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COVER Small flowers appear on Sandhills pixie-moss in late winter to early spring
 [Emily Oglesby, North Carolina Botanical Garden]

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The Longleaf Alliance

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



CAROL DENHOF

The Longleaf Alliance (TLA) is unique in that we are the only organization solely focused on conserving the longleaf pine ecosystem. These working forest systems provide a myriad of benefits ranging from economic products to plant and animal biodiversity to ecosystem services like carbon sequestration and watershed protection. Through our organizational and collaborative work with partners and private landowners, TLA is bringing positive change for this regional landscape using a multilevel approach.

Our programs fall within one or more of our five Strategic Priorities - Growing Awareness, Understanding Longleaf, Improving Forest Health, Conserving Diverse Habitats, and Expanding Ecosystems. Central to our work is our education and outreach to raise awareness of the ecosystem and increase the technical understanding of longleaf pine forests. We do this through our Burner Bob® environmental education program, our participation at public events, training courses like our Longleaf Academy series, and the high-quality technical assistance we offer daily to landowners and partners restoring and managing longleaf. These programs have allowed us to reach over 1 million people across our many outreach tools and platforms in FY 2023.

Through the on-the-ground work of our staff, we are also actively improving forest health by increasing the management and restoration of the longleaf ecosystem and many of its rare species. Over the last year, these efforts have resulted in 135,471 acres burned through prescribed fire, 40 Red-cockaded Woodpeckers translocated, 28 acres of reticulated flatwoods salamander habitat restored, and 85 acres of invasive species

treated. Through collaborative work with our partners, TLA helped to put 342 acres of important habitat under conservation easement in South Carolina. We are expanding the longleaf ecosystem on public and private lands through tree planting. In FY23, TLA provided assistance to plant 7.9M longleaf pine seedlings across nearly 13,000 acres.

In FY 2023, The Longleaf Alliance allocated 93% of our income to programs and services. While we are proud to provide this level of support for the work we do for longleaf, we also recognize the increasing need for general support from TLA members and Conservation Partners that allows our organization to run smoothly and efficiently. The cost of doing business is continually increasing, just like the increasing costs of living for individuals and families across the country, and we are thankful for all who are dedicated to the mission of TLA and have supported the organization over the last year. We literally could not do what we do without your generosity. To help cover our additional administrative costs, including the production costs of this valuable publication, TLA will be making changes in membership levels, magazine advertising, and Conservation Partner incentives in 2024. These changes will provide additional funding needed to allow our teams to continue offering the same high-level science-based technical assistance, outreach, and education that are so beneficial for those restoring and managing longleaf.

We are grateful to have the commitment of dedicated members and partners who believe in The Alliance and our day-to-day work for this important ecosystem. Thank you!!

The Longleaf Alliance

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The Longleaf Alliance's mission is to ensure a sustainable future for longleaf pine ecosystems.

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MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST | WINTER

PLANTING LONGLEAF

- **Site-Prep Burns:** Usually, it is important to conduct a site prep burn before planting longleaf. Site prep burns can remove logging slash, lead to better planting jobs, stimulate early growth by increasing available nutrients, and decrease hot spots that may kill young seedlings in subsequent burns. On deep sands or sites with little logging slash, site-prep burns may not be needed; fuel might be better saved until the first or second-year burn.
- **Plant Early:** Early planting is almost always better than late planting to take advantage of the winter precipitation, grow more roots, and maximize survival. With containerized seedlings, proper planting depth is the most critical factor for success.

GRASSTAGE STANDS

- **Check Survival:** Evaluate young stands to determine one-year survival and ensure adequate stocking. Wait until after the first frost when the grass stage longleaf is more easily seen.
- **First Burn:** Late December through the end of winter is an excellent time to introduce fire in young, healthy longleaf stands to help control unwanted pine seedlings and other competition.

SAPLING & MATURE STANDS

- **Prescribed Fire:** Winter is also a prime time to conduct fuel reduction burns in mature or sapling stands, but use caution (or wait) when burning in drought-stressed stands (most of the South this past year). When reintroducing fire into a long-unburned stand, monitor duff moisture to guide when to burn, and be ready to do immediate mop-up.
- **Prune Longleaf:** In some stands that lack fuels or have a low stocking rate, mechanical pruning may be an option to avoid the “old field” growth form. Winter is the easiest time to prune, and it should be finished before the spring green-up. Anticipate generating a large volume of limbs. Pruning may not be practical in a large stand.

- **Timber Thinning:** Take advantage of dry conditions and thin when the bark is less prone to slipping to minimize equipment damage to your stand. Thinning in the growing season is more likely to result in bark damage from skidding leading to stress, beetles, loss, etc.

CONTROL COMPETITION

- **Herbicide Treatments:** Basal bark and stem injection herbicide treatments are typically the most effective at controlling unwanted or invasive trees and shrubs during the dormant season.
- **Mechanical Brush Management:** It may be easier to reduce heavy shrub layers during the cooler months. Allow time to dry down the slash and follow up later with a prescribed burn.

GROUNDCOVER & WILDLIFE

- **Plant Native Warm-Season Grasses:** Late winter through early spring is the recommended time to plant our native understory species. Some plants require a cold-stratification period and need to be planted earlier.
- **Install Nest Boxes:** If you want more natural pest control agents like kestrels and owls on your property, install boxes early, as these are among the species that begin nesting in winter.

WALK THE “LINE”

- Now is an excellent time to inspect your property lines and freshen up boundary line markings. Take advantage of the cooler weather and greater visibility in the winter woods.

Reach out to
The Longleaf Alliance with any
longleaf management questions at
longleafalliance.org/contact.



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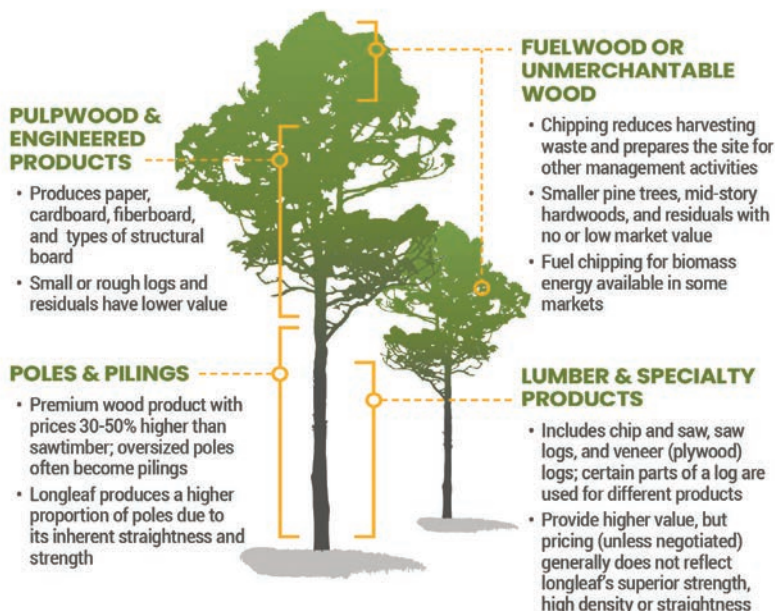
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Q&A

A TREE CAN GO IN A LOT OF DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS



Q. Dear Longleaf Alliance,
I plan to embark on my first timber harvest in the near future, and I have a great consulting forester who will walk me through the process and facilitate the sale. However, as a new forest landowner, I need some beginner information to help me understand the value of my timber. Can you break down the different products I might expect from my stand?

