 she devoted most of her time to animals, fostering dogs, cats and exotic animals while working in shelters/zooes as a humane and environmental educator. Laurelin is especially passionate about reptiles and carnivorous plants. She currently lives in Riverside, RI with her partner Jim, dogs Sadie & Sierra (who assist in her studio and at programs, respectively), cat Bula and many (many) plants. She has recently returned to art, starting Laurelin Rian Art and beginning with the #2018dailycreature project on Instagram. Much of her work in the past year has (unintentionally at first) centered around Longleaf Pine and the plants and animals that depend on them, leading to a fascination with these forests and the #fireforests project.

Laurelin at work on her longleaf inspired piece during the Longleaf Conference. Photo by Randy Tate.

About the Artist: Laurelin Sitterly
Forestry’s impact in Louisiana

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Located in Hardin County, two hours east of Houston Texas, The Nature Conservancy’s Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary is an example of the terrestrial and aquatic diversity of the western extent of the coastal plain in southeast Texas. This diverse landscape, historically known as the Big Thicket, includes wet pine savannas, bald cypress-water tupelo swamps, baygalls, bottomland hardwood forests, American beech-southern magnolia slope forests, mixed pine oak forest, xeric longleaf pine sandhills and woodlands, herbaceous seepage/pitcher plant bogs, and pine flatwoods.

The Sandyland preserve protects 2,848 acres with conservation easements (2,806 acres added in 1994 and 1995) to create a sustainable working forest and conservation area for longleaf pine and associated ecosystems. The original easements were granted with Temple-Inland, then were managed by Campbell-Global LCC, and are now held with CatchMark (Triple T). The Conservancy works cooperatively with Forest Resource Consultants (FRC) which oversees the easement property. The 5,654-acre project is contiguous with the 3,600-acre Village Creek Corridor Unit of the Big Thicket National Preserve. Since the Sandyland preserve is adjacent to the Big Thicker National Preserve, it is included in the United Nation’s UNESCO designation of the Big Thicket as a Biosphere Reserve.

The Sandyland Sanctuary serves as a public access nature preserve, a demonstration site for land and water management practices, an outdoor classroom for education and outreach activities, and a conservation site for the protection of ecologically significant species. The site has been designated as one of the top 500 important bird areas by the American Bird Conservancy and is Site # 17 on the Upper Texas Coast Loop of Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail.

**Flooding the Forest**

The tannic waters of an 8.5 mile stretch of Village Creek, a major tributary of the Neches River, flows through the western edge of the preserve. The Neches, a historic water and current route for shipping and navigation, ultimately empties into the Gulf of Mexico. Village Creek has flooded parts of the preserve before, including during the most recent hurricanes of Ike (2005) and Rita (2008).

Hurricane Harvey brought unprecedented rainfall in 2017 with over 35 inches of rain falling in five days, compared to a regional average annual precipitation of 54 inches. Village Creek rose quickly and, within five days, had flooded most of the preserve. Average flood depth across the preserve was 12 feet, with some areas flooding as deeply as 20 feet. Flood water remained over much of the preserve for 3-7 days, with areas closer to Village Creek being flooded for as long as 22 days. Flood waters covered most of the xeric, ancient alluvial sand deposit ridge of the preserve, the heart of the longleaf pine woodland on the site.

**Trees Like Water, But Only If They Can Breathe**

The Nature Conservancy team started vegetation monitoring in 2014 and have been counting and measuring pines of all
sizes across the preserve since that time. Our plan was to understand how management treatments (including chemical and mechanical shrub clearing, and prescribed fire) were affecting tree reproduction and recruitment. Having those detailed measurements from before the flooding meant that we could also understand how the flooding affected the trees.

Overall, the canopy-sized trees survived the flooding almost completely unscathed. Only 2% of trees (all species combined) were lost. Longleaf regeneration did not fare as well, especially in areas where the flood waters covered the plants completely for multiple days. Overall, approximately 15% of grass-stage, rocket-stage, and sapling-sized longleaf succumbed. The dead pines were clustered in areas with deeper flood water, meaning that there was 100% mortality of the young pines in some areas, but very few pines died elsewhere on the preserve. We hope that having surviving canopy-sized pines throughout the stands means that those young pines will soon be replaced. Monitoring will continue to assess the need for supplemental planting. We will also continue to check on the overstory trees for a few more years to see whether any trees that were stressed by the flooding eventually die from other causes.

