

# LONGLEAF FOR THE LONG RUN

**Economic Opportunities  
Landowners Need to Know**



THE  
LONGLEAF  
ALLIANCE

# Why Longleaf

Longleaf pine ecosystems historically dominated the Southeast, occurring on 90 million acres from Eastern Texas to Southern Virginia. With only a fraction of longleaf remaining today, landowners have many reasons to restore this iconic species while realizing its economic and ecological benefits.

Mature, well-managed longleaf pine stands have diverse ground layers, dominated by grasses and other flowering plants which support numerous wildlife species that thrive in a fire-maintained, open pine forest. The healthier the ecosystem, the more benefits the forest provides to humans.

If managed properly, longleaf forests provide superior wildlife and pollinator habitats, carbon sequestration, source water protection, biodiversity, clean air, nutrient cycling, medicinal resources, and wood products.

## Is Longleaf Right for You?

Longleaf can be a good choice for engaged landowners when it fits the site and meets their objectives. Your answer will depend on your property, objectives, market opportunities in your area, management costs and income streams your forests generate over time, and any incentives you employ that reduce the upfront cost of your investment. Professional help is readily available and highly recommended for timber investments.

## BENEFITS PROVIDED BY LONGLEAF FORESTS



### ECONOMIC

- Wood products
- Pine straw
- Hunting leases
- Carbon credits
- Specialty products



### CULTURAL

- Recreation
- Spiritual values
- Aesthetics
- Heritage
- Human health



### REGULATING

- Disease & pest control
- Climate resilience
- Clean air
- Drinking water
- Flood prevention



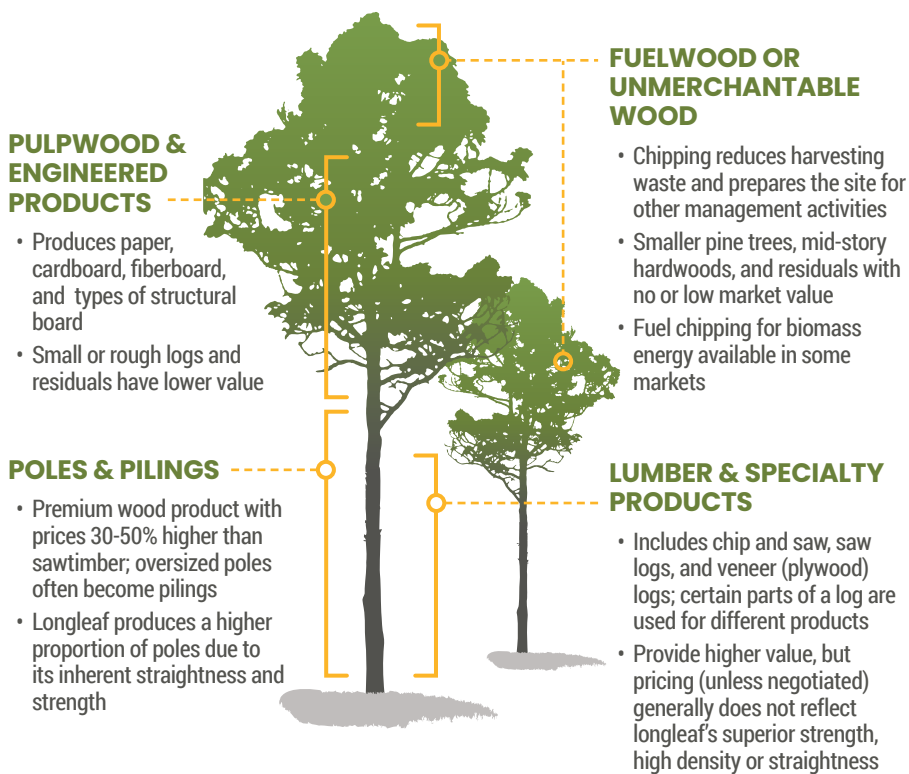
### ECOLOGICAL

- Biodiversity
- Pollination
- Photosynthesis
- Nutrient cycling
- Healthy soils

## Longleaf ecosystems can provide economic benefits without sacrificing ecological value, more so than typical pine plantations.

Longleaf landowners can manage their forests for merchantable products while at the same time promote native groundcover, provide wildlife habitat, protect water quality, sequester carbon and support other environmental benefits.

### A TREE CAN GO IN A LOT OF DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS



**Timber markets** are dynamic, fluctuating over time and geographically, due to local factors (distance to mills, competition, weather) as well as wider influences (global product demand, housing market).