Sincerely,
Forestry Newbie from Georgia

A. Dear Newbie,
We are glad to hear you have a trusted forester that you are already working with – having their expertise to manage your timber sale and harvest will provide peace of mind, and their insight on local timber markets will provide added value. We highly recommend that landowners engage professional forester expertise whenever selling timber.

Timber markets fluctuate due to local factors like distance to mills, competition, weather, and broader influences, including global product demand. Species, tree quality and size, product type, acreage, location, site conditions, markets, and harvesting restrictions all affect the price paid to the landowner for standing timber, also called “stumpage” prices. A forester’s professional inventory of your timber quantifies what you propose to sell, and what it should be worth.

Major products that can be produced from pine trees include pulpwood, chip-n-saw, sawlogs, veneer logs, and pilings or poles. Each product must meet specific minimum size requirements and vary in value based on the product, tree quality, and markets. Large, sound trees with clear logs (logs without knots or branches) generally bring the highest prices.

- Pulpwood includes both the smaller and rougher trees ($\geq 6"$ diameter at breast height or DBH for short) as well as the topwood remaining once the higher value products are sorted out. Pulpwood is chipped into small pieces, chemically treated, and made into paper and wood fiber-based products.
- Chip-n-saw trees (9-14" DBH) produce chips for pulpwood as well as small dimension lumber like two-by-fours.
- Sawtimber trees ($\geq 14"$ DBH) are cut into lumber. Value is dependent on tree quality – logs must be straight, relatively free from knots, and have sound wood. Waste material is converted into chips for fuel or paper production.
- Veneer is produced from a tree ($\geq 16"$ DBH, clear/straight first log) by converting it to continuous sheets of thin wood. Value is dependent on tree quality.

- Poles are the blue-chip product from the straightest, defect free, and tight-grained timber that fits within the product specifications of length and diameter the pole mill is seeking. Longleaf produces a higher percentage of quality poles than any other southern pine species due to its inherent straightness and low taper.
- Fuel chipping is another product that can help profitably utilize small, rough stems or even branches that would otherwise be wasted. Biomass is used to produce pellets or fuel.

This quick summary is just hitting the basics of wood products. Your tract location and haul distance to the various markets often determine which ones are available. For more beginner-friendly timber harvesting resources, we also recommend contacting the forestry agency in your state for their expertise. An example of how they can help is "Selling Your Timber" by the Georgia Forestry Commission. Many states have similar but locally based variations on this information.

Please reach out with any other questions as you continue this process and build upon your forestry landowner knowledge. Don't forget that your consulting forester has a wealth of information and should be able and willing to explain any unclear terminology or steps.

Sincerely,
The Longleaf Alliance

Consulting foresters charge a percentage of the value of the timber sale as their commission for marketing timber. Their knowledge and relationships with existing markets should earn more money than their fee, and likely more than you would have profited on your own. They can also guide you to competent tax advice and be a valuable resource for your future restoration and management.



More helpful info from
Georgia Forestry
Commission's
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By Julian Wilson, North Carolina Plant Conservation Program

PLANT SPOTLIGHT

Pyxidanthera brevifolia
Sandhills pyxie-moss
Diapensiaceae Family



A. Pin flags marking Sandhills pixie-moss slated for plant rescue at Fort Liberty { Katherine Cullata, NC Plant Conservation Program} B. Small moss-like leaves {Katherine Cullata, NC Plant Conservation Program} C. Tiny flowers appear in late winter to early spring {Emily Oglesby, North Carolina Botanical Garden}

Description

With its small evergreen leaves and strong resemblance to moss, this tiny sub-shrub can be easy to miss at first glance! It is most visible from February to March when the Sandhills pyxie-moss blooms into a delightful carpet of miniscule white flowers, a truly magical sight.

Distribution & Habitat

Sandhills pyxie-moss is found in sandhill and longleaf pine/blackjack oak scrub habitats in six counties worldwide – four in North Carolina and two in South Carolina. This narrowly endemic species is listed as Threatened on the North Carolina Protected Plant List, a subset of the species from North Carolina Natural Heritage Program's List of Rare Plant Species that have legal protections.

Like many rare plants in the longleaf ecosystem, significant threats to the Sandhills pyxie-moss include fire suppression, land-use conversion, and ground disturbance from activities such as pine straw raking.

Similar Species

The Carolinas are also home to *Pyxidanthera barbulata*, sometimes called flowering pyxie-moss, which appears similar to Sandhills pyxie-moss but grows in a wider range of habitats and has slightly larger leaves. Flowering pyxie-moss has a larger distribution, also found in New York, New Jersey, and Virginia.

There is some debate about whether these are two species of pyxie-moss, two varieties of one species, or just one species. Regardless of its scientific classification, this adorable, rare plant lives up to its magical name!

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- NatureServe. 2023. *Pyxidanthera brevifolia*. NatureServe Explorer [web application]. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. (explorer.natureserve.org, Accessed November 6, 2023)
- LeGrand, H., B. Sorrie, and T. Howard. 2023. Vascular Plants of North Carolina [web application]. North Carolina Biodiversity Project and North Carolina State Parks, Raleigh, North Carolina. (<https://auth1.dpr.nc-parks.gov/flora/index.php>, Accessed November 6, 2023)



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Green Side Up

Underplanting: Growing Your Next Stand Now

By Karen Zilliox Brown, *The Longleaf Alliance*

Underplanting is the practice of introducing a new generation of trees under an existing overstory. This could be done to convert the stand to a different species, sometimes called “conversion with retention.” It can also be done with seedlings of the same species as the overstory if a multi-aged stand is desired, but natural regeneration is insufficient to achieve this structure.

Objectives and Benefits

Underplanting is often considered if a landowner wishes to avoid a clearcut-and-replant sequence. Underplanting establishes a developing stand while the existing one still stands, essentially getting a jump on the future rotation. This approach keeps the look of a forest, rather than the poor aesthetics of a clearcut, an important consideration if the stand is in a conspicuous location or near a residence.

Retaining the overstory structure is not just for looks; it provides habitat for a diversity of wildlife that may use everything from the groundcover layer to the upper canopy. The overstory trees also provide a fuel source in the form of pine needle litter, allowing for future prescribed burning. Maintaining fine fuels to carry fire can be difficult in other replanting scenarios if the groundcover is depleted following specific chemical site preparations or ground disturbances, like scalping.

Getting Started

A fire-maintained stand may be the most important criterion for considering underplanting, and the ability and willingness to burn every 2-3 years must be proven prior to attempting this technique.