Some Birds Don’t Like Rain

Since 2015, avian surveys have been conducted at many of the vegetation monitoring plots where we are measuring the trees. Some of the most common birds heard before the flood were pine warblers, northern cardinals, white-eyed vireos, and blue jays. Most of the birds in the area are ground-foraging (44%), followed by foliage insectivores (25%), bark insectivores (24%), and aerial insectivores (5%). Surveys were repeated in the spring after the flood, and many of the same species were heard; the distribution of species among the foraging guilds also remained very similar. Three bird species became much less common: blue jays, brown-headed nuthatches, and northern mockingbirds. These three species don’t migrate, so they were in the area during the storm. We’re not sure why they are less common now, but they could have flown away to avoid the storm and flooding, or perhaps some individuals were killed during the storm. The yellow-throated vireo, a migratory species that was not present during the storm, became more common. Northern bobwhite, another resident species, also became more common. In fact, while we knew that bobwhite was present on the preserve, we had never heard them during our point-count surveys until

Texas trailing phlox Phlox nivalis ssp. texensis. Federally endangered species of the xeric longleaf uplands of the preserve. Photo by Matt Buckingham.
after the flooding. Bird surveys in the spring of 2019 will be conducted to see whether these changes are temporary.

**Eyes and Action on The Future Forest**

One issue of concern after the flood is the introduction of non-native/invasive species into new areas of the preserve. Of particular concern with the extensive floodwaters is the potential for new locations of Chinese tallow. Preserve staff continue to monitor the preserve for new infestations of tallow and other undesired species.

Much of the past year was needed for recoup and repair of equipment, inventory, vehicles, building and road infrastructure, and personal residences. Given these factors and the unknown amount of stress on forest stands, the preserve was not subjected to prescribed burns for one year following the flooding event. With the movement of organic material and woody debris, pre-burn assessment and burn prescriptions will include physical inspection of the burn unit. Ignition patterns may be altered to protect mature longleaf if accumulations of materials would cause detrimental fire behavior, or in other areas where soils were scoured of pine needle and leaf litter.

Rare species of the preserve will continue to be surveyed. To date, three species of rare plants of the preserve, the endangered Texas trailing Phlox (*Phlox nivalis* spp. *texensis*), state threatened Scarlet Catchfly (*Silene subciliata*), and White Firewheel (*Gaillardia aestivalis* var. *winkleri*), all appear to have suffered no significant loss.

The preserve will continue to serve as a demonstration site to understand more about the impacts of natural disturbances on our environment and human-made resources. While our infrastructure was significantly impacted from this event, the resilience of our iconic longleaf pine ecosystem and other associated systems was significant.

Acknowledgments: The Nature Conservancy thanks volunteer Suzanne Zick for creating the flood depth and duration maps and interns Maeve Davidson and Declan Kiely, for tree data collection.

The Forest Program of The Nature Conservancy would like to acknowledge and thank the Big Thicket National Preserve and all friends, neighbors, and partners for their assistance, advice, and support during this the hurricane and recovery period.

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Roundstone Native Seed LLC is proud to be a part of The Longleaf Alliance. It is our passion, our drive, and our mission to make a positive difference in the natural landscape by working alongside longleaf conservationists and enthusiasts. We are grateful that the seeds we gather and produce grow into appropriate longleaf ecosystem understory.

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2018 REGIONAL LONGLEAF AWARDS PRESENTED

Congratulations to the twelve 2018 Regional Longleaf Award Recipients that were recognized at the 12th Biennial Longleaf Conference. These individuals and organizations make daily contributions and show unwavering dedication to furthering the cause of longleaf restoration across the southeastern United States. Awards were presented by The Longleaf Alliance President, Robert Abernethy during the Recognition & Awards Luncheon that took place on October 24 at the Holiday Inn – Downtown Alexandria.

