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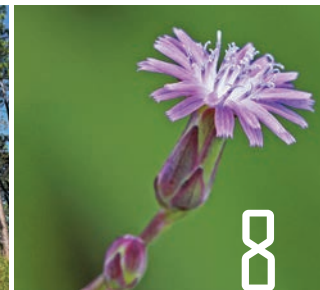
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We would love to hear from you!
longleafalliance.org/contact

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COVER Pitcher plants with a longleaf pine seedling at Blackwater River State Forest in Florida [Vernon Compton]

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The Longleaf Alliance PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



CAROL DENHOF

Joining Together for Tomorrow's Forest

At a recent field day, someone asked me two questions – first, why should a landowner plant longleaf, and second, why would that landowner reach out to The Longleaf Alliance for assistance? What are the advantages?? Where is the value??

The answer to the first question is multilayered and can vary based on the landowner. Longleaf pine provides a myriad of benefits to forest owners if your land conditions are appropriate (suitable soils, geography, etc.) and the owner is prepared and open to the active management required of this forest type. Landowners and managers have historically looked to longleaf for premium timber products, wildlife management objectives, and enhancement of biodiversity. By layering these benefits with emerging ecosystem service markets (e.g., carbon, water, and reduced fire risk), establishing and managing for functional longleaf pine can give certain advantages over other southern pines.

The second question is simple to answer – we believe that a forest owner can only improve their success rates by increasing their knowledge base and experience in proven, science-based land management practices. This is especially true for longleaf. Delivering this assistance is at the core of what we do as an organization.

Our staff continually seek ways to improve accessibility and the services we provide to those looking to learn more about longleaf or are directly engaged in longleaf restoration and management. We recognize that every person's journey is

different, and as such, we strive to provide the right assistance for where they are. Just as we strive to always plant the right tree (or grass) on the right site.

One of our most important outreach tools is this magazine, *The Longleaf Leader*. When we converted our original newsletter to a magazine format in the spring of 2014 (wow, 10 years ago!), our goal was to combine a healthy balance of technical and non-technical information that illustrates all the many ways that we interact with longleaf pine and its ecosystem. Now in our 17th volume year, approximately 1,800 copies are disseminated through mailings, electronic delivery, and in-person distribution each quarter. Every issue is specially crafted to deliver the most up-to-date longleaf information that we think holds real value for you, our readers.

When this issue hits your mailboxes, we will be six months away from our 15th Biennial Longleaf Conference (October 8-11, 2024). We look forward to this event every two years and are working hard to provide a great experience for all who attend, this time at the Sandestin Beach and Golf Resort in Florida. The conference theme will be *Joining Together for Tomorrow's Forest*, and the tracks will center around the components of the recently updated *Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine (2025-2040)*. The conference is open to anyone passionate about the longleaf pine ecosystem and provides a forum for information exchange, networking, and connection with old and new friends. We hope to see you there!

SPRING CALENDAR | 2024



April 17 – 18 | Albany, GA

Herbicides & Longleaf will give participants the tools needed to incorporate herbicides into their own unique forest management objectives.

May 1- 3 | Tallahassee, FL

This ***NEW*** **Fire & Longleaf Academy** is designed for experienced fire practitioners who are ready to take their prescribed fire practice “beyond the black.” The course will address the fire science behind achieving desired fire effects under various burn conditions and seasons.



May 15 – 16 | Tifton, GA

Longleaf Foundations is designed for those that would like to begin building a solid foundation of longleaf knowledge. Expert instruction through a combination of classroom lectures, exercises, discussions, and field tours will jump-start your longleaf education.



Interested in the Biennial Longleaf Conference but working with limited finances?

The 15th Biennial Longleaf Conference is coming to Sandestin, Florida on October 8-11, 2024. TLA established a fund to assist those who would not otherwise have the means to attend the Biennial Longleaf Conference. Waivers are awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis until funding is depleted. More information will be available July 1 at longleafconference.com.

Special thanks to Dick & Rita Porterfield and Ralph Lewis Withrow Legacy Fund.

MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST | SPRING

EVALUATE YOUNG LONGLEAF STANDS

- Assess winter seedling plantings for early mortality from freeze damage or other factors.
- Uncover and/or lift any viable containerized longleaf seedlings planted too deep.

PLAN FOR YOUR NEXT LONGLEAF PLANTING

- Order your seedlings early for 2024-25 planting projects. Nurseries usually sell out of preferred seed sources by early summer.
- Check our website for a directory of our partner nurseries at longleafalliance.org > What We Do

ASSESS LONGLEAF RECRUITMENT

- If promoting natural regeneration is your goal, conduct your longleaf pine cone and flower counts in May to assess the developing crop, as well as next year's potential crop.
- If a good crop is developing, prepare the seedbed with prescribed fire - see right.

SPRING RELEASE OR EARLY SITE PREPARATION TREATMENTS

- Assess stands for herbaceous competition to determine if there is a need for chemical release, especially on former agricultural sites. If using any Oust® product, test pH to ensure it is below 6.2 to avoid seedling mortality. For any release, avoid periods of stress or late-planted seedlings.
- Apply hexazinone as a site prep treatment or to control oaks on sandy sites after bud break but before full leaf-out. Hexazinone is tough on oaks but easy on many desirable understory species.
- For site preparation following a cutover, ensure adequate time for resprouting to develop before applying a herbicide site prep treatment. If in doubt, wait a year to improve the effectiveness of treatment.

PRIORITIZE BURNING

- Evaluate what you burned in the winter to determine if you accomplished your desired fire effects.
- Burn young longleaf stands invaded by short needle pines or hardwoods that are too large to control with winter burns.
- Avoid disking fire lines around wetlands and ponds; reptiles and amphibians are actively traveling to wetter areas for breeding, and plow lines can impede their movement.
- Promote viable wiregrass seed production, increase wildflower abundance, and control hardwoods with growing season prescribed fire.

PREPARE THE SEED BED

- Spring or summer fire in mature longleaf stands with good cone crops prepares the seed bed and promotes natural regeneration.
- The goal is to increase the likelihood that seed falls on bare mineral soil but not so clean that predators can find and destroy most of the new seed.

IF YOU MOW

- Burning is better, but mowing can be a tactical tool to combat competition. Consider combining mowing with periodic patch burning to enhance habitat development and condition.
- Avoid complete mowing in spring to early summer to reduce the loss of ground-nesting birds. Most birds will re-nest if damage does occur and suitable habitat is nearby.

PLANT NATIVE WARM-SEASON GRASSES

- Check for weedy competition 7-10 days before seeding. If needed, treat with herbicide.
- Time plantings with seasonal rain events.
- For successful germination, seed must be planted less than 1/4 inch deep.

Reach out to The Longleaf Alliance for any questions about establishing and managing longleaf stands at longleafalliance.org/contact.



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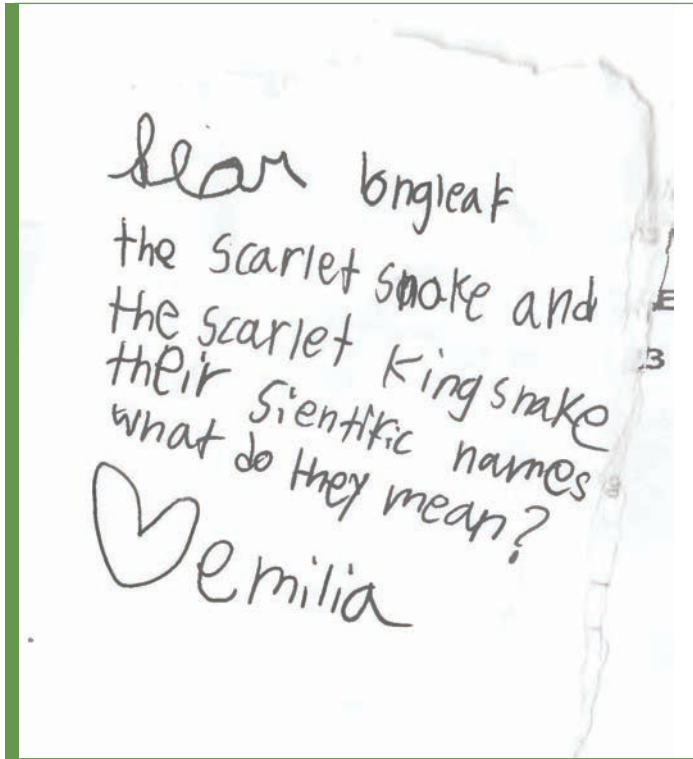
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Q&A



Scarlet snake {Kameron Burgess}



Scarlet kingsnake {Samantha Dillon}



Learn how to identify coral snakes and their mimics at <https://longleaf.info/coralsnakes>.

Q. Dear Longleaf,
What are the scientific names for the scarlet snake and the scarlet kingsnake? What do they mean?

♥ Emilia in Georgia

A. Dear Emilia,
We are pleased you wrote to ask about snakes! They're important members of any ecosystem they inhabit, and they're beautiful animals to see in the wild. The snakes you asked about are especially cool to encounter because they're pretty shy and prefer to come out at night.

The scarlet snake and scarlet kingsnake are known for being mimics of the venomous coral snake. They are similar in size and coloration, but if you look closely - they are two different species of snake with different habits, and all three snakes rely on longleaf ecosystems.

Scarlet snakes go by the scientific name *Cemophora coccinea*. *Cemophora* is a Latin word derived from the Greek words *kemos* and *phoreus*; together, they mean "muzzle bearer." The species name *coccinea* is derived from another Latin word, *coccineus*, which means "red, scarlet, or crimson." Scarlet snakes are known for having pointy, shovel-like faces for digging, so I think the translation "scarlet muzzle bearer" is pretty fitting for them!