Regular burning will prepare the area for underplanting by favoring herbaceous species in the understory, reducing woody encroachment, and preventing duff accumulation. A selective herbicide, like hexazinone for oak control, can also be very effective and compatible with longleaf restoration goals.

Frequent fire may be the single most important indicator for success in establishing longleaf through underplanting.

Thinning

The existing tree canopy can be retained at a range of densities depending on the landowner's goals and constraints. Generally, reducing the overstory to 20-70 basal area (BA) is recommended. The lower the remaining overstory, the more light can reach the ground, and the better underplanted seedlings can thrive.

Longleaf is considered shade-intolerant, meaning it will grow in the shade but does best in full sunlight. Of course, so do



A.



B.



C.



D.

A. Six-year growth on underplanting longleaf B. 14-year-old longleaf just after loblolly removal C. Four-year-old planting under open loblolly D. Very active slash pine regeneration

other undesirable plants. If loblolly or slash pine remains in the overstory, a very active seed source is also retained. The natural regeneration of these species can quickly overtake the stand, and prescribed burning is the best management tool to tackle this problem.

Even so, loblolly is a particularly aggressive seeder on prime sites. Sandier sites, more suitable for longleaf, can abate some of the pressure from loblolly recruitment and be better candidates for this underplanting.

Longleaf Response

Longleaf seedlings are sensitive to competition, which affects survival, establishment, and early growth. Underplanted longleaf will likely remain in the grass stage longer than their cutover counterparts. A lower residual basal area overhead will favor better longleaf seedling growth. Longleaf survival may not compare well to the cut-and-replant scenario; neither will overall height growth year-for-year. But if the primary objective is a continuous forest, this method provides a path.

Harvesting the Overstory

Once the remaining overstory has reached maturity or market conditions are suitable, a harvest could be considered. More care

will be needed to develop harvest plans, mark the timber to be cut, and provide closer guidance on the harvest operations to minimize damage to the developing stand below. The developing stand may be 10 or 15 years old by this point, or even older, and could be susceptible to breakage or injury from equipment. The scale of this operation may be limiting for loggers due to lower volume and contract complexity.

After the overstory has been taken off, the young stand will be able to respond to the new conditions by strengthening against wind exposure, expanding its canopies and volume, and taking its place in the overstory.

What to Expect

Approach this technique with eyes open to the conditions needed. There are unique challenges and setbacks to planting longleaf in this way, and shortcuts in preparing the stand are less forgiving than with other approaches.

If the landowner's goals include bringing longleaf into an existing stand or maintaining a continuous forest structure for wildlife, aesthetics, or other reasons, then underplanting or "slow conversion" can be a viable option with regular prescribed fire management.

Photos by Karen Zilliox Brown

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TLA staff participated in numerous education programs in 2023, including leading the isolated wetlands station at the Indigo Snake Festival in Alabama. {Kaiden Spurlock}

G.U.I.D.E.-ing Longleaf Forward

2023 | Highlights from The Longleaf Alliance

The Longleaf Alliance (TLA) is proud to share our collective successes achieved in the restoration, stewardship, and conservation of the longleaf pine ecosystem in 2023 from Texas to Virginia. These advancements are only possible with the trust, dedication, and generosity of members and conservation partners. The Alliance's G.U.I.D.E.-ing framework (Growing - Understanding - Improving - Diverse - Ecosystems) identifies our key strategic longleaf objectives.

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

2023 marked an exciting milestone for The Longleaf Alliance (TLA) and Burner Bob® as we celebrated the 5th anniversary of our partnership. Bob's numerous appearances this year included six fire festivals across the Southeast, Partnerscapes Private Lands Partners Day in Montana, and

the Lomakatsi Restoration Project's Inter-Tribal Ecosystem Restoration Partnership Peer-to-Peer Learning Summit in Oregon.

We were thrilled to collaborate with Burner Bob®, Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Division, and The Environmental Resources Network (T.E.R.N.) on new educational materials promoting Eastern Indigo Snake conservation: *Introducing the Indigo*, an award-winning short film for young people, *Burner Bob® and Friends Save the Indigo* activity book, and two 'Save the Indigo' stickers. Thank you to Magic Kumquat Productions and Cassandra Waldrop for their creative direction.

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

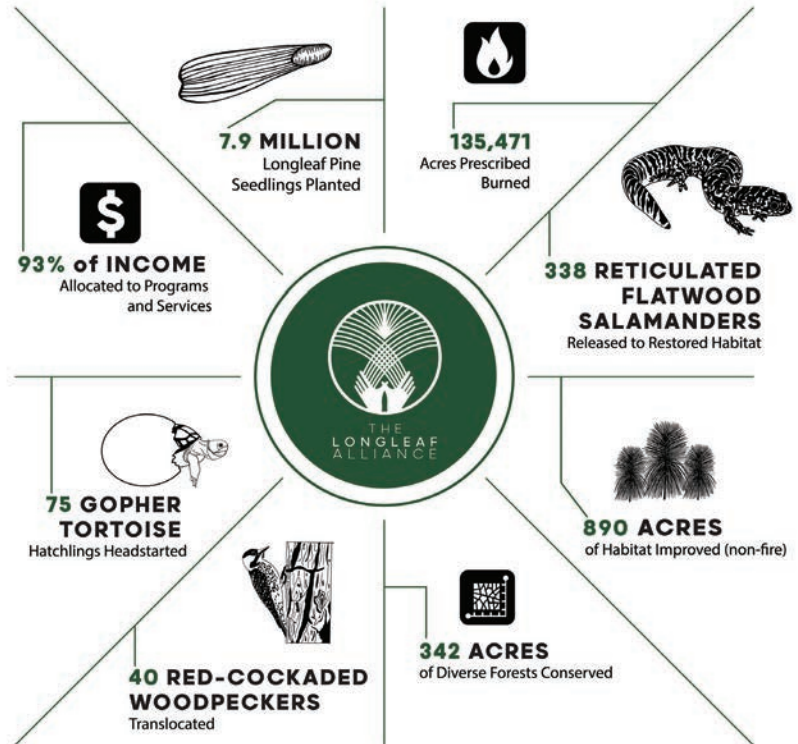


Father-son longleaf planting duo at the "Pints for Pines" volunteer planting event with Three Rivers Land Trust and Appalachian Mountain Brewery in North Carolina. Sales from AMB's Long Leaf IPA support TLA tree planting fund. {Sarah Crate}

IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS



1,238,954 PEOPLE reached via Longleaf Academies, Technical Assistance, Field Days, Workshops, Fire Training, social media, & other outreach events



Alliance staff kept very full calendars all year with more than 300 technical assists to landowners and partners and reached more than 4,000 people through workshops, field days, Learn and Burns, webinars, and academies.