The Bill Boyer Natural Resource Professional of the Year Award: recognizes a natural resource professional who has made outstanding contributions within the field of longleaf ecosystem conservation – Nathan Klaus, Georgia Department of Natural Resources

The Palustris Corporate Achievement Award: recognizes a corporation with long-standing commitment toward conservation of the longleaf ecosystem – Roundstone Native Seed Company

The Gjerstad/Johnson Landowner of the Year Award: recognizes a private landowner for ensuring the future of the longleaf ecosystem on private land – David Daigle of Alexandria, Louisiana

The Burner Bob Award: recognizes an individual or organization for outstanding efforts in championing prescribed fire to ensure the future of the longleaf ecosystem on private land – Jesse Wimberley, North Carolina Sandhills Prescribed Burn Association

True Longleaf Champion Awards: recognize a lifetime of dedication to the conservation and restoration of the South’s iconic forest – Vivian Beech of Grand Bay Alabama; Luther Jones, Natural Resources Conservation Service (retired); Clay Ware, US Fish and Wildlife Service (retired).

Conservation Partner Awards & Award Recipients

Natural Resource Conservation Service Team Achievement Award: recognizes an NRCS team that has gone above-and-beyond the call of duty in delivering longleaf restoration for private landowners - NRCS Chesterfield County South Carolina Field Office.

Department of Defense Team Achievement Award: recognizes a DOD team that has excelled in managing and restoring the longleaf ecosystem on Military Installations – Georgia Sentinel Landscape Team.

US Fish and Wildlife Service Team Achievement Award: recognizes a USFWS team for their exemplary management and restoration of the longleaf ecosystem for wildlife. – North Carolina Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

USDA Forest Service Team Achievement Award: recognizes a USDA FS team that has significantly improved and expanded the management and restoration of the Longleaf ecosystem on and around the National Forest System – US Forest Service Million Acre Challenge Team.

Non-Profit Conservation Partner Award: recognizes a non-profit organization that has significantly improved, protected and conserved the longleaf ecosystem – The Nature Conservancy.

Resource Management Service, LLC is proud to support the work of The Longleaf Alliance and its partners.
Nathan Klaus, Bill Boyer Natural Resource Professional of the Year

John Seymour, Palustris Corporate Achievement Award Recipient

David Daigle, Gjerstad/Johnson Landowner of the Year

Jesse Wimberley, on behalf of Sandhills PBA, receiving the Burner Bob Award

Vivian Beech receiving True Longleaf Champion Award

Luther Jones receiving True Longleaf Champion Award

NRCS Chesterfield County SC Field Office Team receiving the Natural Resource Conservation Service Team Achievement Award

Betsy Dutoit (NWTF), Alison McGee (TNC), and Randy Tate (LLA) accepting the Department of Defense Team Achievement Award on behalf of the Georgia Sentinel Landscape

John Ann Shearer, on behalf of the North Carolina Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, accepting the US Fish and Wildlife Service Team Achievement Award

The USFS Million-Acre Challenge team receiving the USDA Forest Service Team Achievement Award

The Nature Conservancy staff receiving the Non-Profit Conservation Partner Award
The Longleaf Alliance is very pleased to have three staff join GCPEP and two staff promote into new positions. Welcome and congratulations to all.

**Charlie Abeles** joins the GCPEP staff as Wildlife Biologist leading the LLA reticulated flatwoods salamander recovery efforts on Escribano Point Wildlife Management Area. Almost all known breeding locations for the species from the past five years have been located on either Escribano Point or Eglin Air Force Base. Charlie graduated from Virginia Tech College of Natural Resources with a Bachelor’s Degree in Wildlife Science and a minor in Biological Sciences. Most of his work experience has been with threatened and endangered herpetofauna and avian species, including previous work on Eglin Air Force Base with Virginia Tech as an Endangered Species Crew Leader.