The scientific name for the scarlet kingsnake is *Lampropeltis elapsoides* - *Lampropeltis* is the genus that all of the kingsnakes belong to, and *elapsoides* is the species name to identify scarlet kingsnakes. *Elapsoides* is a nod to the coral snake (*Micrurus fulvius* in the family Elapidae) as scarlet kingsnakes are very striking mimics.

It's funny how some species names are almost a direct translation of their common names! Thanks again for your scaly question.

Sincerely,
The Longleaf Alliance



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By Abraham Huang, The Longleaf Alliance

PLANT SPOTLIGHT

Lactuca graminifolia (Michaux) var. *graminifolia*

Grassleaf lettuce

Aster Family – Asteraceae



All photos by Mary Keim, Orange County, Florida CC BY-NC-SA 2.0 DEED

Description

A biennial herb belonging to the large dandelion, chicory, and wild lettuce tribe (Cichorieae). Narrowly lobed leaves occur mainly on the lower half of the plant. Bluish-purple florets appear in the spring and summer. Grassleaf lettuce can reach heights up to 5 ft tall.

Distribution & Habitat

Grassleaf lettuce is found in mesic to dry habitats, including pine-oak woodlands, oak scrub, longleaf pine sandhills, pine flatwoods, and disturbed areas like sandy fields and roadsides.

Three varieties of *Lactuca graminifolia* have been described. Variety *graminifolia* is mostly restricted to the Coastal Plains, from North Carolina to Florida and into western Louisiana, with reports of rare disjunct populations elsewhere. Other varieties occur in western North America and Central America (var. *arizonica* and var. *mexicana*).

Wildlife Value

Plants and insects also associated with grass-leaf lettuce include wiregrass, phlox, stillingia, pencil flower, pawpaw, fleabane, gopher weed, tiny bluet, blackroot, milkweed, Darlington oak, sweat bees and leafcutting bees, and aphids.

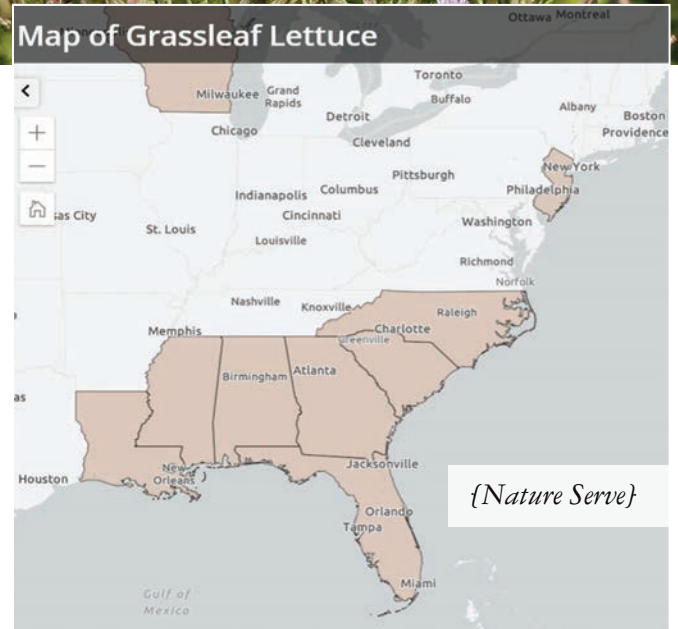
Related Species

There are ten wild lettuce species in the Southeast and more than 75 species worldwide. Relatives in the *Lactuca* genus include garden lettuce *Lactuca sativa*, cultivated for sweeter flavoring compared to the bitter taste of its wild relatives. Wild lettuce, particularly *Lactuca virosa*, also became known for its medicinal properties in the 19th century. It was used for sedation and pain relief, earning the nickname “poor man’s opium.”



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Green Side Up

*Robust groundcover response within a
larger gap opening {Carol Denhoff}*

Longleaf Gaps

By Karen Zilliox Brown, The Longleaf Alliance

Forest “gaps” are openings in the tree canopy with low or no competition for sunlight and other resources from overstory and midstory plants.

Longleaf pine trees take advantage of openings in the canopy, sometimes creating a “gap dome.” The developing cohort of longleaf saplings takes on a dome-like appearance as the trees in the center of the gap grow the quickest, demonstrating longleaf pine’s strong preference for full-sun conditions. The centers of gaps appear to have more availability for root growth to take place as well, aiding in higher survival and growth for seedlings that establish farther away from the parent trees’ root systems.

Gaps and Disturbance

Southeastern forests encounter numerous natural disturbances, from wildfires to windstorms to insect/disease outbreaks. As a result, gaps in the canopy are common; they can affect expansive areas or result in more concentrated areas of impact. Even an especially hot area of a prescribed burn can create an opening in the canopy due to isolated tree mortality.


Value to Wildlife

Mature timber “as far as the eye can see” provides little heterogeneity to attract a range of wildlife species. Small openings in the canopy provide a break in that monotony and offer excellent foraging habitat, with a robust understory of native warm-season grasses, forbs, and legumes, all responding to ample sunlight in the gaps. This is assisted with prescribed fire being applied at an appropriate frequency across the unit to maintain these conditions.

While fire-maintained longleaf pine ecosystems have a more open canopy structure compared to other forest types, gaps are still a valued component in providing habitat diversity.

To Plant or Not to Plant...

Forest landowners are faced with the question of what to do with unexpected openings in their longleaf stands. Nature may have created a temporary “vacuum,” but we should only expect



Longleaf seedlings were planted in small gaps in the mature mixed pine overstory. {Casey White}



Above: Longleaf dome-like appearance as the trees in the center of the gap grow the quickest, demonstrating longleaf pine's strong preference for full-sun conditions. {Sarah Crate}

Below: Bark beetle outbreaks tend to create gap-shaped pockets of mortality, some affected areas can grow to be quite large if undetected or intervention is not done. Making sanitary cuts, or felling the dead trees and sometimes a buffer of living trees, is recommended to stave off further timber damage and loss. This photo shows a treatment done for an Ips beetle infestation. {TLA}

that to hold for a short time. New plants, either desirable or undesirable, will take advantage of this new niche.

So, should gaps be replanted? Or managed as they are with prescribed fire? The gaps' size and scale are important considerations, as are the stand's objectives and potential management challenges. If the landowner desires a multi-aged stand or wants a forest structure in place for wildlife, aesthetics, etc., then gap regeneration can be a path forward.

Managing Gap Regeneration

If you decide to plant, once downed debris is dealt with, gap openings can be treated like micro-clear cuts. The site should be prepared with a prescribed burn and planted with a spacing or density similar to other free-to-grow scenarios, such as 622-726 trees per acre.

Prescribed fire should be maintained on a 2-year cycle to keep competition from other seedlings at bay.

More care will be needed to develop a harvest plan for the surrounding timber and provide closer guidance on the actual operations to minimize damage to the emerging gap stands.

Considerations

It is essential to have an objective that can be met with a gap regeneration technique and to consider the future of the stand before replanting patches. For instance, if the surrounding stand is even-aged and a harvest is planned in the next five years or so, maintaining a gap as an open area may be more efficient than the additional costs and effort of longleaf establishment at a small scale. Landowner objectives play the most significant role in determining the viability of upfront expenses and nuanced management that would need to take place for future timber harvests.

Sensitive Pea, NC Ecotype (*Chamaecrista nictitans*)

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“I didn’t want to buy a piece of property and just leave it as is. I wanted something valuable that would be valuable long after I’m gone. This land here will be my legacy.”

When Willis Blaine Morton retired from the Valero Houston Refinery at 62, he decided he needed a project and a place for his family to gather. “The Farm” was just that place — 252 acres of his own little paradise. Blaine is transforming this former timber company property into a more wildlife-friendly habitat by burning, thinning, and creating openings. His plan is to do a slow conversion, transitioning over time to the native vegetation that would have been there historically. Blaine's most recent project was to work with the Texas Longleaf Team to plant 54 acres of longleaf pine.

Blaine says, “My plan was to make The Farm the best deer hunting place I could afford. The first priority was big deer and my second was pine trees. You can do things for the trees that benefit wildlife, and you can do things for wildlife that benefit the trees, so it’s kind of a win-win situation.”



He admits to having a general idea of how to start managing his land but reaching out to Texas Parks & Wildlife, Texas A&M Forestry, and the Texas Longleaf Team helped filled in the details. “I wasn’t sure how to do it in the beginning, but if you have a certain interest in something, being it owning land or raising honeybees ... or whatever you want to do, there’s some folks that can answer most of those questions you have.”

Jenny Sanders with the Texas Longleaf Team notes, “I think the work Mr. Morton has done out here proves that any landowner can make an impact. It’s a long-term game that happens a little at a time, but you can definitely provide value for generations to come.”

Hear more from Blaine Morton and see The Farm in the Texas Longleaf Team's video at <https://longleaf.info/TheFarm>



THE LONGLEAF ALLIANCE PLANTING FUND

ACCEPTING PROJECT REQUESTS UNTIL JUNE 1ST



Because healthy private forests provide tremendous public benefits, many incentives exist to encourage landowners to plant, grow, and manage forests. This is especially true with longleaf pine, which has superior environmental benefits.

The Longleaf Alliance works with multiple partners to provide longleaf pine seedling funds to landowners. In fiscal year 2023, we helped plant 7.9 million longleaf pine seedlings on private and public lands.