**Commodities** are the raw goods or interchangeable products that come from trees that can be bought and sold. Longleaf pine trees can offer high value wood products and provide specialty products that can increase the rate of return per acre for landowners while also providing other values like aesthetics or wildlife habitat. Premium products from mature longleaf pine timber include poles and pilings.

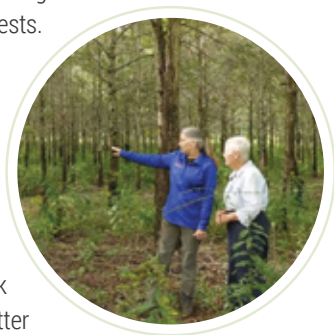
# Making the Most Out of Your Longleaf

In any investment, lowering up-front costs and achieving early returns are keys to profitability. This is even more true for forest investments due to their long-term nature. Resources are available for landowners to help make the most of their forests.

## Using a Consulting Forester

A consulting forester works for landowners to identify their goals, develop forest management plans, and implement forestry activities. Foresters can offer insight about the timber market and manage timber sales and harvests. Their services vary widely, and some also provide surveying, boundary marking, wildlife management, prescribed burning, cost-share program advice, and setting up contracts such as hunt leases or pine straw raking.

Foresters charge by the hour or day, by the service, or through a negotiated part of revenues. Fees are worth the peace of mind of professional expertise and often come back to the landowner through increased forest productivity or better timber sale prices and management.



**Be sure to ask for both credentials and references when selecting a consulting forester.** In some states, practicing forestry is not permitted unless a person is a Registered Forester or working under the supervision of a Registered Forester.

## Cost-share and Incentive Programs

Incentive programs can significantly reduce up-front expenses for longleaf establishment or management costs such as firebreak installation, prescribed fire, and invasive species control. Funding for longleaf landowners is offered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state forestry agencies or non-governmental organizations such as The Longleaf Alliance.

## TIMBER TAXES

visit [timbertax.org](http://timbertax.org)

Understanding timber taxes can be daunting and confusing for landowners, but advanced planning is important. Discuss your land and associated tax implications with a tax advisor before undertaking income producing or reforestation activities. There are several ways landowners can reduce the financial burden of reforestation or realize income from their land. Depending on the type of income, it can be treated as ordinary income, or income may qualify for capital gains.



## The long-term nature of forestry investments enhances the value of reducing risk of catastrophic loss.

An undervalued attribute of longleaf pine is its natural resilience to many threats including insects and disease, windstorms, and wildfire.

**Longleaf pine forests withstand attack by or loss from many common insects and diseases** that impact other southern pines, including southern pine beetles, which cause more damage to southern pines than any other insect pest.

Hurricanes are a fact of life in the longleaf landscape, particularly in the Coastal Plain region of the Southeastern US. **Longleaf pine is more resistant to damage from hurricane winds than other southern pines**, and the type of damage suffered differs as well. Broken or snapped trees are a total loss and actually become a management cost. Leaning and uprooted trees can be salvaged and can even, in many cases, be held for a period of time to avoid flooded and depressed post-storm markets.

Perhaps most importantly, **longleaf is tolerant of fire throughout its entire life**, enduring most fires without significant mortality or damage when it is used wisely. Unless fuels have accumulated to dangerously high levels, longleaf also survives most wildfires.

*Clockwise from top from left: Redheaded pine sawfly; Green longleaf needles remain after being scorched in a fire; Aerial image of longleaf showing different types of damage from hurricane winds (Photo courtesy of The Jones Center at Ichauway).*





## **Realizing all the values of longleaf forests requires active management.**

To balance the economic and ecological potential, longleaf forests should be working forests. Timber harvests and prescribed fire are integral practices to longleaf forest health and management. Control of invasive species, groundcover restoration, and wildlife habitat enhancement only add to the values inherent in longleaf forests.



## **Forest management reduces risk by improving forest health.**

The health of your forest is important whether you produce income from forestland or simply enjoy its beauty, wildlife, and other amenities. Inattentiveness, unpredictable weather events, invasive species, pests, and disease can hinder a forest's ability to provide the benefits of healthy forests.

Regular monitoring combined with planned management activities can improve the health of forests while also generating income and minimizing potential risks.

## **Harvesting is a restoration tool with income opportunity.**

Landowners often face overgrown properties with a long history of fire exclusion, an overstory of undesirable species, and an abundance of woody plants in the understory instead of desirable native groundcover. Income from sustainable harvesting helps landowners move forward with management, bringing them closer to achieving their restoration goals while reducing expenses on their pathway to healthier stands.

# HARVESTING METHODS FOR MANAGEMENT & RESTORATION



## CLEARCUTTING

Harvesting timber to prepare a stand for reforestation, includes removal of undesirable species for conversion to longleaf pine on appropriate sites.