**Emma Browning** is one of two Biological Technicians hired to assist GCPEP with rare species recovery efforts. Emma will be working on recovery of the reticulated flatwoods salamander and the gopher tortoise on Escribano Point Wildlife Management Area and Eglin Air Force Base. She has a Bachelor of Science from West Texas A&M University with a major in Wildlife Biology. She previously worked for Virginia Tech as a Herpetology Research Technician on Eglin Air Force Base and as a Wetland Restoration Specialist with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

**Nicholas Barys** joins GCPEP as a Wetland Ecosystem Support Team Member. Nick graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Natural Resource Conservation from the University of Florida in 2017. He previously worked as an OPS Park Ranger with Blackwater River State Forest and as a volunteer working with reptiles, amphibians, and habitat restoration at the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center and Nokuse Plantation.

**Jessica Sandoval**, previously the LLA Wetland Ecosystem Support Team (WEST) Leader, was promoted into the second Biological Technician position focusing on recovery of the reticulated flatwoods salamander on Escribano Point Wildlife Management Area. Promoting into the WEST Team Leader position is **Ed O’Daniels**, previously a Team Member with the WEST.
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— Becky Humphries, NWTF Chief Executive Officer

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The Natural Resources Conservation Service works with private landowners and cooperating partners to protect and restore America’s longleaf pine forests.

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By Lynnsey Basala, The Longleaf Alliance

The Longleaf Alliance Remains Steadfast Thanks to Unwavering Support

Happy New Year to our friends near and far across the longleaf range. We wish to extend a heartfelt thanks to all of the wonderful, dedicated and important non-profit, state, and federal conservation partners, individuals and families, corporations, foundations, and organizations that have allowed The Longleaf Alliance to continue to lead the effort in maintaining longleaf pine forests and their biologically diverse habitats throughout the southeast.

The Longleaf Alliance had a momentous year, and there is no slowing down in sight. It’s our pleasure to share the following exciting and collective successes achieved in endangered species recovery, education, and longleaf ecosystem restoration this year: The Longleaf Alliance (LLA) teamed up with partners in South Carolina and private landowners to restore the red-cockaded woodpecker in South Carolina. Grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), International Paper, USFWS, American Forests and you, our supporters provided the funding to restore this endangered species. We installed artificial nesting cavities and translocated 30 RCWs from the Francis Marion National Forest in the fall; another 24 RCWs will be moved from the Francis Marion to landowners in South Carolina’s Lowcountry with a desire to expand their RCW populations. Also funded by a grant from NFWF, we moved 60 birds from the Apalachicola National Forest in Florida to the Desoto National Forest in Mississippi. We are also doing RCW restoration work on the Conecuh National Forest, Blackwater River State Forest, and the Desoto National Forest. And a little closer to the ground, this past winter 69 Gopher Tortoise hatchlings were raised at the University of Georgia’s Savannah River Ecology Lab and were released this fall.

Our staff provided longleaf technical assistance such as proper planting techniques and prescribed fire management, understory restoration, and stand management to over 2,790 landowners, in person and via presentations. This included 38 meeting presentations, 9 workshops, 12 Longleaf Academies, 6 fire training courses, and 536 technical assists. Through social media outlets such as our website and Facebook, we touched over 250,000 individuals interested in learning more about the longleaf ecosystem. We just concluded the 12th Biennial Longleaf Conference in Alexandria, Louisiana where over 300 longleaf landowners and managers came together to meet old friends, make new ones, and learn from some of the best individuals in the business about the longleaf pine ecosystem and its management. We also worked with partners such as American Forests, Arbor Day Foundation, and the US Fish and Wildlife Foundation and participating public and private landowners to assist with the planting of 1.6 million longleaf seedlings and assisted with prescribed burns on over 50,000 acres. Last, but certainly not least: The Longleaf Alliance allocated an astounding 86% of income to programs and services this year; a figure that steadily increases and of which we’re quite proud.

Thank you for choosing to give your high-impact donations to The Longleaf Alliance through our wide array of multi-channel giving vehicles. Whether you donated $10 or $10,000 this year, your contribution does not go unnoticed. With that said, The Longleaf Alliance strongly encourages you to not only renew support this year, but consider increasing your donation. We are forever grateful for your trust and efforts to strengthen The Longleaf Alliance’s mission.

This list contains those that contributed funds between October 1, 2017 and September 30, 2018. If you find that we have made an error, please don’t hesitate to call our headquarters in Andalusia, Alabama or email us at office@longleafalliance.org so we can correct our records.