The Longleaf Alliance Planting Fund will accept requests until June 1st for the 2024-2025 planting season. Applicants are encouraged to apply early as funding opportunities may arise before the deadline. Most funds are available to cover the cost of seedlings only, but they may be used in combination with other funding as long as the same practice on the same tract is not covered twice.

Submission details and FAQs can be found at longleafalliance.org/longleaf-planting-funds.

As always, we encourage folks to order longleaf seedlings early! Waiting until you hear back about a cost-share application may be too late to guarantee seedlings.

The Longleaf Alliance can also connect you with other potential incentive programs that are specific to your management objectives and location. Reach out at longleafalliance.org/contact.



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J.R.R. Tolkien

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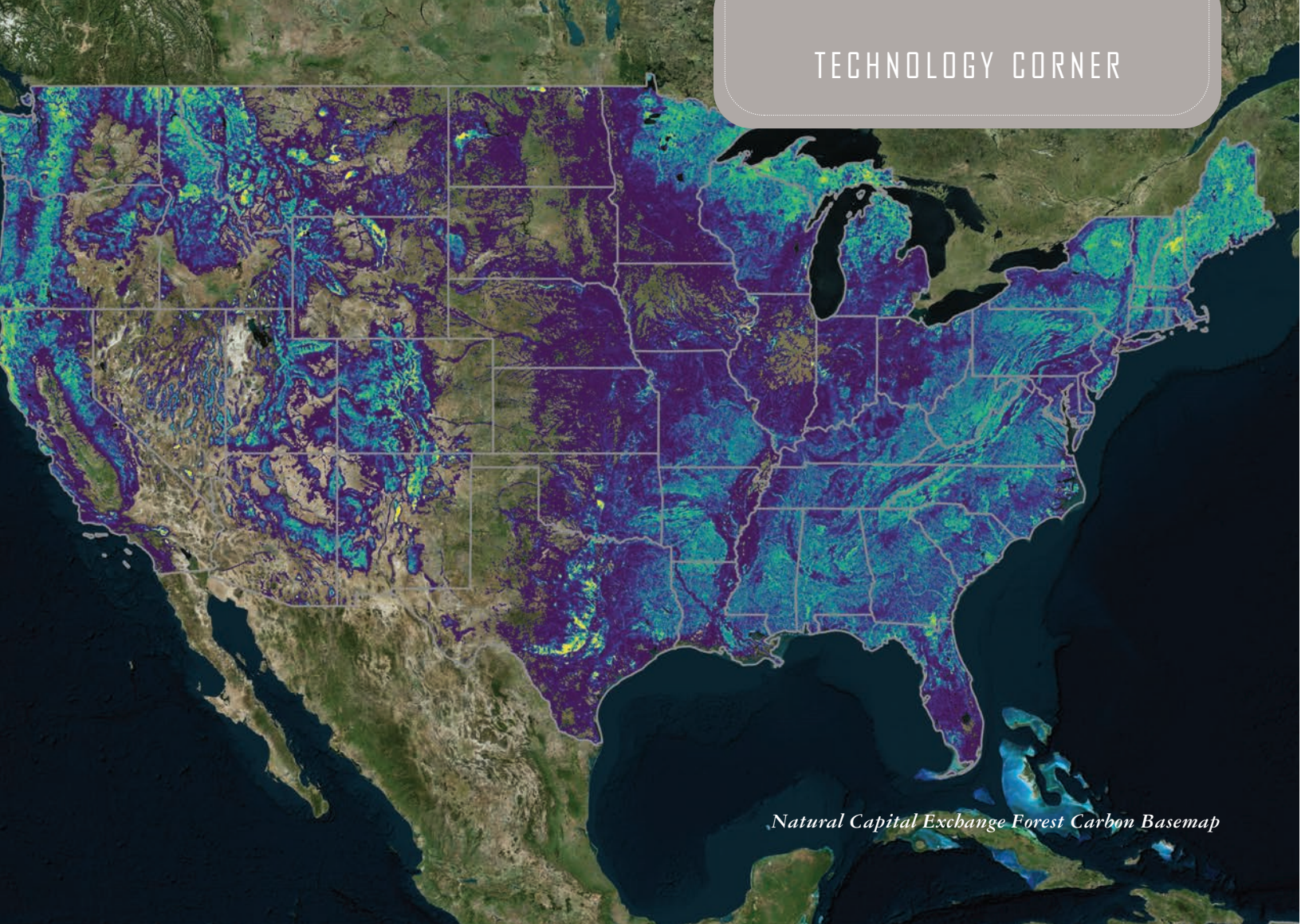


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*Natural Capital Exchange Forest Carbon Basemap*

By Max Nova, Chief Operating Officer, NCX


NCX TECHNOLOGY CONNECTS LANDOWNERS TO “NATURAL CAPITAL” OPPORTUNITIES

Your land might be worth twice as much as you think. The emerging interest in building climate change resilience is shifting how land is valued and landowners can benefit if they increase the amount of what is known as the “natural capital” on their property through good forest management.

Natural capital is similar to capital in the traditional economy. Instead of stocks, bonds, and factories, natural capital is trees, wildlife, and soil. The traditional economy already values some kinds of natural capital like the crops we eat or the timber we use to build houses. A great example is longleaf pine forest ecosystems which provide a suite of economic and ecological benefits to landowners and communities including habitat, carbon, water, and disaster resilience.

Some landowners are beginning to receive payments for their natural capital. You may have seen news stories about forest carbon projects or payments for habitat protection. The general structure of these programs is that landowners change their land management practices and receive payment for measurable natural capital outcomes that result.

The rules are still being written for this new sector of the economy. It's an exciting but also a confusing time. Landowners face complex tradeoffs and can inadvertently lock in long-term liabilities depending on the natural capital program they choose to participate in. For that reason, landowners need to know which programs are a good fit for them and their land. NCX's mapping technology makes it easy to check your eligibility for many different programs.



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Eligible

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Eligible

Living Carbon biotech-enhanced reforestation

Living Carbon plants productive mixed forests on currently unreforested land. The...

Tree Planting | Enroll by Apr 15, 2024

40 year term

Requested

Forest Carbon Works Conserve Program

Improved Forest Management (IFM) carbon program designed to increase ne...

Harvest Deferral | Open enrollment

40 year term

Eligible

Carbon payments for silvopasture

Working trees pays farmers and ranchers to plant trees on their properties. a...

Regen Ag | Open enrollment

30 year term

Eligible

Forester assistance with reforestation

Need help reforesting your property? Working with a professional forester to...

Tree Planting | Open enrollment

0 year term

Eligible

Forester management plan assistance

Working with a forester on a forest management plan as a private landowne...

Other | Open enrollment

0 year term

Eligible

CSP: Forest soil quality

NRCS Maintaining and improving forest soil quality is an enhancement practice...

Harvest Deferral | Open enrollment

5 year term

Eligible

CSP: Facilitating longleaf pine

NRCS Facilitating longleaf pine regeneration and establishment is an...

Tree Planting | Open enrollment

5 year term

Action Required

CSP: Oak forest regeneration

NRCS Facilitating oak forest regeneration is an enhancement that will release...

Biodiversity | Open enrollment

5 year term

Step 2: Discover and Compare Programs

Now that your property has been assessed, head over to the Programs page. Browse the opportunities your land is eligible for. Compare payouts, learn program requirements, and read through the community Q&A to decide which programs are right for you.

Living Carbon biotech-enhanced reforestation

Living Carbon plants productive mixed forests on currently unreforested land. They have developed bio-tech improved poplar seedlings that are enhanced for faster and more robust growth, which studies show increase the success of reforestation, especially on degraded lands. They plant these seedlings alongside other native species, using input from landowners to align these plantings with each landowner's unique goals. They specialize in planting on abandoned mine lands, degraded agricultural lands, pasture, and other unproductive soils. Landowners retain ownership of the land throughout the project, and at the end of the term inherit a biotech enhanced and mixed native forest as an investment property or to keep as a legacy for generations to come.

[Not Interested](#) [Check Eligibility](#)

Check your eligibility in 60 seconds

Previous program | Next program

Program overview

Key obligation

Allow tree planting project on land.

Implementation period is 6-12 months for design, site prep, and planting. Site will be monitored using field-based and remote sensing methods on an annual basis.

Charter landowner role

Landowners select their preferred native tree species to complement the improved poplar seedlings Living Carbon has developed.

Contractually commit to harvest restrictions during the contract duration. Some thinning will be allowed and the landowner retains timber rights and revenues.

Term length

40 years.

Landowner costs

None.

Eligibility requirements

Eligible states: AL, AR, GA, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MN, MO, MS, NC, NE, OH, OK, PA, SC, SD, TN, TX, VA, WV.

200 plantable acres minimum (plantable = low slopes, unreforested, some soil substrate)

Smaller properties (50-100 acres) may qualify if they are located within a 50-mile drive and add on to a 2000 plantable acres. Tell your facilitator to look this.

Stackable programs

Stackable are programs that you can participate in at the same time as this program.

- ELBRO hunting lease
- LandTrust best hunting experiences
- CSP: Restoring Wildlife Habitat

In the news

Read recent news articles about this program partner.

- Could superpowered plants be the heroes of...
- Biotech startup Living Carbon enhances tree...
- Genetically engineered trees stoke climate fu...
- View the latest website to learn more.

\$84,666

Time-adjusted value

[View Calculator](#)

Step 3: Connect with Program Partners

Request a call when you've found a program you want to learn more about. Program partners will get in touch to dive deeper into program specifics, provide personalized answers to your questions, and negotiate terms to help you decide if the program fits your management goals and needs. NCX is here to guide you through every step of the enrollment process for the programs of your choice.