Longleaf Academy Program

With support from our partners, TLA staff offered seven Academy sessions in 2023, including Longleaf 101, Groundcover 201, Understory 201, and the debut of Longleaf and the Landowner Academy. This new Academy was specifically designed to engage traditionally underserved/unserved landowners, often dealing with heirs property issues. TLA worked with the Longleaf for All Working Group of America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative to present the initial Longleaf and the Landowner Academy on the Hodges Farm near Swainsboro, Georgia, to a packed house (30). Eight TLA staff contributed to producing this new Academy that is already being requested across the range.

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

Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership Landscape

The Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership's (GCPEP) full-time field staff grew in 2023. The new team, the *Ambystoma bishopi* Restoration Team or A.R.T. for short, works alongside the greater AMBBIS team to support reticulated flatwood salamander conservation and wetland restoration goals at the Escrivano Point Wildlife Management Area in Florida.

The Alliance is proud of the GCPEP field teams' hard work to support the stewardship of the landscape. The Ecosystem Support Team (EST), AMBBIS, and A.R.T. teams assist partners with prescribed fire, invasive species control, wetland restoration, reticulated flatwood salamander recovery, Red-cockaded Woodpecker cavities, and other habitat improvement activities in Alabama and Florida.



- ▲ *Participants from the first-ever Longleaf and the Landowner Academy watch as a gopher tortoise burrow is scoped. TLA Academies combine both classroom and field-based learning. {Tiffany Woods}*
- ◀ *Lisa Lord, TLA, and Kurt Buhlman, UGA Savannah River Ecology Lab, prepare a pen for the release of headstarted gopher tortoises at the Aiken Gopher Tortoise Heritage Preserve in SC. {Tracey Tuberville}*

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

The Georgia Sentinel Landscape (GSL)

In 2023, GSL prescribed fire cost-share programs administered by TLA and the Georgia Forestry Commission supported 69 landowners conducting 9,866 acres of prescribed burning with funding from NRCS and Georgia DNR. Approximately 36% of the landowners who burned in the Southeastern focal area were conducting first entry burns that were either the landowner's first use of prescribed fire as a management tool or the initial burn of a young longleaf stand. Overall, the project has provided cost-share funding for 34,589 acres of prescribed burning on private lands in Georgia since fiscal year 2021 with 290 landowner agreements, and 64% of the prescribed burning acres were in primary target counties around Fort Moore, Fort Stewart, and Kings Bay.

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 7.9 million longleaf pine seedlings in fiscal year 2023. Planting projects were completed on both private and public land, with funding from American Forests, Arbor Day Foundation, Enviva, Georgia Pacific, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, National Forest Foundation, One Tree Planted, and Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We also continued our tree planting program with Appalachian Mountain Brewing and Georgia-Pacific's Aria® brand.

To further this work, Susan French transitioned to the role of Restoration Coordinator, a new TLA position focused on developing and implementing strategies and programs that promote, sustain, and increase longleaf restoration, longleaf seedling capacity, and understory species supply.

Longleaf Sustainability Analysis & Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine (2025-2040)

TLA staff contributed to and led collaborative teams to produce two crucial products for America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative and its partners across the longleaf range: the Longleaf Sustainability Analysis (LSA) and the Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine (2025-2040). This second iteration of the Conservation Plan has updated strategies and objectives to guide our continued efforts to reach eight million acres of longleaf pine forest in the Southeast. The LSA assists partners' efforts with a map analysis designed to facilitate the strategic, transparent, and evidence-based identification of the "right work" in the "right places" across the longleaf range.



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Research by David Dickens, PhD – Forest Productivity Professor and Dr. Yanshu Li, PhD – Forest Taxation and Economics Associate Professor – University of Georgia Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources

AN ECONOMIC COMPARISON OF LOBLOLLY AND LONGLEAF PINE

Many forest landowners are faced with deciding to plant loblolly or longleaf pine in the Coastal Plain region, an area spanning from southern Virginia southward to Florida and westward to eastern Texas. In their recent paper, Dickens and Yanshu address this decision from an economic standpoint; key findings are summarized below.

ECONOMIC ANALYSIS ASSUMPTIONS: All costs and revenues are in constant 2022 dollars.

Loblolly pine is grown to a 24-year rotation with a single thinning at age 15 years, with a growth rate of 6.25 tons/acre/year.

Longleaf pine is grown to a 45-year rotation, with two thinnings (age 20 and 32 years) and a clearcut at age 45 years, with a growth rate of 4.33 tons/acre/year (31% less than loblolly's growth rate).

Financial Assistance: Funding to reduce longleaf establishment costs by 50% is based on assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Longleaf is favored over loblolly for EQIP ranking, so cost-share is only factored in for longleaf. Other incentive programs provide different levels of assistance.

Annual property taxes and other costs = \$10/acre/year.

Pine Straw Income: Additional income of \$210/acre/year from annual pine straw harvests is included for longleaf

pine from age 12 through age 20 years. Total prep costs for straw harvesting (mowing and herbicide) are estimated at \$260/acre. Loblolly pine is not commonly raked where there is an abundance of longleaf stands, therefore no pine straw income is realized.

Pine Stumpage Prices*

- Pulpwood = \$8/ton: Trees with stem defects like forking and those trees with diameters from 4.6 to 9.6"
- Chip-n-saw = \$20/ton: Trees with no visible stem defect and diameters from 9.6 to 12.6"
- Sawtimber = \$27/ton: Trees with no visible stem defect and diameters from 12.6" and larger
- Poles = \$42/ton: Trees with no visible stem defect to 45 feet or more and diameters 14" or larger
Longleaf only - assuming 20% of the tons of sawtimber/acre are poles at age 45 years

*Net prices are calculated after consulting fee + county stumpage tax = 10% of timber sale

Table 1. Loblolly and longleaf pine establishment costs per acre. Without financial assistance, longleaf pine establishment costs are higher due to herbaceous weed control and containerized seedlings use; loblolly pine seedling costs are based on bareroot seedlings.

		Site Prep	Seedlings	Planting	Total Cost
Loblolly pine		-\$110	-\$54	-\$100	-\$264
Longleaf pine	No cost-share	-\$155	-\$120	-\$100	-\$375
	50% cost-share	-\$77.50	-\$60	-\$50	-\$187.5

Table 2. Loblolly and longleaf pine income per acre.

Loblolly	Age at Harvest	Harvest yield (tons)				Income
		Pulpwood	Chip-n-saw	Sawtimber	Poles	(\$/acre)
	15	31	3	0	0	\$308
	24	33	62	21	0	\$2,071
	Total income					\$2,379
Longleaf	12-20	Pine straw income per acre/year				\$210
	Total pine straw income over 9 years					\$1,890
	20	39	0	0	0	\$312
	32	29	25	7	0	\$921
	45	23	6	80	0	\$2,464
	Total timber income - no poles					\$3,697
	*45	23	6	64	16	\$2,704
	*Total timber income - 20% sawtimber as poles					\$3,937

The net revenue for one 24-year rotation for loblolly pine is \$2,115 per acre (returns from harvesting minus establishment costs; \$2,379 - \$264).