The Longleaf Alliance is a 501(c)(3) organization and contributions may be tax-deductible to the fullest extent permitted by law.
Supporting a good cause and having fun while fundraising brings out the kid in all of us. LLA received $1 of every Long Leaf IPA and AMB pint sold on tap between 6:00pm-8:00pm which resulted in a $1,153 contribution and Sam’s Bottle Shop becoming a new corporate conservation partner. Did we mention the free oysters!

Third-Party Fundraiser conducted at Sam’s Bottle Shop in Durham, NC in conjunction with National Arbor Day on Friday, April 27, 2018. Photo courtesy of Lynnsey Basala

Do you have a third-party fundraiser idea? Make LLA your charity of choice! Contact Development Director, Lynnsey Basala, at (314) 288-5654.

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The Palustris Society was founded by several members of The Longleaf Alliance Board of Directors to further the legacy that Rhett Johnson and Dean Gjerstad created to protect and restore longleaf forestlands. Since its inception in Fall 2015, twenty-one members representing seven states across the range, have joined the elite group of dedicated conservationists who share a dream of restored and viable working longleaf forests by making a donation or pledge of $10,000 or more to The Longleaf Alliance. Commitments range from annual contributions of $10,000 or more, to single commitments of $10,000 to be paid over a period of up to five years. For more information on the Palustris Society, contact Development Director, Lynnsey Basala, at (314) 288-5654.

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*These donors have designated all or a portion of their contribution to The Longleaf Alliance Endowment.

The Longleaf Alliance Endowment

The Longleaf Alliance Endowment was established in Fall 2015 and is comprised of tributes, memorials, restricted Palustris Society and individual contributions. The endowment offers a unique opportunity to strengthen our mission and ensure that the longleaf forest is conserved for our children and grandchildren to enjoy for future generations.

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Susan Miller  Abraham Rilkin  Susan Whitehurst
Douglas Miller  Joseph Riley  Joel & Allise Whitworth
Robert Mills  Randy & Anne Rilling  Jerry Wilcher
Buddy & Robin Moody  Adrian Ringland  James Zito
Ginger Moore  Shawn Riordan  Carl Yarborough
John Morgan  Janet Ritter  Filmore, LLC
M. Lane Morrison  Kevin Robertson  Transplant Solutions
Gary Mozel  Calvin Robinson  B. & J. Beal Nursery
Kim Mumbower  Farrell Robinson  Cary Pounds
Mark Munkittrick  Charles Roe  Robert Roundtree
Lynton Musselman  Chad Rogers  John Rowell
Stephen Musser  Christine Rolka  Bill Rummel
Gary Myers  Curtis Rollins  Paul Ryan
Jim Neal  Marco Romano  creekside Nursery
Lynne Neil  Thomas Roney  Fontaine Nursery
Darlin Newman  Angelina Ross  G. & D. Shop
Trice Nichols  Helen Roth  Gary & Son Nursery
Molly O'Connor  Kathleen Roth  Gary's Nursery
Ben O'Connor  Monica Rother  Gary McClellan
Mike & Bettye Older  John Saad  Gary McClellan, Inc.

Corporate Conservation Partners

$10,000 Level & Above
Norfolk Southern

$9,000 Level
Garden & Gun
Greater Alexandria Economic Development Authority

$5,000 Level
Advantage Forestry Container Pines, LLC
Appalachian Mountain Brewery ArborGen
Blanton’s Longleaf Container Nursery
CHEP, A Brambles Company
Duncan-Two Ltd.
Flowing Well, LLC
Forest Investment Associates
Hancock Timber Resource Group
International Forest Company
Meeks’ Farms & Nursery, Inc.
Resource Management Service, LLC
The F.A. Bartlett Tree Expert Co.  
Whitfield Farms & Nursery

$2,500-$4,999 Level
Align Mineral Management  
Dauntless Air  
Doggett Machinery  
Berger  
Bodenhamer Farms & Nursery  
Drax Biomass  
Enviva  
Forestate Growers, LLC  
International Paper  
Milliken Forestry  
Outdoor Underwriters  
PropTek  
PRT Growing Services  
Roundstone Native Seed, LLC  
The Cargo Hold  
The Forestland Group  
Vernon Parish Tourism Commission