About NCX (Natural Capital Exchange)

NCX's mission is to accelerate the transition to a nature-positive economy. Doing this requires a massive effort to include millions of landowners across the United States. NCX developed a way to combine satellite imagery with field measurements to determine the size and species of trees in every acre of forest. Powered by Microsoft's AI for Earth program, NCX's proprietary U.S. Forest dataset serves as the foundation for the Natural Capital Exchange.

Our previous 1-year Harvest Deferral Program showed us that the main barriers to landowners in this emerging economy are confusion and lack of information and guidance. This is why we changed our focus to helping landowners discover, evaluate, and compare opportunities to participate in natural capital markets.

17 Frog Pond is a well-known fire-maintained ephemeral wetland, but this project focused on finding small, degraded, hard-to-detect sites. {Brady Beck}

FINDING WETLANDS IN THE NORTH CAROLINA SANDHILLS

*By Debbie Crane and Sarah Hecoeks, The Nature Conservancy,
with Ryan Bollinger, The Longleaf Alliance*

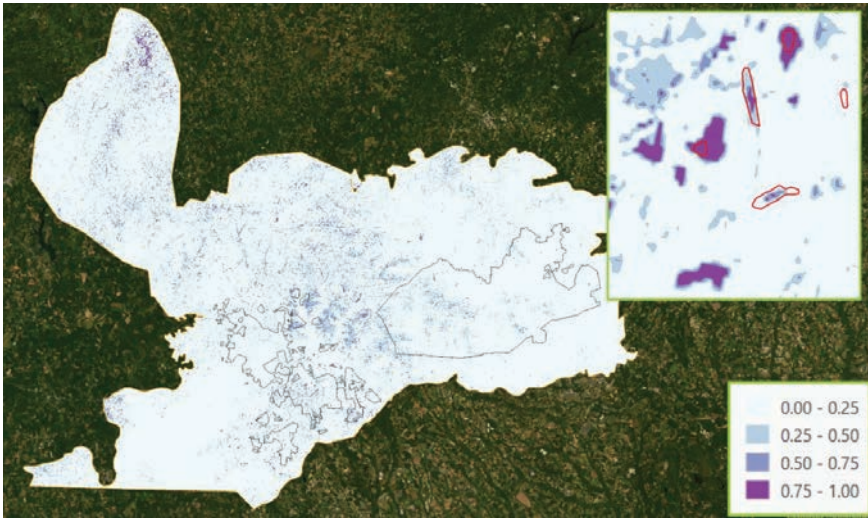
Isolated wetlands are critical components in the longleaf landscape, given the number of rare amphibians that breed in them. These shallow depressions are characterized by having a clay layer beneath the sandy soil surface, which allows them to hold water for at least some of the year, meaning they are ephemeral. This prevents fish from surviving in the pools, providing an ideal breeding habitat for amphibians free of fish predators.

The 63,000 acres of the Sandhills Gamelands, managed by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC), are home to one of the region's finest examples of an isolated depressional wetland — 17 Frog Pond in Scotland County, purportedly named for the 17 species of amphibians that once bred there. This pristine habitat is fire-maintained. Without fire passing through these wetland basins during the dry season, sweetgum and other woody plants take over and suck up all the water. In just a few years, a wetland basin can look dramatically different. It may no longer contain the sedges and aquatic grasses that are essential for amphibians to lay their eggs.

Sarah Hecoeks, The Nature Conservancy, collaborated with a Duke University graduate student to create and train a predictive model to find new wetland sites using GIS and the characteristics of previously mapped wetlands. The model identified places that appeared similar to those existing wetlands. Sarah then ground-truthed hundreds of potential wetland sites looking for wetland plants as well as another telltale sign of a degraded wetland — lots of sweetgum.

Sarah subsequently worked with WRC biologists and land managers to compile a list of 20 high-priority wetlands requiring restoration, complete with specific management recommendations and an assessment of the level of effort required. She recently revisited one of those sites and found WRC staff removing sweetgum from the perimeter of a large and beautiful wetland. She says, “We just gave them this advice, and they are already implementing it.”

Hecoeks hopes for even greater success as this work is expanded to other areas in the Sandhills. “Elsewhere in the landscape, there hasn’t been as much ongoing effort to find new wetlands, so we’ll probably find even more wetlands in those places.”



◀ *Map of potential wetland locations in the North Carolina Sandhills. The darker the color, the higher the probability of wetland occurrence. Known wetlands are outlined in red.*

▼ *Sarah Hecocks at a recently restored upland depressional wetland.*



▲ *Upland depressional wetland suffering from hardwood encroachment due to fire suppression {Margaret Fields}*



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11

FORESTERS

48

FOREST OFFSET
PROJECTS

2.9M

ACRES

67M

FOREST OFFSETS
ISSUED

\$750M

TOTAL PROJECT
REVENUE

Getting to Know Jason Dockery

2024 CHAIR OF THE LONGLEAF PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL

Earlier this year, America's Longleaf welcomed Jason Dockery as the 2024 Chair of the Longleaf Partnership Council. Jason is the Northeast Regional Forester for the Alabama Forestry Commission.

What is your personal connection to longleaf?

I had the privilege of interning with a forest management company that had an interest in longleaf pine, which was a bit of a novelty in the 1990s. I probably learned more about longleaf that summer than in forestry school. Following graduation, I started working in an area of Alabama where we serviced many cost-share applications as the technical service provider, including longleaf pine plantings. During those years, I also learned a lot about longleaf and fire. There was much to be discovered about longleaf planting and management at the time, so I received a good bit of training early in my career. Since then, I have had many opportunities to manage properties with longleaf pine stands or work with private landowners in managing longleaf pine.

Tell us about a special longleaf forest in your home state of Alabama.

I really enjoy the longleaf pines on Flag Mountain in Coosa County, some of the oldest in Alabama. My agency, Alabama Forestry Commission, manages a portion of the mountain as Weogufka State Forest. While the longleaf forests on Flag Mountain are not currently the most productive, the oldest trees recorded there germinated early in the 1600s. Many of these trees grow in areas with very little soil, as the mountain is very rocky. Fire is now slowly being re-introduced to Flag with the help of many cooperators, including The Nature Conservancy. To preserve the genetics of these stands, we hope to see regeneration from these trees and transplant seedlings to other areas on the mountain that have lost their longleaf. We are currently improving the facilities in the State Forest, and much of this area is open to the public, including the observation tower. It is worth a visit!



How can government agencies like yours benefit from the Longleaf Partnership Council?

State forestry agencies spend a great deal of time interacting with private landowners in making plans and forest management decisions. Providing the most up-to-date information on funding, management practices, and available partnerships to these landowners is key in assisting them in their longleaf goals. The Longleaf Partnership Council and the Local Implementation Teams (LITs) are great resources for agencies to access this information so that it can be relayed to landowners through direct contact or outreach efforts. State agencies also communicate the concerns and challenges of managing for longleaf from these landowners back to the Partnership so that solutions can be found. All of this contributes to the combined goal of America's Longleaf.

How do you hope to grow the Partnership, particularly with private landowners?

Private landowners currently manage the bulk of the existing longleaf acreage across the range and represent the greatest opportunity to increase acreage in longleaf pine. Each private landowner is unique regarding personal objectives, experiences, and needs related to longleaf management. I hope we can grow the Partnership by continuing to assess the new and growing challenges these landowners encounter. Understanding such challenges will help us develop new solutions for more landowner engagement.

What's the outlook for the next 15 years of America's Longleaf?