## EVEN-AGED THINNING

Cutting a portion of trees to increase light to the forest floor, giving groundcover and remaining trees room to grow. Also reduces risk from wildfire.



## UNEVEN-AGED THINNING

Similar benefits of even-aged thinning, but with the goal to promote tree seedling recruitment, or natural regeneration, in mature stands.

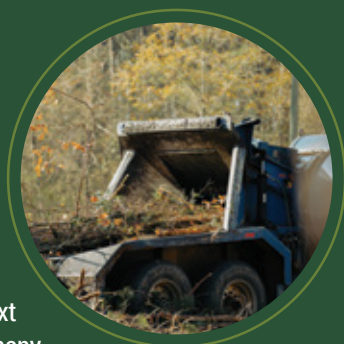


## CHIPPING

Low-quality wood, including pine tops and limbs and unwanted midstory trees, are chipped to facilitate habitat restoration, including reintroduction of prescribed fire. Also used for damaged timber in salvage harvests.

## Is fuel chipping an option for you?

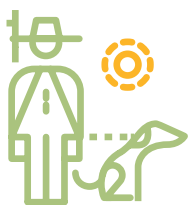
Fuel chipping can allow a landowner to take what is currently a problem and turn it into an asset. Fuel chipping occurs when low-quality wood is chipped and processed for biomass energy. This also includes tops and limbs and unwanted midstory hardwoods that typically would be left behind or burned onsite to prepare for planting the next generation of forests. Markets for fuel chips exist in many areas of the Southeast utilizing both pine and hardwood sources.



# Non-Timber Income

Many non-timber sources of income and incentive programs can be layered or “stacked.” For example, a landowner can sell their carbon and have a conservation easement if the conservation easement does not limit or disallow management or harvesting. It can be advantageous to learn about available opportunities before entering into permanent agreements to ensure they are complementary and don't limit future opportunities.

## Alternative sources of income from either forest products or the land itself:



### Hunting and Recreational Leases

Longleaf forests are often in high demand because of their aesthetic and wildlife value. Willing landowners can sell a pre-determined right of access to others for hunting or recreational purposes. Lease values vary based on the property's infrastructure, size, quality, accessibility, and other factors. Agreements can be variable in term, duration, and season. Sellers should consider liability, safety and health, potential constraints on personal use of their property, and long-term stewardship of the property's resources.



### Mitigation Banking

A mitigation bank is a permitted project area that is restored, enhanced, or established to offset ecological impacts and habitat loss from commercial development or similar activities elsewhere. Landowners can sell credits and receive compensation for the ecological services they are providing. Setting up a mitigation bank is complex and requires the assistance of experts or developers well-versed in the process, regulations, and credit marketing.



### Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of land to protect its conservation values. Landowners continue to own and manage their land and retain the right to sell the land or pass it on to heirs. If the easement is purchased or is a bargain sale, the landowner can receive payment for all or part of the value. Landowners may also be able to take advantage of certain tax benefits.





## Pine Straw Harvesting

Pine straw can provide supplementary income for landowners of planted stands beginning 8-10 years after planting, or in well managed natural stands of any age. Pine straw is popular as a landscaping mulch across the southeast and has become a valuable product of longleaf forests. Intensive pine straw harvesting can impact other resources such as the groundcover, wildlife habitat, and soil productivity. Alternative harvesting techniques are an option to mitigate these negative impacts.



## Plant Materials

Another emerging market is the sale of groundcover seed and plant materials (wiregrass or other species) or longleaf pine seed for commercial production. The market for longleaf seed is growing as the demand for containerized longleaf seedlings grows across the range, but collection sites are limited, and seedling production has been further limited by poor quality seed.

# Ecosystem Service Opportunities

Beyond their land and wood product values, forests provide tangible benefits known as ecosystem services.

## Forests Carbon Offset and Credit Programs

Increasing amounts of carbon in the atmosphere is a primary contributor to our changing climate, but forests are a natural solution for climate mitigation. Because of this, a voluntary market has developed for carbon credits to offset emissions. What does this mean for forest landowners? Landowners that practice climate-smart forestry have opportunities to sell their carbon, with very little or no up-front costs in some cases. Several companies that develop forest carbon projects and sell offsets now operate within the Southeast. Agreements vary in length and conditions ranging from short-term deferred harvest programs to other agreements that can be 40+ years or longer. In this rapidly developing market, it is important to research the currently available programs to see what is right for you and your objectives for your property.