$1,000-$2,000 Level
Campbell Global  
Charles Ingram Lumber Company  
Coastal Pine Straw, LLC  
Conservation Resource Partners  
Curry Sawmill Company  
Ernst Conservation Seeds  
Enterprise Holdings  
Georgia Pacific  
Green Assets  
Groton Land Company, Inc.  
Hood Industries, Inc.  
Little Thomas, LLC  
Mudd & Holland Consulting Foresters, LLC  
Merrily Plantation, Inc.  
Nutrien Ag Solutions  
Sam's Bottle Shop  
Southern Loggers Cooperative  
Templin Forestry, Inc.  
The Town of Woodworth  
Westervelt Ecological Services

$500 Level
Alexandria-Pineville Convention & Visitors Bureau  
Baker Land & Timber Management, Inc.  
Baldwin County Soil & Water Conservation District  
Crenshaw Land Management Group, LLC  
Crosby Land & Resources  
Long Leaf Land & Timber, LLC  
Mid Atlantic Pine Straw  
Molpus Timberslands Management  
Nalty Timberslands  
South Carolina Tree Farm Committee  
Southern Seed Company, Inc.  
Wake Stone Corporation

$250-$499 Level
American Forest Management  
Ancilla Pines, LLC  
Bellhouse Publishing, LLC  
Black Mingo Plantation, LLC  
Cedar Creek Land & Timber Inc.  
Cheeha Combahee Plantation  
Exelon  
Grace Acres Farms  
Hess Pottery  
JE Pittman Pea River Farm, LLC  
John L. Russell Properties, LLC  
Loblolly Forest  
Luce Packing Company  
Moore Farms Botanical Garden, LLC  
Nancy R. Walters Consulting  
National Audubon Society  
Oakridge Partners, LP  
PowerSouth Energy Cooperative  
Ridge Properties, LLC  
Stone Mountain Farm, LLC  
The Westervelt Company  
Visions, LLC  
Wells Printing

$100-$249 Level
Batts Tree Farm  
Dargan, King & Knight, LLC  
Flowers Forestry, LLC  
Henderson & Associates, Inc.  
Rayonier Forest Operations, LLC  
Thompson Forest Consultants, Inc.

Up to $100 Level
A D B S Farms  
A.J. Hodges Industries, Inc.  
Ammerman Timber Company, LLC  
Bankhead Land & Timber  
BB & MS Rounsaville Farms  
Beach Forest Management  
Bill Ardrey Forestry, Inc.  
Bladen Farms  
BR Mosley Land Co LLC  
Bradley Tree Farms, LLC  
Brewer Lands, LLC  
Broadwell Brothers, LLC  
C.V. Forestry Services, Inc.  
Canebrake Farm, LLC  
Carolina Heart Pine, Inc.  
Charles Dixon & Co., LLC  
Cleveland, Inc.  
Congaree River, LLC  
Construction Supplies of New Orleans, Inc.  
Delaney Development, Inc.  
Dexter Longleaf, LLC  
Diamond Timberslands, LLC  
Dopson Forestry Services  
P&W Forestry Services, Inc.  
Flint Plantation, LLC  
Forest and Land Management Inc.  
Forest and Real Estate, Inc.  
Forest Lodge Farms, LLC  
Forestall Company, Inc.  
Gillespie Lumber, LTD  
Good Earth Systems, LLC  
Hand Me Down Farm, LLC  
Harrison Woodlands, LLC  
Hart Family Farm, LLC  
Hobcaw Barony  
Jenkins Timber Properties, LLC  
Jowett & Wood, Inc.  
K & L Forest Nursery  
Keim's Forestry Services  
Leary Properties, LLP  
Light Forestry Consulting Services, LLC  
Longleaf Energy Group, Inc.  
McKeon Tree Farm  
Never Fail Farms  
Nixon Land Company  
North Bassett's Creek Timber Management  
O.W. Cox Naval Stores, LLC  
Ole Pataula Farms, LLC  
Oser Forestry Services  
Pasley River Farms, Inc.  
Pinecare Forestry  
Plantation Pinestraw  
RCWO, LLC  
RFR Consulting, Inc.  
Rigdon Livestock Farms, Inc.  
River Ridge Plantation  
Rutland Forest Nursery  
Sand Hills Forestry  
SC Forestry Services, LLC  
Szemore & Szemore, Inc.  
South Carolina Pole & Piling, Inc.  
Spring Creek Land Company, LLC  
Stuewe & Sons, Inc.  
Swanson Forestry & Real Estate Co.  
Thomas Farms, Inc.  
Three Rivers Forestry LLC