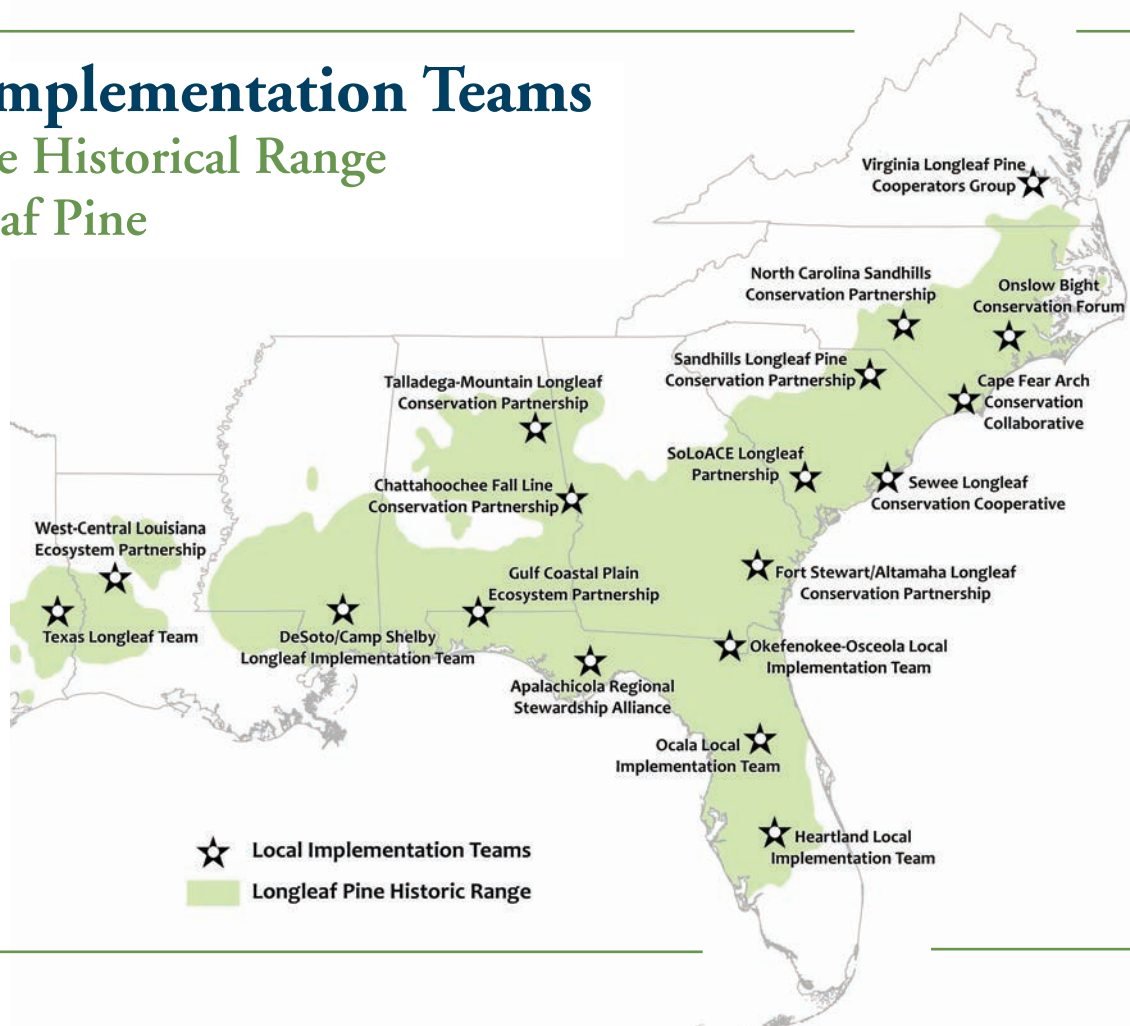
It is exciting to have the updated *Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine (2025-2040)* complete and available to guide our work for the next 15 years. The plan is still focused on maintaining, improving, and restoring longleaf pine forests in the Southeast, but some priorities have shifted over time due to changing needs across the range. As a result, we will be more strategic in our goals and utilize new approaches while bringing more partners to the table, allowing us to monitor and evaluate our progress better. Very soon, we will develop a five-year Strategic Priorities and Actions (SPA) Plan for a more focused look at the short-term activities necessary to advance the goals and objectives of the Conservation Plan.

What's your favorite plant or animal that lives in longleaf forests?

Northern Bobwhite Quail are my favorite, not only for their striking appearance but because they are so responsive to fire in longleaf stands. Bobwhites tend to show up on many properties after a prescribed burn program is initiated, even if they have not been observed prior. Fire simply allows them to thrive in these stands. They are very vocal, so I enjoy hearing and seeing them in areas managed by fire. One resident covey is usually found in an area where I regularly conduct prescribed burning. They come right out to greet you as soon as you start preparing the firebreaks, stay close to the firebreaks during the burn, and go right back in the stand as soon as the burn is complete. Burner Bob® is a great witness to their fondness for prescribed burning!

America's Longleaf Partnership Council is comprised of 33 members representing non-governmental organizations, state and federal agencies, implementation teams and other collaborative efforts, private industry, universities/research/extension, and private landowners. The LPC provides a forum where its diverse partners can bring different objectives, missions, responsibilities, and contributions required to make longleaf pine conservation efforts successful.

Local Implementation Teams within the Historical Range of Longleaf Pine



LEAF Center Hosts Silvopasture Burn Workshop

By Dan Weber, *The Nature Conservancy*

LOUISIANA



Hands-on silvopasture controlled burn at LEAF
{Rodney McKay}

On December 15th, 2023, participants gathered at the Louisiana Ecological Forestry Center (LEAF) in Florien, Louisiana, for a silvopasture burn workshop co-hosted by Louisiana Grazing Lands and Quail Forever. The workshop was the first of its kind for the region and focused on the basics of woodland and pasture burning, as well as the benefits of maintaining grasslands with fire for ecosystem health and wildlife. The morning classroom session included presentations on silvopasture grazing methods, wildlife benefits, and burn regulations and liabilities. During the afternoon, the group took part in a hands-on controlled burn of seven acres of silvopasture planted with longleaf pine seedlings in early 2023. A second site at LEAF with 2-year-old longleaf pine was visited and served to compare and contrast strategies and progress with the site burned that day.

Instructors included CC Richmond from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Rodney McKay from LEAF, Chris Able from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Jackson Martini from Quail Forever, and Amelia Purdy from the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry.

At approximately 4,600 acres, LEAF is the site of one of the state's largest private longleaf pine restoration efforts. It regularly hosts agencies and landowners interested in advancing their understanding of restoring and maintaining longleaf habitat. LEAF is located within the Fort Polk/Kisatchie National Forest Significant Geographic Area where the local LIT, the West Central Louisiana Ecosystem Partnership, works collaboratively with partners including the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Department of Defense, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, conservation NGOs, and others to advance longleaf and other ecosystem restoration efforts.

Strong Partnership Leads to Conservation, Recreation, and Base Buffering Protection Effort

By Vernon Compton, *GCPEP Director, The Longleaf Alliance*

FLORIDA



Clear Creek Lake {Vernon Compton}

Thanks to a strong partnership between Florida's Santa Rosa County, the Trust for Public Land, and Naval Air Station (NAS) Whiting Field, another important conservation parcel is being protected in perpetuity. The 429-acre property, to be managed by the County, has conservation and water quality benefits, passive recreation opportunities, and helps with base buffering for NAS Whiting Field. Department of Defense Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) funding, which centered on protecting the installation from incompatible development, was a key element of support leading to the project's success.

The site includes the 92-acre Clear Creek Lake, a spring-fed tributary of the Blackwater River, an Outstanding Florida Waterway. Protecting the Clear Creek tributary will help keep the Blackwater River healthy and resilient. Upland areas include longleaf pine, gopher tortoises, and fox squirrels.

Santa Rosa County has now protected two key properties that will provide plant and wildlife habitat in the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP) landscape, including that for several rare species. The earlier protected parcels (centered on the East River and its watershed and buffering Eglin Air Force Base) highlighted another strong partnership effort between Santa Rosa County, the Trust for Public Land, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Congratulations to all the partners for their outstanding work in preserving critical conservation parcels in Northwest Florida's Santa Rosa County. Your collaboration is making a difference.

Rare Birds Back at Sprewell Bluff

By Nathan Klaus, Georgia Department of Natural Resources

GEORGIA



Banded Red-cockaded Woodpecker captured at Fort Stewart and banded for Sprewell Bluff WMA in Upson County, Georgia. {Pvt. Santiago Lepper/50th Public Affairs Detachment/U.S. Army}

After almost 50 years, Red-cockaded Woodpeckers are back at Sprewell Bluff Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The Red-cockaded Woodpecker, or RCW for short, is an endangered bird species once found throughout the southeastern U.S. However, habitat loss has drastically reduced their populations, and the species was last documented at Sprewell Bluff in 1976.

Crews from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources brought fire back to Sprewell Bluff in 2001, followed by years of timber thins, longleaf pine planting, and hack-n-squirt efforts to control hardwoods. Following the hard work to restore longleaf pine woodlands beneficial to these birds and other wildlife, three pairs of RCWs were translocated from Fort Stewart and released into artificial nest cavities on the WMA in December 2023. This process of translocation was coordinated through federal and state conservation agencies with the hope the birds would take to their new home and begin raising young starting this spring, ending the species' long absence from these woodlands.

This project was funded by the Georgia Ornithological Society, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Knobloch Family Foundation, and the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program. More translocations are planned for the coming years. The hope is Sprewell Bluff WMA will eventually support 25 RCW cluster sites.

Advancing Herbaceous Groundcover in the Ft. Stewart/Altamaha Partnership Landscape

By Blake Adams, Preserve Manager, The Orianne Society

GEORGIA



Tractor with flail-vac for native seed collection {Caleb Goldsmith}

Public and private partners of the Ft. Stewart/Altamaha Longleaf Restoration Partnership Groundcover Working Group continue to share resources, collect seed, and expand native groundcover efforts in southeast Georgia.

At the Longleaf Stewardship Center in Telfair County, Georgia, The Orianne Society (TOS) has established donor fields with several native species suitable for the groundcover restoration in the Partnership's landscape. With wide-open fields and sandhills, most of the seed is collected with tractors and flail-vac harvesters. They continue to improve their native groundcover restoration efforts, with natural plant communities being restored on 130+ acres over the past two years, with hopes of continuing to grow.

In addition to their existing harvesting equipment, The Orianne Society borrowed a flail-vac seed harvester from The Nature Conservancy to assist with seed collection. In just a few days, they were able to collect several species (including wiregrass, lopsided Indiangrass, little bluestem, Elliot's bluestem, and blazing star) totaling 650 pounds of material. The seed is cleaned and

processed at the TOS Longleaf Stewardship Center facility. In the years when the harvest exceeds TOS restoration needs, surplus seed is donated to The Nature Conservancy and a private landowner for their restoration work.