The net revenue for one 45-year longleaf pine rotation with 50% cost-share is \$5,139.50 per acre [(\$3,697 + \$1,890 pine straw income) - (\$187.50 + \$260 pine straw management costs)] and \$5,379.50 for the poles scenario (an increase of \$240/acre by having 20% poles).

Since the rotation ages for loblolly and longleaf are different, Bare Land Value (BLV) is used as a financial criterion to compare timberland investment returns under various scenarios. Also known as Land Expectation Value (LEV), BLV is the net present value of a stream of revenues and costs from land in perpetual timber production.

Longleaf can outperform loblolly financially when annual pine straw income is realized with or without reforestation cost-share, even when loblolly grew over 30% more wood with a shorter rotation compared to longleaf (24 years vs 45 years).

Table 3. Bare Land Value (BLV) using a 5% discount rate. With 50% cost-share, longleaf's BLV is almost twice as high as loblolly's. Adding 20% harvested poles in the longleaf scenario at age 45 years improves BLV by \$30/ac.

Species	Scenarios			Bare Land Value
Loblolly pine	24-year rotation, 1 thinning, no poles, pine straw, or cost-share			\$563 / acre
Longleaf pine	45-year rotation, 2 thinnings, pine straw income	no cost-share	no poles	\$825 / acre
			20% poles	\$855 / acre
		50% cost-share	no poles	\$1,035 / acre
			20% poles	\$1,065 / acre



Tables and text adapted from:

Dickens, E.D., and Y. Li. 2023. Comparison of a short rotation loblolly pine stand to a long rotation of longleaf pine with and without EQIP cost-share and pine straw income. University of Georgia Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources. WSFNR-23-32A. 3 pages. <https://bugwoodcloud.org/resource/files/27961.pdf>

HONORING LONGLEAF LANDOWNERS

By John Ann Shearer, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Julian Wilson, NC Plant Conservation Program, and Sarah Crate, The Longleaf Alliance



Under picture-perfect blue skies, thirty landowners and natural resource professionals gathered at Bayfields property in Bladen County, North Carolina in October 2023. No stranger to leading tours, Richard Broadwell, a forester, certified burner, and private landowner, guided the group through a fire-managed longleaf stand. The tour continued to a wetland meadow that he and Corey Smith of Cape Fear Land Solutions restored by removing encroaching woody vegetation and conducting burns that stimulated native grasses, allowing water to return to the ephemeral wetland. A final stop centered on transitioning loblolly to longleaf, where ideas for conversion were shared among the many attendees.

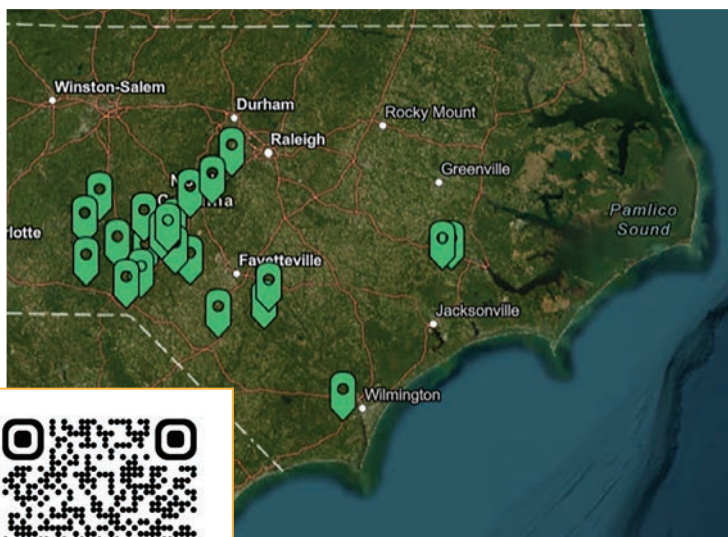
Peer-to-peer learning was at the heart of this event as the Broadwell family's quiet determination and philosophy of responsible forest management serve as a model for fellow landowners. The family was recognized that day with the North Carolina Longleaf Honor Roll, a program created to

highlight exemplary land stewardship to thank landowners and inspire others.

North Carolina Longleaf Honor Roll

The North Carolina Longleaf Coalition (nclongleaf.org) created the Longleaf Honor Roll to recognize landowners who are working to improve stands and balance all the values of a longleaf forest - wood products, wildlife habitat, recreation, and aesthetics. Private property owners in North Carolina with a current forest management plan who manage their longleaf with prescribed fire and are reducing negative impacts from pine straw harvesting are eligible for the Honor Roll.

To date, 25 landowners in 13 counties have been recognized. Meet a few of the Honor Roll landowners and explore more online in the StoryMap created by the North Carolina Forest Service.



Meet more Longleaf
Honor Roll landowners at
<https://longleaf.info/honor-roll>



Dohn, Jr., Charlotte, Richard, and Charles Broadwell accepted the NC Longleaf Honor Roll plaque and sign on behalf of Dohn, Broadwell, Sr. (Benjy Strope)

Family of Dohn Broadwell, Sr. Balden County

The Bayfields property, totaling ~4,000 acres, 1,100 of which are dominated by longleaf pine of varying age classes, is an important contributor to the network of conservation lands in Bladen County with several protections in place, including 1,700 acres in conservation easement, 443 acres in the Red-cockaded Woodpecker Safe Harbor Program, and a portion of the property in the North Carolina Black Bear Sanctuary Program. Bayfields began with the vision of Dohn Broadwell, Sr., and his sons Dohn, Jr., Charles, and Richard have carried that legacy forward.



Charles and Joe Dietzel

Caldwell-Dietzel Farms, LLC Robeson County

The first landowner in Robeson County to be recognized by the Longleaf Honor Roll, Caldwell-Dietzel Farms has established more than 130 acres of longleaf pine. The Farm, led by Joe Dietzel and owned by his family for over 200 years, regularly manages the property with prescribed fire and has experienced firsthand how a good burning regimen can mitigate the risk of significant losses from wildfire. The Farm's adherence to rotational pine straw harvesting that incorporates prescribed burning and periods of rest is an excellent model for landowners interested in balancing income from their timberlands with forest health and wildlife considerations. At the pinnacle of outstanding conservation measures at Caldwell-Dietzel Farms is Joe's desire to permanently protect the Farm by placing it under a conservation easement with Three Rivers Land Trust.



The Gordon Family on their longleaf property in Richmond County {Ashley Gordon}

Matt & Ashley Gordon

Richmond County

North Carolina Longleaf Coalition representatives and supporters from the North Carolina Forest Service, The Longleaf Alliance, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, and Quail Forever gathered together to discuss what they love most about longleaf pine and learn what makes the Gordons' longleaf efforts on their property so important. After the harvest of loblolly pine, the Gordons established 21 acres of longleaf pine. The remnant longleaf pines on their property demonstrate the significance of their work – bringing back longleaf to where it once thrived. The young trees are doing well, and native grasses and flowers have responded favorably to the Gordons' management. Matt has not only demonstrated a commitment to using prescribed fire as a management tool on his own property, but he has also encouraged and aided his neighbors in doing the same.