Timber Investment Managers, LLC  
Timberland Investment Resources, LLC  
Timberland Transitions, LLC  
Truax Company  
Uchee Farms, LP  
Universal Ethician Church  
Yarn Turpentine & Cattle Company  
W.A. Freise & Sons Timber and Land Company, Inc.  
Whipple Tree Farm  
White Oak Forestry Corporation  
Wildland Management Services, LLC  
Willowbrooke Farm, LLC  
Wood Lane Farm, LLC  
Woodland Cottage LLC

Agency Conservation Partners
Chesterfield Soil and Water Conservation District  
Florida Department of Natural Resources Management, Escambia County  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission  
Florida Forest Service  
Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Division  
Georgia Forestry Commission  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries  
LSU, Department of Biological Science Baton Rouge  
Natural Resources Conservation Services  
Natural Resources Conservation Services, Alabama  
Natural Resources Conservation Services, Louisiana  
Natural Resources Conservation Services, South Carolina  
NC Division of Forest Resources  
NC State University  
North Carolina Forest Service  
South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division  
South Carolina Forestry Commission  
St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge  
Texas A & M Forest Service  
United States Forest Service  
US Department of Military Affairs
SUPPORT THE ALLIANCE

US Endowment for Forestry and Communities
US Fish and Wildlife Service
US Fish and Wildlife Service, Georgia
US Fish and Wildlife Service, North Carolina
US Fish and Wildlife Service, South Carolina
US Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas
US Forest Service
US Forest Service, Conecuh National Forest
US Forest Service, Kisatchie National Forest
US Forest Service, North Carolina
US Forest Service, Oakmulgee Ranger District
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
USDA, National Resources Conservation Service, Alabama
USDA, National Resources Conservation Service, South Carolina
Virginia Department of Forestry

Nonprofit Conservation Partners
Alabama Forestry Association
Alabama Forest Owner’s Association
Alabama TREASURE Forest Association
Amazon Smile Foundation
American Forest Foundation
American Forests
Anonymous
Anonymous
Arbor Day Foundation
Audubon South Carolina
Bicknell Family Charitable Fund
Bradley/Murphy Forestry & Natural Resources Extension Trust
Florida Wildlife Federation
Friends of St. Marks Wildlife Refuge
Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelley Foundation
Henry Fair Family Fund for the Environment of Coastal Community
Hitchcock Woods Foundation
J. W. Jones Ecological Research Center
Jacksonville Zoo & Gardens
John Winthrop Charitable Trust
Lillian C. McGowin Foundation
Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry
Louisiana Forestry Association
Mississippi Fish & Wildlife Foundation
Mobile Botanical Gardens
National Audubon Society
National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
National Wild Turkey Federation
National Wild Turkey Federation, Alabama Chapter
National Wild Turkey Federation, Florida Chapter
National Wildlife Federation
NatureServe
North Carolina State University
Pine Needle Garden Club
Robert K. Johnson Foundation
Sethy Springs Charitable Trust
Sid & Vivian Beech Trust
Solon & Martha Dixon Foundation

South Carolina Association of Consulting Foresters
South Carolina Bluebird Society
South Carolina Tree Farm Committee
Southeastern Society of American Foresters, Flint River Chapter
Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Inc.
Tall Timbers Research Station
Texas Parks & Wildlife
The Conservation Fund
The Horton Trust
The Natives
The Nature Conservancy
The Orton Foundation
The Sandhills Area Land Trust
The Sledge Foundation, Inc.
The South Carolina Chapter of the Association of Consulting Foresters
Thomas and Loraine Williams Foundation
Walthour-Moss Foundation
Williams Family Foundation

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I did something stupid. I climbed a tree. It’s a tall longleaf pine, sitting on the bay. It was unwise. I have exactly one back-surgery under my belt. I could’ve killed myself.

