

2022 | We Love What We Do!



GCPEP staff assist with restoration of Florida bog frog habitat. The burn piles are the result of mechanical removal of overgrown woody species. This is a series of restoration steps to promote herbaceous species growth and assist with regulating the seepage hydrology of bogs in the small floodplain of the seepage stream. Photo by Kaiden Spurlock.

The Longleaf Alliance (TLA) made significant progress toward our mission to ensure a sustainable future for longleaf pine ecosystems in 2022. From Texas to Virginia, Alliance staff assisted landowners and partners with longleaf establishment, prescribed fire, habitat restoration, at-risk species conservation, mapping, outreach, and more.

TLA programs continue to follow our GUIDE-ing framework to achieve key strategic longleaf objectives. The Alliance's G.U.I.D.E. acronym (Growing - Understanding - Improving - Diverse - Ecosystems) identifies our key strategic longleaf objectives.

All in all, it was a very full year for The Longleaf Alliance and our partners. We are proud to share with you some of our successes.

GROWING — We raise awareness, increase engagement, and grow a love for longleaf across the range.

In addition to exposing the general public to the story of longleaf pine, we also teach those same folks about how the benefits of “good fire” can have a significant impact on the landscape. The need for effective prescribed fire outreach and education is critical as more people are living and working in the wildland/urban interface.

2022 brought the in-person return of many public outreach festivals focusing on prescribed fire, including Party for the

Pine and Fire in the Pines in North Carolina and the second annual Savannah River Fire Festival in Georgia. Combined with other festivals focusing on longleaf, forestry, and wildlife, The Alliance festival exhibits reached almost 50,000 people.

The *Getting Started with Prescribed Fire on Private Lands* video, produced in partnership with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, combines landowner testimonials with technical resources and reached over 10,000 people on various social media platforms in 2022.

Burner Bob® the Bobwhite Quail, TLA's iconic mascot promoting the benefits of prescribed fire, had a very busy year, attending more than ten in-person events and releasing his newest outreach materials - *A Walk in the Woods with Burner Bob® & Friends* video and *Save the Indigo* coloring book.

UNDERSTANDING — We collect and share technical information about longleaf through science-based education, outreach, and technical assistance through methods best for each audience.

In addition to hosting the 14th Biennial Longleaf Conference in Wilmington, North Carolina in the fall, Alliance staff kept very full calendars all year with more than 350 technical assists to landowners and partners and reaching more than 2,500 people through workshops, field days, learn and burns, webinars, and academies.



A



B



C

A. Invasive Species Coordinator Emma McKee treats cogongrass in Florida. Alliance field teams treated over 3,000 acres of invasive species in 2022. Photo courtesy of Florida Power and Light.

B. Susan French and Burner Bob® promoted the Savannah River Fire Festival on the local news in April.

C. Gopher tortoise release day. TLA partners with University of Georgia Savannah River Ecology Lab to head-start gopher tortoises. Eggs are collected for rearing, and one-year-old tortoises are released the following year. Photo by Lisa Lord.

Longleaf Academy Program

In 2022, the Longleaf Academy Program continued offering both virtual and in-person learning opportunities. Virtual Longleaf Foundations, a condensed introductory course similar to Longleaf 101, was offered all year; participants completed online modules at their own pace with the opportunity to join “Ask the Alliance” live sessions throughout the year. With support from our partners, TLA staff offered four in-person Academy sessions, including Longleaf 101, Fire 201, Herbicide 201, and Groundcover 201 field day.

The Owen Fellowship

The Owen Fellowship of The Longleaf Alliance aims to advance longleaf pine research through a graduate student scholarship award. Recipients participate in the Biennial Longleaf Conference and contribute to The Longleaf Leader. In 2022, the inaugural Owen Fellowship was awarded to Kelly Petersen, Ph.D. Student in Ecology at the University of Georgia, to support her work on longleaf pine genetic diversity. As a two-year award, the application period for the 2024-2025 Fellowship will be announced in April 2023. Thanks to the generosity of Bill Owen, the second round of The Owen Fellowship will provide a \$20,000 scholarship award, paid in two annual installments.

IMPROVING FOREST HEALTH — Through active stewardship, we improve the condition of longleaf ecosystems across the range.

Longleaf Tree Improvement

In July, The Alliance convened a summit of longleaf tree improvement specialists from every sector, including federal, state, and private perspectives, as well as the leaders of each of the three university-led cooperatives (North Carolina State University, University of Florida, and Texas A&M University). Of the roughly 100 million longleaf seedlings produced annually, only about one-quarter have any degree of genetic improvement. Some existing orchards and seed production areas are vulnerable to age, declining health, and storm damage; many are not managed. Through this gathering, participants were energized to move forward in improving the quality and quantity of seed for future longleaf restoration.

Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership Landscape

The Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP) gathered on May 25th to celebrate its 25th Anniversary at the Bear Lake Pavilion of Blackwater River State Forest, the exact location of the first CGPEP gathering in 1997. Close to 100 people, both past and present partners, were joined by friends



Texas Forests and Water Forum, Nacogdoches, TX. Photo by Lisa Lord.

from the Longleaf Partnership Council to mark this significant milestone and to reflect on all of the restoration accomplished in this landscape effort.

The Alliance is proud of the GCPEP field teams' hard work to support the stewardship of the landscape. The EST (Ecosystem Support Team), WEST (Wetland Ecosystem Support Team), and the AMBBIS (reticulated flatwoods salamander) team continued to assist partners with prescribed fire, invasive species control, wetland restoration, reticulated flatwood salamander head-starting, Red-cockaded Woodpecker cavities, and other habitat improvement activities in Alabama and Florida.

DIVERSE FORESTS CONSERVED — We work with landowners to ensure the future of longleaf by conserving high-quality, diverse longleaf forests across generations.

Forests and Water

Two-thirds of the freshwater in the United States comes from forested watersheds. Forest landowners are essential to supporting healthy watersheds and our drinking water.

In South Carolina and Georgia, The Longleaf Alliance partners with the Southeastern Partnership for Forests and Water, the Savannah River Clean Water Fund, and the Georgia and South Carolina Forestry Commissions. In 2022, this partnership released the Savannah River Watershed Conservation Priority Index (CPI) Map, identifying conservation areas of greatest importance for clean drinking water in the lower

Savannah River, helping move toward the Fund's goal of retaining 60% of forest cover.

Expanding this work to the western longleaf range, The Longleaf Alliance, with partners from the Texas Longleaf Team, Southeastern Partnership for Forests and Water, Texas Partnership for Forests and Water, and several others, hosted the Texas Forests and Water Forum in Nacogdoches, TX. Over 90 people attended, and it was an excellent opportunity to expose new audiences, including representatives from the conservation, forestry, corporate, and regulatory sectors, to the work of The Alliance and connect healthy, well-managed longleaf forests and source water protection.

ECOSYSTEMS RESTORED — Through advocacy, policies, assistance, partners, and our own management actions, we facilitate the expansion of longleaf ecosystems across the range.

The Longleaf Alliance, working in collaboration with restoration partners, supported the planting of 8 million longleaf pine seedlings in fiscal year 2022. Planting projects were completed on both private and public land, with funding from Arbor Day, Enviva, National Forest Foundation, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, One Tree Planted, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Partners Program, USFWS Tyndall Air Force Base, and TLA donor funds. We also continued our tree planting program with Appalachian Mountain Brewing and Georgia-Pacific's Aria® brand.