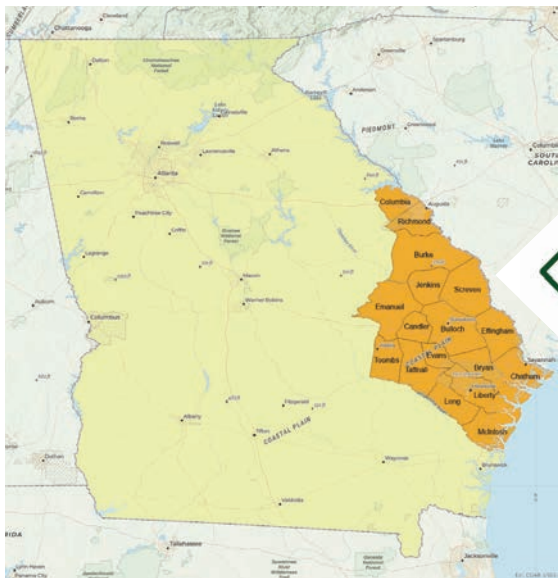
By sharing equipment (an all-terrain vehicle installed with a flail-vac), the Georgia Department of Natural Resources has also been able to collect seed on several wildlife management areas in southeast Georgia to further their restoration efforts.

Fort Stewart continues to collect significant amounts of seed from their restoration plots, with 2,500 lbs. of wiregrass seed harvested this past year.

New Prescribed Burn Association Available to Private Landowners in Georgia

By Ashley Curtis, Tall Timbers

GEORGIA



The Savannah River Prescribed Burn Association (PBA) is geared towards assisting landowners in the implementation of prescribed fire as a land management tool. This PBA serves 17 counties north of the Altamaha River from Savannah out towards Augusta. The PBA utilizes a neighbor-helping-neighbor approach to share equipment and labor and also provides support through various training and education workshops.

Forty-five partners and interested landowners met on March 13th in Statesboro (Bulloch County, Georgia) to discuss the goals of the PBA and what is going to make the PBA successful. We had multiple speakers discussing costs of prescribed burning for private landowners, how a PBA can offset those costs, updates on smoke regulations in Georgia and how that will affect prescribed burning. We also had landowner testimonials from members of the Southwest Georgia PBA discussing how their PBA has assisted in the success of their management plans.

If you are interested in implementing prescribed burning as a part of your land management plans, please get involved with the Savannah River PBA. We can work together towards your goals. Contact Ashley Curtis at Tall Timbers (acurtis@talltimbers.org).

South Carolina Forestry Commission Provides Burning Workshop in Williamsburg County

By Patrick Ma, The Nature Conservancy, and Michelle Johnson, South Carolina Forestry Commission

SOUTH CAROLINA



A landowner learns firing techniques from SCFC. (South Carolina Forestry Commission)

The South Carolina Forestry Commission, in conjunction with natural resource organizations and other partners, conducted a “Learn to Burn” field day for landowners in Williamsburg County on February 1, 2024. The fire demonstration and training event was sponsored and attended by representatives of The Sewee Longleaf Conservation Cooperative, The Longleaf Alliance, Clemson Extension, the Center for Heirs Property Preservation, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, and The Nature Conservancy.

Black River Unit Forester Ron Holt and Assistant Unit Forester Tonya Smith led the workshop. Participants learned the importance of prescribed fire, how to plan, liability issues, different firing techniques, and had the opportunity to burn 12 acres of private land. For workshop participants wearing appropriate clothing, Forestry Commission staff guided individuals through the burn unit for a chance to lay down strips of fire using a drip torch. Attendees also reviewed fire accomplishments on a neighboring tract burned earlier in the week.

Black River Unit personnel put in the fire breaks and prepared the tract for burning. Tonya Smith was the burn boss and directed Dillon/Florence Project Forester Chet Foyle and Horry/Marion Project Forester Caleb Watson, Williamsburg Sector Fire Management Officer Terry Cook with Forestry Technicians Wayne Springs, Jackie Welch, Justin Johnson, Brantley Burrows, and Georgetown Sector Forestry Technician I Wayne Smith, at the event. Three new technicians from the Williamsburg Sector also participated in the workshop to learn (Will McElveen, O’Neal Bluefort, and Dylan Lewis).

The Forestry Commission provides workshops on prescribed fire across the state to help landowners learn more about it and how useful it can be.

Cheraw Family Bringing Back Tradition of Putting Fire on the Land

By Charles Babb, Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership Coordinator

SOUTH CAROLINA



Layne Rogerson reviews the prescribed fire plan with family members prior to initiating a burn of 31 acres. {Courtesy of Layne Rogerson}

The Godbold family of Cheraw, South Carolina, is bringing back the tradition of utilizing fire to manage their longleaf pine stands. After several years of working with the Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership (SLPCP) to restore fire in 60 acres of longleaf, family members have reached a confidence level to conduct prescribed burns without assistance from outside professionals.

Layne Rogerson, daughter of landowner Pat Godbold, recently planned and executed a prescribed fire on 31 acres of longleaf to encourage groundcover development. Over Thanksgiving weekend, the weather cooperated, allowing three generations of family members to work together, prepare fire lines, and conduct a successful burn. According to Layne, “The grandchildren were excited to help while learning the techniques and benefits of prescribed burning. Hopefully, they will continue the practice and have opportunities to teach their children how to be good stewards. We have used fire for ten years now, and we see the benefits. It’s time for us to be able to take care of the family land ourselves.”

Charles Babb, SLPCP Coordinator, has worked with the Godbold family for several years to improve pollinator habitat and manage the property to attract and raise Red-cockaded Woodpeckers by installing nest cavities. “The Godbold family is focused on enhancing the overall ecosystem instead of prioritizing forest income. The joy of seeing natural habitat being utilized by all sorts of animals is sometimes more valuable than other benefits of ownership.”

Environmental Conservation Corps Helps Restore Longleaf Pine Habitat at Nemours Wildlife Foundation

By Heather Kraus, Nemours Wildlife Foundation, Marni Friedman, The Sustainability Institute, and Jennie Haskell, The Longleaf Alliance

SOUTH CAROLINA



ECC Crew Leader Emma Raines planting longleaf pine seedlings {Marni Friedman}

Environmental Conservation Corps members and Sustainability Institute staff at Nemours Wildlife Foundation {Heather Kraus}

Partnering with The Sustainability Institute’s Environmental Conservation Corps (ECC), a local AmeriCorps program that focuses on habitat restoration work, Nemours Wildlife Foundation planted 1,450 longleaf pine seedlings in Beaufort County, South Carolina. The ECC is a conservation-based, service-learning, and workforce development program that engages young people as AmeriCorps members in conservation service experiences. The Corps members work with federal, state, and non-profit organizations to address and help mitigate the local climate impacts with nature-based solutions. Service work includes building living shorelines, constructing rain gardens, water quality testing and monitoring, and planting native flora.

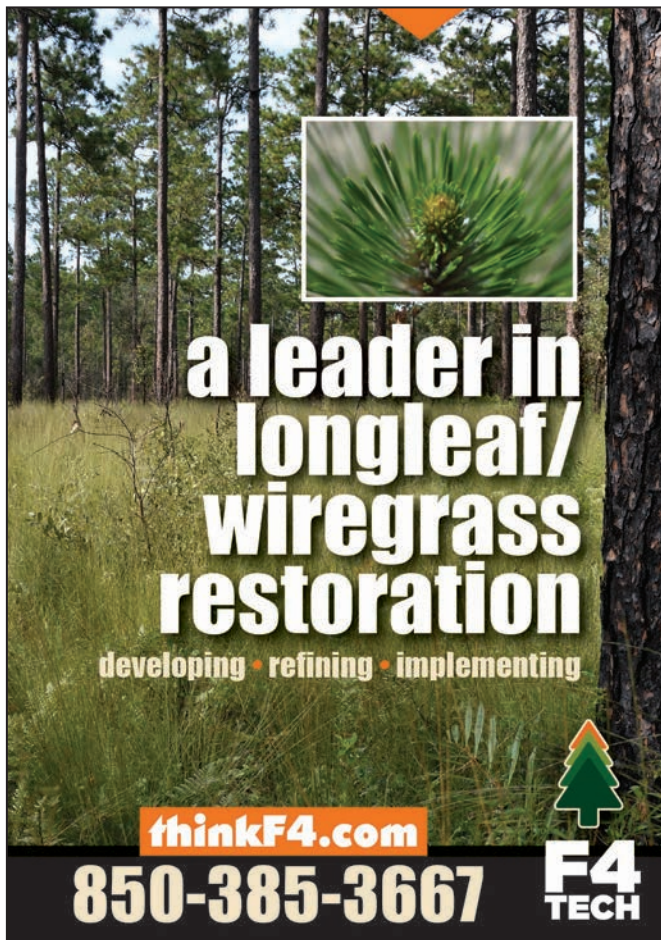
Through the “living laboratory” that is the Nemours property, members of the ECC had the opportunity to not only learn about longleaf restoration but also engage in hands-on experiences to establish longleaf pine in gaps of a loblolly pine overstory. This effort was the next step in their ongoing savanna restoration.

Through collaborative partnerships, such as those with The Longleaf Alliance and The Sustainability Institute, Nemours can facilitate sound stewardship, scientific research, and experiential education.

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By Whit Gibbons

University of Alabama Press, 2022

Reviewed by Lisa Lord, *The Longleaf Alliance*

Salleyland: Wildlife Adventures in Swamps, Sandhills, and Forests

The theme that runs in abundance through the book *Salleyland* is joy.

Whit Gibbons, a retired ecological researcher with a tenure of 41 years with the University of Georgia's Savannah River Ecology Laboratory, writes about stewarding his very own "Hundred Acre Wood" named Salleyland. Initially acquiring the property for the sheer pleasure of wildlife appreciation and herpetology, Gibbons soon realizes it is an undervalued gem; Salleyland is a living laboratory and an opportunity to share nature's gifts with others. Through this collection of stories and memories, Whit immerses readers as he explores Salleyland from every angle—historian, researcher, naturalist, host, and granddad.