Long ago, I once hiked into these same woods with a sack lunch and guitar strapped to my back. I climbed this tree because it meant something to me.

When I reached the top, I was too winded to play my instrument. So I just sat there and felt sad.

After Daddy died, sadness was the central feeling of my boyhood. This emotion doesn’t go away easy, it hangs with you from breakfast to supper. It’s in your dreams. It’s in each song you hear. Each tree you climb.

That day, my friend had family in town. His was a large family. A mother, father, sisters, brothers, Uncles, aunts, cousins up the kazoo. They had a summer cookout. Complete with tire swings, pink lemonade, and the whole ball of wax.

Early that same day, I visited his house. I was looking for someone to play with me, but I was met with a shaking head. My friend’s mother said, “You’ll have to come back later, we have family in town.”

Family.

And it occurred to me on that very day, on that very porch step, he had family, and I didn’t. In fact, I hardly knew what family was. My mother and sister and I were wounded people who tried to pay car insurance on time. My mother had lived in several rent houses in only a few years. Money was thin. Stability was a myth.

So I left my friend’s house. I promised myself I wouldn’t cry because I reminded myself I was stronger than that. And I climbed a tree with a guitar on my back like a person with the IQ of room-temperature coleslaw.

When I reached the top, my clothes smelled like a pine tree, and my hair had sap in it. I was out of breath, and my boyish hands were raw from climbing.

I looked across the old growth forest and saw the thousands of gray-barked trees, stretching toward Beulah Land itself, and I could almost feel them talking to me. And—believe me, I know this is going to sound ridiculous—but I felt like these trees were family.
After I’d spent a few hours in the towering pine, the sun was beginning to set over the Choctawhatchee Bay. And I started to climb downward with a guitar strapped to my back.

This was a big mistake. The guitar caught a branch. It nearly killed me. I fell from the top branches. I hit the dirt so hard it knocked the wind out of me. The guitar landed on top of me. It bounced, then splintered.

I laid on the forest floor, gasping. And when I caught my breath, I began to cry. Every feeling I had came to the surface. I stared upward and sobbed until my ears clogged. The trees stood tall, and strong, and just let me cry.

Then, I brushed dirt off and limped home, carrying a guitar that was in pieces. And I never told a soul about that day. Until now. Truth be told, over the years, I almost forgot about the whole accident. I guess I forgot how lucky I was to survive such a fall.

Anyway, a few days ago, I was in the supermarket. I spotted an old friend, ahead of me in the checkout line. He was a middle-aged man, with silver in his beard.

We shook hands. We hugged. In the checkout aisle, he was surrounded by kids. Sons, daughters, nephews, nieces were with him. Their faces were covered with smiles, and freckles.

I asked how he was doing.

“Oh, we’re good,” he said. “We’re just stocking up for our yearly cookout like we do every year.”

They are a beautiful family.

When I left the store, I stopped by a familiar patch of woods and walked through the tall straight-shafted trees until I found one I recognized. A sturdy tree, with a few low limbs.

I removed my shoes. I attempted to climb it. It was foolish, and irrational, and it was pure rapture. I made it ten feet high before my bad knee started to ache. And I’d be lying if I said I didn’t feel like a complete idiot sitting in those branches. But I did it.

And I can’t tell you why. Maybe I climbed it because no matter how old I get, I’m still that same boy who once got the wind knocked out of him. Who thought he would be blue forever. Who thought the world was against him. Who was sad because he had no family.

Well. I’ve grown up a lot, and I’m not sad anymore.

And I needed these trees to know that.

Sean Dietrich is a columnist, novelist, and radio show host, known for his commentary on life in the American South. His work has appeared in Southern Living, The Tallahassee Democrat, Good Grit, South Magazine, Alabama Living, the Birmingham News, Thom Magazine, The Mobile Press Register. He has authored seven books and is the creator of the Sean of the South blog and radio show.