Another prescribed fire conducted at the Thompson's property with their Honor Roll and fire management signs proudly on display. {Jay Strider}

Mike Thompson

Montgomery County

Mike Thompson established his 30-acre tract of longleaf pine in Montgomery County in 2013 and has actively managed it in the years since by implementing three prescribed fires for this ten-year-old longleaf. Historically, longleaf pine was present on Mr. Thompson's property based on the evidence of old lighter stumps. Mr. Thompson's investment and dedication to burning his young longleaf was evident on the day of his Honor Roll recognition when a Northern Bobwhite Quail joined the group, announcing its presence with the well-known call.



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• Celebrating •

AMERICA'S LONGLEAF RESTORATION INITIATIVE

In November, America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative celebrated its initial fifteen years of conservation success and announced the signing of a memorandum of understanding to renew partnership efforts to restore longleaf pine forests across the South for another fifteen years.

Longleaf pine forests were once the dominant forest type in the southern U.S., blanketing some 90 million acres. They are among the most species-rich ecosystems outside the tropics. These forests — home to more than 40 threatened and endangered species — have played an outsized role in the economy and culture of the South.

Forestry and conservation leaders from across the United States, including representatives from federal, state and private agencies, were joined by U.S. Department of Agriculture Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Meryl Harrell, U.S. Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks Shannon Estenoz, and Honorable Brendan Owens, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations, and Environment, to recognize years of longleaf pine restoration accomplishments and to reaffirm the commitment to continue restoring longleaf pine ecosystems across federal, state and privately managed lands.

"When I signed the original memorandum of understanding in 2010 pledging USDA's support, little did we know that the effort to restore America's longleaf pine forests would evolve into what many consider the most successful landscape-scale initiative in North America and a national model for collaboration," said Agriculture Secretary Tom J. Vilsack. "Longleaf pine is vital to the culture, ecology and economies of the South, and there is more work to be done to ensure these forests and the many benefits they provide are restored across the region. With the signing of this new memorandum, we are

joining with our federal, state, private and non-profit partners to renew our efforts to restore longleaf pine."

Longleaf pine ecosystems now span just 5% of their historic range due to the conversion to other forest types, conversion to other land uses, as well as the suppression of fire — which is critical to restoring and maintaining this fire-adapted forest.

Partners have worked across the South to restore longleaf pine to its historic range. Since 2010, over 1.7 million acres of longleaf pine trees have been planted, over 17 million acres have been treated with prescribed fire, and over 363,000 acres have been protected for their value as longleaf pine habitat. In total, more than 21 million public and private acres have been impacted through on-the-ground management activities. The partnership has added longleaf pine forests, strengthened local economies, contributed to national defense, and made the forests of the South more resilient to climate change.

These efforts have increased longleaf pine cover from a historic low in the 1990s to more than 5 million acres today, with more longleaf pine forests being added every year.

Longleaf pine restoration is a priority for numerous agencies and private and public organizations, including those part of the 33-member Longleaf Partnership Council, a group of non-government entities, state and federal agencies, local implementation teams, private landowners and representatives from private industry and the academic sector. The Longleaf Partnership Council promotes effective communication and collaboration among partners working to conserve longleaf pine ecosystems across the South while providing a forum where these diverse partners can bring their objectives and contributions together to achieve marked longleaf pine restoration success.

"Healthy, resilient forests like the longleaf pine ecosystem are critical to DoD's mission success and provide the natural



Stakeholders celebrated America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative on Wednesday, November 15, 2023, at the U.S. Department of Agriculture Jamie L. Whitten Building Patio in Washington, D.C.



A.



C.



B.



D.

A. The Honorable Brendan Owens, U.S. Department of Defense, Meryl Harrell, U.S. Department of Agriculture Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment and U.S. Department of Interior Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Shannon Estenoz sign the renewed Memorandum of Understanding. B. Jaelith Hall-Rivera, Deputy Chief, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service presents Carol Denhof, Longleaf Partnership Council Chair, with a longleaf pine tree, symbolizing the billionth longleaf seedling planted earlier this year to mark the incredible milestone. C. James Tillman, U.S. Department of Agriculture Regional Conservationist, Southern Region, National Resources Conservation Service provides remarks. D. Emily Aversa, Bezos Earth Fund, Jamelle Ellis, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, and William Owen, a private landowner from Virginia, answer panel questions.

infrastructure we depend on to support military training and testing activities as well as other ecosystem services crucial to mission sustainment,” said Honorable Brendan Owens. “Working with partners to restore longleaf forests supports national defense by preventing land use conflicts that can limit military activities, enhancing installation and landscape resilience to climate-related threats, and expanding habitat for imperiled species. The DoD is proud to be part of ALRI’s impressive accomplishments to date and looks forward to charting the next 15 years for this iconic southern American forest.”

“The Department of the Interior is proud to play a part in the America’s Longleaf Restoration Initiative,” said Shannon Estenoz, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. “This coordinated effort helps restore and protect one of the most diverse and imperiled ecosystems in North America, the Longleaf Pine ecosystem. It is vital for our federal agencies to support local efforts, on both public and private lands, to restore and manage this iconic ecosystem.”

“At NFWF, landscape scale restoration is what we do, and the America’s Longleaf Restoration Initiative is such a great model for many other conservation initiatives,” said Holly Bamford, Chief Conservation Officer of the National Fish and