Each chapter, with themes such as "Get off the Beaten Path" and "Embracing Serendipity," unveils tales of discovery and adventure. In addition to wonderful stories of roaming the woods, sandhills, and swamps of rural South Carolina and charming family photos of grandchildren that evoke nostalgic memories of childhood adventures, the author

provides valuable tips for any naturalist, both novice and seasoned. His advocacy for active engagement with nature through field notes, journals, and photography mirrors his passion for the great outdoors.

Notably, *Salleyland* shares a special connection with The Longleaf Alliance. In 2016, Whit generously allowed the filming of a "Three Minute Management" video on planting longleaf pine at the property. This collaboration not only enriched Salleyland with new longleaf pine but also disseminated a wealth of information, garnering over 55,000 views on TLA's YouTube Channel.

Salleyland is so much more than a family retreat. *Salleyland*, the book, is an invitation to revel in the wonders of the natural world, a testament to the joy that can be found around every corner when one takes the time to explore and appreciate it truly. Whit Gibbons beckons readers to embark on a journey of discovery and forge a deeper connection with the wonders surrounding us.



Longleaf pine planting and filming The Longleaf Alliance's "Three Minute Management" video at Salleyland



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*By Karen Z. Brown and Wendy J. Ledbetter,
The Longleaf Alliance, with Blaine Tyler,
Georgia Department of Natural Resources*

Longleaf Destinations

Woven In Time:

Longleaf Pine and Sweetgrass Coastal Conservation
on Sapelo Island, Georgia

*The 100-foot-tall lighthouse built in 1820 overlooks Doboy
Sound which was once a busy waterway.*



A maritime forest meets a tranquil shoreline where remnants of horseshoe crabs and oyster shells lie at the water's edge.

Sitting beachside, Mrs. Yvonne Grovner's hands work quickly to add bundles of fragrant sweetgrass to the basket taking shape. Narrow strips of green saw palmetto are coiled around the bundles to pull it tight. Sometimes, longleaf pine needles from the island's forests or black rush stems found in the salt marshes are added to the basket's design. Sweetgrass, and longleaf too, are literally woven into the rich culture of the Gullah Geechee people and Sapelo Island.

The Gullah Geechee are descendants of West Africans enslaved on the Georgia and Carolina coasts. These communities and their sense of place are dwindling. On Sapelo Island, a small and dedicated population of around 35 remains in the historic area known as Hogg Hummock (also known as Hog Hammock). Considered one of the last remaining populations of this distinct West African Creole culture in the United States, Hogg Hummock residents are committed to remaining on the island despite many pressures.

A LONG AND STORIED HISTORY

Tales of pirate treasure, Civil War battles of the Antebellum South, and the industrial magnates that came to find seclusion, serenity, and leisure are just a small part of Sapelo Island's rich and captivating story.

Archaeologists trace the island's human inhabitation back more than 4,500 years. A large Guale Indian population lived there then, and the name Sapelo is of Guale Indian origin. The Spanish arrived in 1573, and a Franciscan mission was eventually constructed on the north end. When the English began colonization of Georgia in 1733, it led to an agreement with the Creek Indians in which the Indians were guaranteed

hunting lands on several barrier islands, including Sapelo. In 1757, another treaty with the Creeks turned those islands over to the English Colony.

Early in the 1800s, the island was transferred through sale, and sugar cane cultivation began, followed by cotton, which would drastically change the island's nature. After the Civil War and emancipation, many of the 350+ people formerly enslaved on the island's plantations continued to live on Sapelo, establishing a free community.

In 1912, an automotive engineer from Detroit, Howard Coffin, purchased the entire island, except for the area established by Black communities. Coffin reinitiated large-scale agriculture and established a sawmill and a seafood industry. He built roads, drilled artesian wells, and added other improvements. When the Great Depression evaporated Coffin's wealth, he sold his island holdings to North Carolina tobacco heir R. J. Reynolds, who lived on the island part-time for 30 years. Reynolds established the Sapelo Island Research Foundation and provided facilities and support for the University of Georgia Marine Institute. Annemarie Schmidt Reynolds, his widow, sold the island to the State of Georgia in two transactions (1969 and 1976).

CONSERVATION TODAY

Today, the State of Georgia owns about 97%, or all but 435 acres, of the island. The Sapelo Island Wildlife Management Area (WMA), managed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR), offers 9,000 acres for recreation, including hunting for white-tailed deer, small game, and feral hogs.



Longleaf forest with palmetto understory



A. Tabby ruins from the 1819 Chocolate Plantation on the island's north end. (Named from Chucalate, a Guale Indian village on the island.) The main house and slave quarter remnants still stand, telling the history of a different place and time.

B. Mrs. Yvonne Grovner constructs a sweetgrass basket and shares stories in the Gullah Geechee tradition on a Sapelo Island Tour.

C. Now a prized artform, sweetgrass baskets were originally crafted by the Gullah Geechee people for use in rice production.

The island's upland natural areas are dominated by towering pines and grandfather oaks draped in Spanish moss. The WMA includes an estimated 700 acres of longleaf pine forest with a diverse understory of saw palmetto, and native grasses and wildflowers. Conducting timber stand improvement and prescribed fire operations on an island with limited access presents logistical challenges. Land managers take advantage of natural events, like wildfire, to respond with a reforestation plan that converts acreage back into longleaf pine. Included in GA DNR's management plan is reestablishing native vegetation on an old airstrip.

In addition to the longleaf pine stands, the island's ecosystems include hardwood-dominated maritime forests, salt marshes, dune meadows, and freshwater ponds and impoundments, usually teeming with waterfowl and wading birds. The island is also an important site for resident and migratory bird populations.

Conserving sweetgrass (*Muhlenbergia sericea*) for future generations is another priority for island land stewards and the Gullah Geechee community. Sweetgrass growing in areas behind coastal dunes on barrier islands is subject to the changing forces of nature's frequent and intense storms, rising sea levels, and erosion. Scientists with the University of Georgia Marine Extension and the Georgia Sea Grant program are working with the community to monitor and restore sweetgrass.

Blaine Tyler, Area Manager with GA DNR shared the vision for Sapelo Island, "In our unwavering commitment to ecological stewardship, myself, alongside the dedicated Georgia Department of Natural Resources staff, embark on a transformative journey to restore and manage Sapelo Island's delicate ecosystem, with a particular focus on nurturing the resilient spirit of the longleaf pine. Together, we strive to weave a tapestry of sustainability, preserving not just the flora and fauna, but the rich legacy of our shared natural heritage."

The beauty and remoteness of Sapelo Island continue to intrigue. In many ways, Sapelo is an active locale for various research institutions, natural resource managers, and its residents.

AN EYE TOWARD THE FUTURE

Like most coastal areas, Sapelo and its people face regular challenges from a changing and intensifying climate. As a barrier island, this is more pronounced as these features regularly take the brunt of oncoming hurricanes, slowing the storm before it heads for the mainland. Rising tides and saltwater intrusion are a concern for the uplands and for the embedded freshwater wetlands that support whole ecosystems unto themselves.

For the Gullah Geechee community, other risks loom, such as land loss and threats to cultural sustainability. If allowed to go into effect, recent proposals would open the island up to more residential development and drastically increase the tax burden, threatening to force out generations-long residents of Hogg Hummock.

HOW TO EXPERIENCE SAPELO ISLAND

Access Sapelo Island via the state-operated passenger ferry that launches from the Sapelo Visitor Center outside Darien, Georgia. Allow time to check out the interpretive exhibits and browse the gift shop at the Center. No personal motorized vehicles are allowed, so the best way to experience the island is through a local guide or tour group.

Tours cater to specific interests; for instance, Sapelo Island Tours may feature a basket-weaving demonstration by Mrs. Grovner, and visitors will experience significant cultural sites around the island. Sapelo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve on the western edge of Sapelo is dedicated to the research, education, stewardship, and sound management of coastal resources. Tours from the Reserve are available throughout the year. The two beaches, Nannygoat on the south end and Cabretta on the north end are open to access for sunbathers and bird watchers; sea turtles dig their nests here in the summer months.

The beauty and remoteness of Sapelo Island continue to intrigue. In many ways, Sapelo is an active locale for various research institutions, natural resource managers, and its residents. There is even a post office whose sole employee diligently delivers daily mail to and from the mainland. But away from the ferry landing and community centers, it is easy to forget, momentarily, the

conveniences of modern life. Walking under the stately canopies of the maritime forests or looking out at the vast expanses from the island's shores, imagining the centuries of human history that took place on this ground, Sapelo Island, in many ways, is also a land that transcends time.



{Summit to the Sea, University of Georgia}

Photos by Wendy J. Ledbetter

TLA Staff News



At the beginning of 2024, The Longleaf Alliance welcomed **Simon Ward** to the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP) crew as the newest member of the Ecosystem Support Team (EST). Simon has ten years of military experience, most recently with the United States Air Force at Hurlburt Field near Destin, Florida, and before that, at Joint Base Charleston in South Carolina. With a Bachelor of Arts in Biology from Bowdoin College, his passion for wildland fire is a perfect fit for the EST and our many partners working to increase the amount of prescribed fire implemented in the GCPEP landscape. Simon joins Kaiden Spurlock, Donna Vassallo, Alan Patterson, Jasmine Little, and Emma McKee on the EST.



Anne Rilling retired from The Alliance in March 2024 after 15 years with our organization. Anne's knowledge and skill sets in forestry, environmental education, project management, and "all things numbers" were valuable assets for The Longleaf Alliance as we grew and expanded to become the organization we are today. TLA staff celebrated Anne at the December 2023 all-staff meeting with a surprise guest – Rhett Johnson, President Emeritus and TLA co-founder. Congratulations and best wishes, Anne, on your retirement adventure.