## Payment for Watershed Services

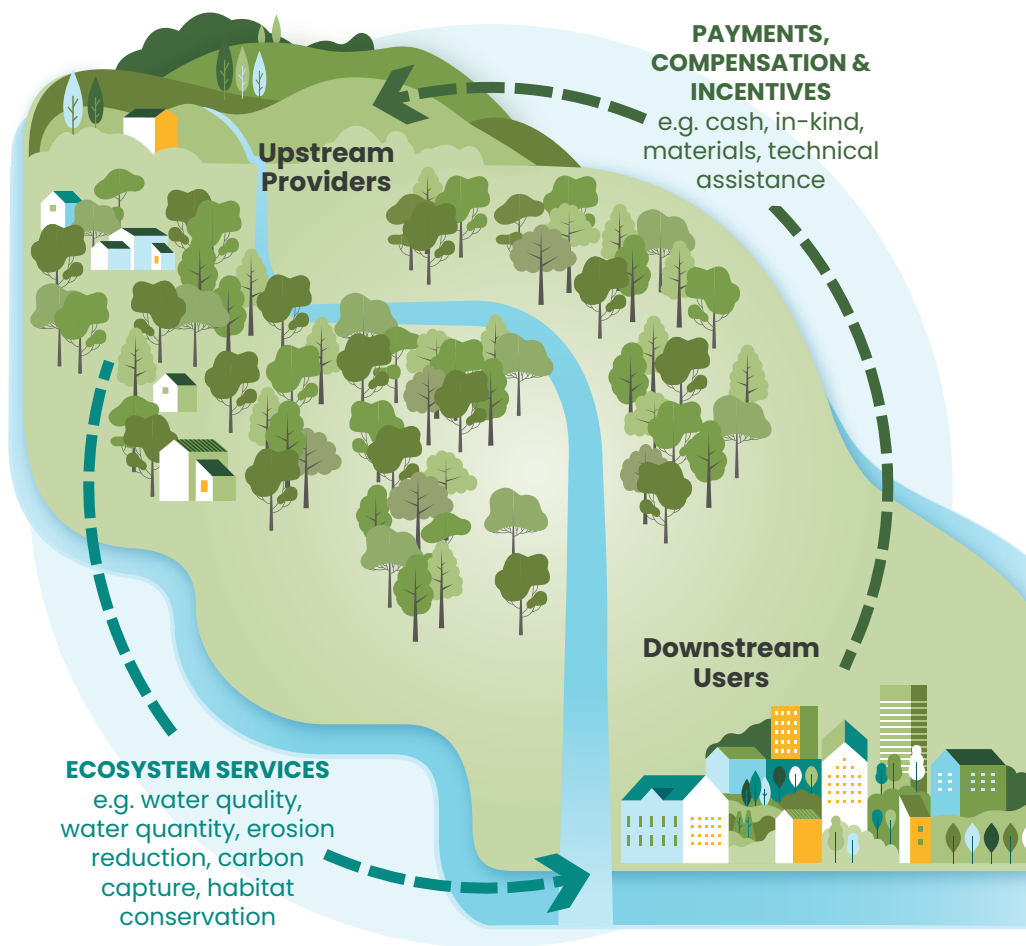
Payment for watershed service programs are a new and emerging market in the Southeast. Water utilities, forestry agencies, conservation partners and industries are looking to secure sustainable funding to increase drinking water security, stormwater and flooding management, wildlife and habitat protection, and recreational benefits through green infrastructure. Payments to landowners, most often through conservation easements, comes through a variety of ecosystem financing mechanisms. This has been most successful in watersheds where continuous or reoccurring funding mechanisms have been developed. Although we don't have many examples of these programs in the Southeast yet, they are growing as the need to maintain water quality and manage quantity becomes increasingly important.



*Photo by Andrew Kornylak*

# EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES FOR FORESTS LANDOWNERS

Forest landowners provide a public benefit by capturing carbon and protecting source water supplies through their healthy forestland, creating new revenue opportunities for landowners.



## Capturing Carbon

Trees convert carbon dioxide from the atmosphere into stored carbon, and forests contain the largest land-based supply of carbon. Forest carbon is even stored in the form of forest products and the built environment.

## Watershed Services

Forests act as a natural filter, regulate streamflow, reduce flooding, and provide storage. Healthy, well-managed forests produce cleaner water, require less water treatment and less energy and chemicals used in the drinking water treatment process.





# THE LONGLEAF ALLIANCE

**Ensuring a sustainable future for  
longleaf pine ecosystems**

12130 Dixon Center Road

Andalusia, AL 36420

334-427-1029

**[www.longleafalliance.org](http://www.longleafalliance.org)**