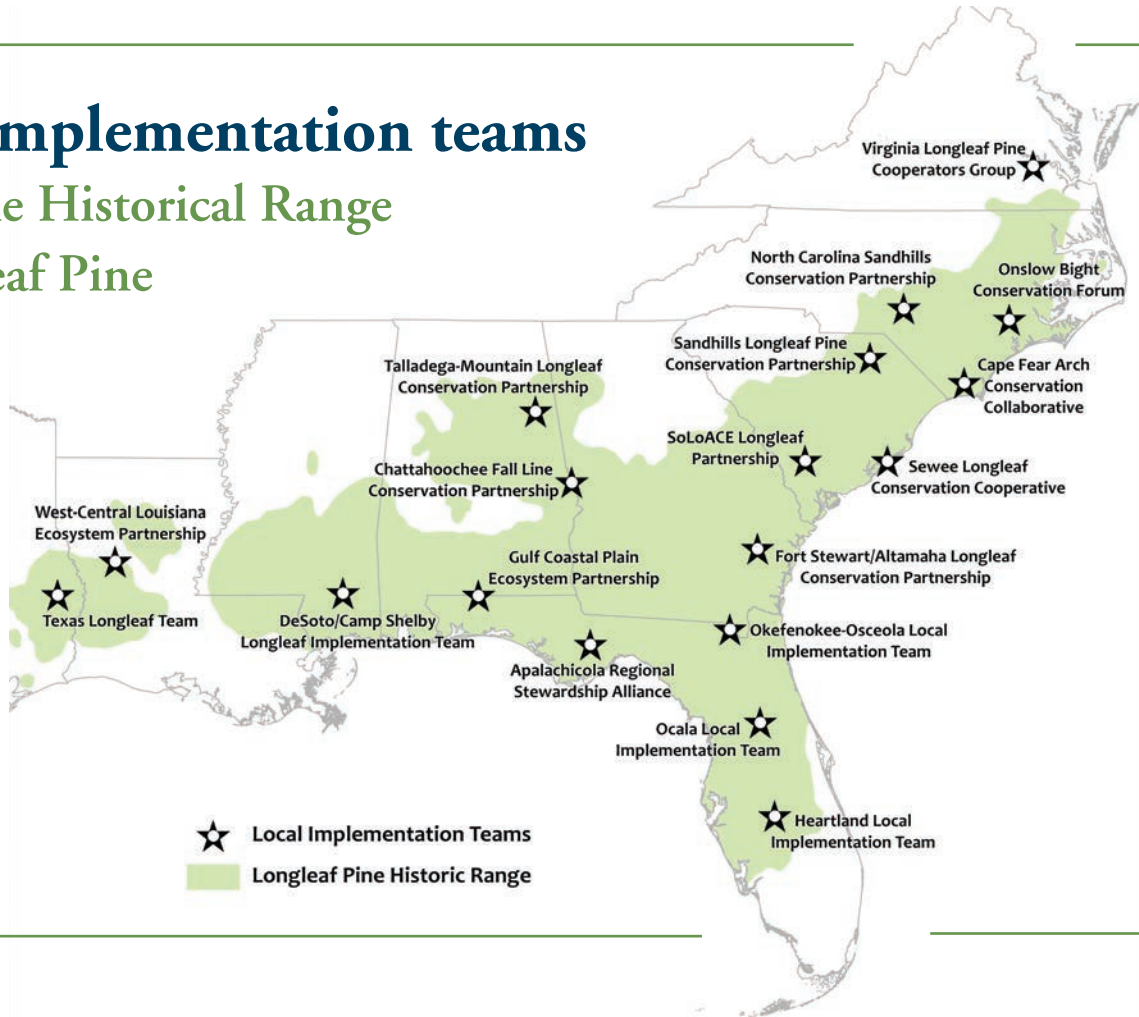
Wildlife Foundation. “We collectively have achieved so much through our longleaf work and are excited to join our many partners in celebrating the longleaf pine restoration successes of the past fifteen years.”

America’s Longleaf Restoration Initiative and the Longleaf Partnership Council also recently released a new Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine (2025-2040) which serves as a blueprint for partners working to restore this ecosystem during the next 15 years.

“The tremendous longleaf ecosystem accomplishments achieved since 2009 are a direct result of the successful collaborative efforts of the many partners that have played a role in America’s Longleaf Restoration Initiative over the years,” said Carol Denhof, Longleaf Partnership Council Chair. “With this event, we are not only celebrating these successes and renewing our relationships with our Federal agency partners, but we are also looking towards the future of ALRI with the launch of the second iteration of the Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine. We acknowledge that there is still much to be done to reach our restoration goals, and this strategic, science-based plan will serve as a framework as we continue our work to restore, manage, and conserve healthy longleaf forests for generations to come.”

USDA photos by Tom Witham

Local Implementation teams within the Historical Range of Longleaf Pine



Progress on the Species Status Assessment of Eastern Diamond-backed Rattlesnakes

By Kiley Briggs and Houston Chandler, *The Orianne Society*



{Ben Stegenga}

The Orianne Society works with The Longleaf Alliance within the Ft. Stewart/Altamaha Longleaf Restoration Partnership to restore native ecosystems using prescribed fire and by planting longleaf pines and native groundcover. Orianne's primary goal in the Southeast is to restore native ecosystems that provide habitat for sensitive wildlife species, such as the eastern indigo snake, gopher tortoise, and other sandhill specialists. Another species benefiting from this effort is the eastern diamond-backed rattlesnake (*Crotalus adamanteus* or EDB) because they often use gopher tortoise burrows in sandhill ecosystems to survive freezing winter temperatures.

In the midst of population declines and severe habitat loss, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was petitioned to list the EDB under the Endangered Species Act, triggering a species status assessment. Through this assessment, The Orianne Society is working to better understand the status and distribution of EDBs. This multifaceted project includes conducting surveys for EDBs in South Georgia in data deficient areas, marking EDBs at Orianne's Longleaf Stewardship Center to estimate survival and population size, creating a database of EDB observations, and constructing a habitat model.

Fieldwork for this project is concluding, and staff have shifted towards the final database preparation and are working on the habitat model. Results should be available in a peer-reviewed publication by late 2024. Regardless of whether EDBs are listed, this work will be

instrumental in helping state, federal, and private land stewards manage and improve habitat to protect this charismatic species, including at sites managed by members of the Ft. Stewart/Altamaha Longleaf Restoration Partnership.

676 Acres of Longleaf Forest to be Protected in Louisiana

By Dan Weber, *The Nature Conservancy*



High quality ground cover on Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Acquisition (Photo courtesy of LDWF)

During the 2022 legislative session, the State of Louisiana passed House Bill 762, establishing the Louisiana Outdoors Forever Program and Fund to provide funding for conservation projects. Two important longleaf sites located in Allen Parish will be protected under the most recent list of approved projects. A 288-acre tract will be added to the CC Road Savanna Preserve, owned and operated by The Nature Conservancy, bringing the total size of the Preserve to 886 acres. The addition is estimated at ~60% longleaf pine by basal area, with the remainder a mixture of mostly loblolly pine and slash pine. Most overstory trees are ~30-60 years old, with some individuals much older. The longleaf pine flatwood wetlands at the Preserve most likely harbor over 200 species of plants, including one of only two known populations west of the Mississippi River of the federally endangered hemi-parasitic plant, American chaffseed (*Schwalbea americana*).

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) will also add a 388-acre longleaf pine tract to its portfolio. In addition to its high plant species richness and diversity, the site harbors mature to old-growth longleaf pine savanna as well as seven flatwoods ponds in pristine to near-pristine condition. There is limited public access to longleaf pine savannas in this portion of the state. This acquisition will provide public recreation opportunities and will present opportunities to establish a protected space for an experimental population of American chaffseed.

Sewee Longleaf Conservation Cooperative Focuses on Information Sharing

By Jennie Haskell, *The Longleaf Alliance*



Longleaf seedling surrounded by native groundcover after thinning and burning treatments on the Francis Marion National Forest. (Jennie Haskell)

Sewee Longleaf Conservation Cooperative (SLCC) sponsored a Williamsburg County Forest Landowners Association meeting in September to discuss forestry issues and timber markets in the area. Forestry Association of South Carolina President and CEO Cam Crawford provided an update on local markets and statewide issues. Representatives from several local mills and many local foresters were present to answer questions. Cam Crawford presented copies of the new book *The History of Forestry in South Carolina* to local forester Amy McFadden and SLCC coordinator Patrick Ma.