THE Owen Fellowship OF THE LONGLEAF ALLIANCE



Congratulations IAN WARR

M.S. Student, Forestry & Natural Resources,
University of Georgia

This project aims to unravel poorly understood physiological processes in longleaf pine, specifically the role of belowground non-structural carbohydrate (NSC) reserves in its early life history stages.

In addition to establishing baseline belowground NSC concentrations across grass, bolting, sapling, and mature longleaf pine trees, this study will capture reductions in NSC reserves during bolting, construct an annual carbon budget, and assess the impact on estimated biomass.

Special thank you to the Selection Committee for their efforts in reaching this unanimous decision.

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By Lynnsey Basala, The Longleaf Alliance

YOU MAKE THE BIENNIAL LONGLEAF CONFERENCE Possible

With our planning in motion, our excitement is building to host the 15th Biennial Longleaf Conference in Sandestin, Florida, this October. We will be in the heart of the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP) landscape, home to The Alliance's three field teams and over half of our staff members. This area includes some of the best remaining longleaf pine habitats in the world, including at least 50% of the surviving old-growth longleaf, and a long track record of active management and coordinated conservation projects. Partners in this landscape have learned and accomplished more together than they could have on their own.

Similarly, the Biennial Longleaf Conference is possible because folks from across the range and businesses of all shapes and sizes directly support this education and fellowship opportunity. Conference sponsorship revenue helps to offset conference expenses, making registration costs manageable for participants.

We could not host this event without the generosity of others. Please help us reach our \$92,000 sponsorship goal!

Ready to join us? Review the incentives and agreed-upon terms in the table and contact Lynnsey Basala, Vice President for Development, at (314) 288-5654 or Lynnsey@longleafalliance.org.

15th BIENNIAL LONGLEAF CONFERENCE SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



GIVING LEVELS & INCENTIVES		\$10,000	\$5,000	\$2,500	\$1,000	\$500
The Longleaf Leader	Quarterly Magazine Issues	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Complimentary Advertisement*	Full Page (4)	½ Page (4)	¼ Page (4)		
	Electronic Delivery (for Internal Use)	✓	✓			
	Recognition in Winter Issue - Annual Report	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Magazine Submission*	2-Page Article	1-Page Article	½ Page Article	Photo & Caption	
Media & Gifts	Press Release Acknowledging Contribution	✓				
	Quote for Company Use	✓	✓			
	Company Logo on TLA Website	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Recognition at TLA Academies & Workshops	✓	✓	✓		
	Longleaf Themed Gift	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Biennial Conference	Individual Annual Membership – Includes registration discount	1	1	1	1	1
	Official Sponsor of Conference Social Event	Evening Celebration	Meal or Field Tour	Break	Hospitality Room	
	Complimentary Exhibit Space** & 1 Full Conference Registration	✓	✓	✓		
	Additional Complimentary Registrations	3	1			
	Company Logo on Printed Conference Materials	Prominent Placement	Prominent Placement	✓	✓	✓
	Company Logo & Link on Conference Website	Prominent Placement	Prominent Placement	✓		

*Partner must work with magazine editor on article content/publication timeline and follow submission guidelines. The Longleaf Alliance reserves the right to accept or reject advertising or editorial material submitted for publication.
**Additional fees for exhibit may apply.

The Biennial Longleaf Conference is the largest and longest-running gathering focused on the restoration and conservation of the longleaf pine ecosystem. This event provides the opportunity to share, learn, and celebrate longleaf through featured plenaries, oral and poster presentations, field tours, socials, and more. It also serves as a rallying spot for other organizations and agencies, like the Longleaf Partnership Council of America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative.

Open to individuals, private landowners, land managers, wildlife biologists, conservation groups, students, researchers, consultants, forestry professionals, and agency and outreach personnel who share an interest in longleaf pine ecosystems, the conference draws up to 400 attendees and 30+ exhibitors and vendors.



RMS

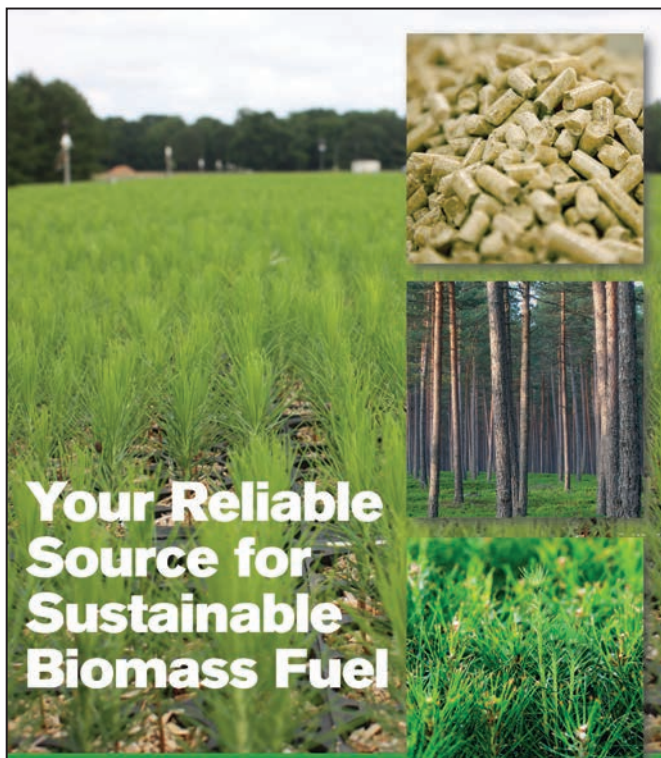
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By Anne Rilling, The Longleaf Alliance

BRINGING IT BACK



My tenure at The Longleaf Alliance seems short compared to a longleaf pine's life span. Like the longleaf, beginning from a small sapling and growing to an impactful tree, I have grown professionally as has the organization itself.

From its inception in 1995, The Alliance has focused on raising awareness of the longleaf ecosystem, growing its supporters, and increasing collaboration with other natural resource partners. In 2007, The Alliance incorporated, established a board of directors, hired part-time employees, and contracted with Auburn University for outreach staff. A large grant through the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act meant additional personnel was needed. The adage “being in the right place at the right time” explains how I came to TLA when Rhett hired me as the first full-time employee. Fast forward a couple of years as our staff continued to grow, more projects came on board, and the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP) transitioned under TLA's umbrella. About that time, our part-time business manager decided to step down. As a self-proclaimed “numbers nerd,” budgets, spreadsheets, and financial analysis are my thing, so it seemed natural to assume the role of Vice President for Business in 2012.

My time with The Alliance has allowed me to meet and work with landowners, other longleaf enthusiasts, and natural

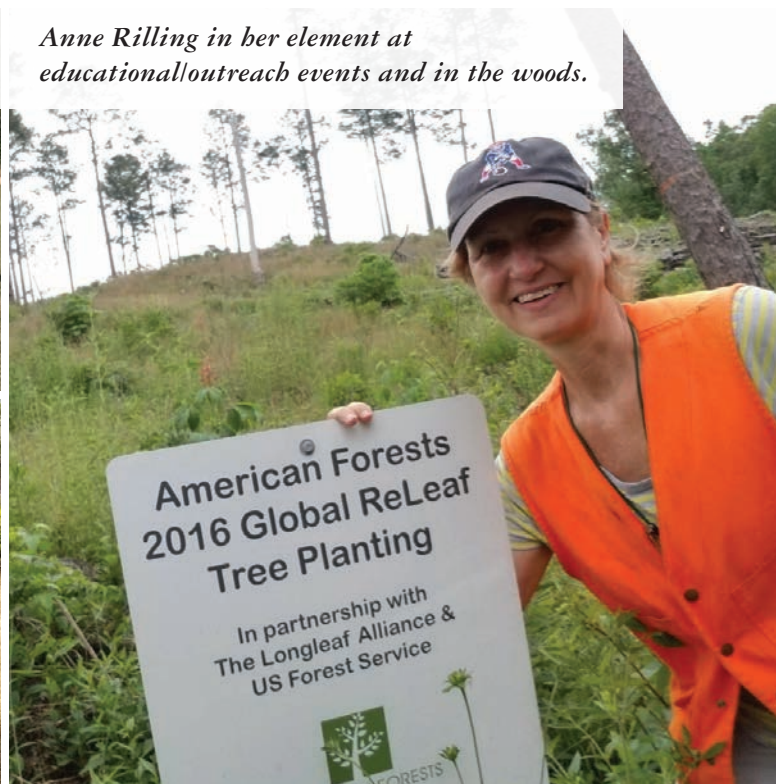
resource professionals across the range. Our members and staff are as diverse as the longleaf ecosystem we promote, and that diversity creates a strong entity. When you call the headquarters in Andalusia, Alabama, you will always get a live person. When I answer and listen while a landowner passionately describes their property, it always makes me smile.

Those who know me well know I do not make hasty decisions, so my decision to retire comes after much thought and planning. My slow exit has helped with the transition, reassigning my projects and remembering all the little tasks that get done without any thought or fanfare. It has also allowed me to slide into a retirement lifestyle gradually. Still, it will be hard to let go because I will miss my friends and colleagues, even those who caused me headaches and heartburn.

The Alliance has often been referred to as the “little engine that could,” and even as a small non-profit, we have been a force multiplier in expanding the longleaf and its ecosystem. It has been a privilege to be a part of “Bringing it Back.”



Anne Rilling in her element at educational/outreach events and in the woods.



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