In October, SLCC hosted a Longleaf Academy 201 Groundcover Restoration in Moncks Corner, SC. This learning opportunity was a 3-day course with speakers from The Longleaf Alliance, U.S. Forest Service, Roundstone Native Seed Company, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and field visits on the Francis Marion National Forest and a private property managed by Sabine and Waters. Topics addressed species and ecosystem identification, management methods, treatment considerations, seed collection and storage, and cost-share resources. Attendees, including landowners and land managers from across the Southeast, were given management scenarios to discuss and develop treatment plans as small groups. "This was a great opportunity to learn about the diversity of the longleaf ecosystem, various techniques to

restore the groundcover, and to network with other individuals about their conservation challenges," commented one participant.

More learning opportunities are available this winter within the SLCC: a Herbicide and Longleaf 201 Academy in Georgetown, SC (January 10-11, 2024), a Learn and Burn workshop in Williamsburg County (January 25, 2024), and the Sewee Fire Festival, scheduled for March 23, 2024, in Mt. Pleasant.

Protecting Critical Conservation Corridors

By Hervey McIver, Longleaf Protection Director, The Nature Conservancy



*Longleaf woodlands on the Marshall Tract
{Hervey McIver}*

2023 proved to be another good year for land protection in the three North Carolina longleaf landscapes – Sandhills, Cape Fear Arch, and Onslow Bight. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) completed seven projects totaling 4,085 acres. These vary from preserving diverse wetlands to mature longleaf sites as additional buffer around Fort Liberty. One project, though, stands out for its quality habitat, size, and location.

The 3,300-acre Marshall Project protects a beautiful longleaf forest over an ancient set of sand dunes and swales punctuated by several large elliptical depressions known as Carolina bays. The Marshall family stewarded their land for much of the 20th century, cherishing and managing the many mature longleaf ridges for pine straw. Over time, the family reached out to TNC to preserve this meaningful site forever. TNC closed on the property in November and will transfer it to the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, which will reintroduce controlled burning.

What makes the Marshall Project so rewarding is the land comprises a large portion of the most promising longleaf corridor linking all of the outstanding conservation areas near the coast (Green Swamp, Camp Lejeune, Croatan National Forest, and others) with Bladen Lakes State Forest and the Sandhills. This corridor leads both inland and northwards, creating high-quality, diverse habitats for plants and wildlife to make the slow migration over the coming decades and centuries as our climate changes. These corridors will be a lasting legacy felt by many generations.

Private Lands RCW Activities

By Charles Babb, Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership Coordinator



A Red-cockaded Woodpecker works to excavate a nest cavity near artificial nest cavities. {Charles Babb}

In 2020, The Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership (SLPCP) installed eight Red-cockaded Woodpecker (RCW) nest cavities on two adjoining private properties in Chesterfield County, South Carolina. The cavities were immediately occupied prior to the 2021 nesting season, with two chicks fledging each subsequent year. An unfortunate beetle infestation claimed several cavity trees in 2022, which caused the birds to relocate, but nesting continued without interruption. While checking on nesting activities, SLPCP Coordinator Charles Babb noticed that the birds had begun excavating a natural cavity in a nearby tree. On a recent scouting trip to identify additional trees to install artificial cavities, Sarah Stewart and Matt Lerow of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Safe Harbor Program noted two additional natural cavity starts within the cluster. According to Matt, “That’s a good indication that the birds like the site and have settled in. Apparently, some of the juveniles and young adults have been roosting outside in the open and have begun excavating cavities to occupy. Now that it is getting colder, they will rush to make the cavities large enough for roosting. The good thing is, they will do a better job of picking suitable trees than we can.”

To date, cavities have been installed on four private properties in the Focal Area. All four sites have evidence of use, with active nesting monitored on three sites. Additional cavity inserts are planned for new properties as suitable habitats are created through thinning, herbicide treatments, and prescribed fire.

Saving Florida's Gopher Tortoises – an Incredible Recovery Effort

By Vernon Compton, GCPEP Director, The Longleaf Alliance



Gopher tortoise in front of a burrow {Carissa Kent}



Gopher tortoise rescue burrow excavation {Carissa Kent}

Recently, at the Forestland Stewards Stakeholder Forum, hosted by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and International Paper, the gopher tortoise recovery work of Saving Florida's Gopher Tortoises in the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP) landscape was highlighted. The organization, founded in 2005, is led by Founder and Director Carissa Kent and has a mission of saving gopher tortoises from development sites and promoting conservation and long-term species survival through education and collaborative partnerships with governmental agencies,

nonprofits, developers, private and public landowners, and the citizens of Florida. The gopher tortoise lives in burrows in upland ecosystems and has an average life span of 60 years. They are recognized as keystone species because over 350 other species utilize and depend on their burrows for survival. Many species would possibly go extinct without the presence of tortoises and their burrows.

Saving Florida's Gopher Tortoises began as an idea for humane rescue and relocation of gopher tortoises from approved development sites. In 2006, GCPEP partner Nokuse Plantation accepted 11 tortoises from the first such rescue project in Volusia County. In 2016, Eglin Air Force Base began accepting rescue tortoises. Along with these two GCPEP partners, developers, including D.R. Horton, Lennar Homes, and Adams Homes, have partnered with Saving Florida's Gopher Tortoises to rescue rather than bury tortoises on their development sites.

The development site rescue centers on using a specialized crew consisting of a backhoe operator and two ground experts to excavate the tortoises carefully and slowly from their underground burrow. The longest burrow excavated to date was 65 feet, and the deepest burrow was 28 feet. Over 10,000 gopher tortoises have been rescued and then translocated to suitable habitat on public and private lands in Florida.

Thanks to the tremendous efforts of Saving Florida's Gopher Tortoises and the many collaborating partners and landowners, outstanding progress is being made with population establishment. Besides rescue work playing an important role in recovering the gopher tortoise, other commensal species, including the eastern indigo snake, will benefit.

Virginia Longleaf Cone Collection

By Jim Schroering, Virginia Department of Forestry



Longleaf pine cone harvest at Joseph Pines Preserve in Sussex County, VA. {Phil Sheridan}

In 2023, the Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) burned 1,000 acres of state and private land to maintain longleaf stands and to prepare existing pine stands for future conversion to longleaf. DOF also propagated over 122,000 containerized longleaf seedlings and 4,000 warm-season grasses at its Sussex Nursery and managed a record cone collection from native Virginia longleaf trees. Notably, the majority of cones were collected from grafted longleaf trees at DOF's New Kent Forestry Center and 25-year-old trees on Meadowview Research Station's Joseph Pines Preserve.

Demand for native Virginia seedlings continues to build among LIT partners and private landowners. Research conducted by Meadowview suggests Virginia longleaf pine provenance reproduces at an earlier age than other southern provenances. A provenance study initiated by DOF in 2007 indicates Virginia source seedlings produce significantly more volume per acre as compared to southern sources primarily due to earlier growth initiation and higher survival.



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Specialty license plates provide financial support to worthy organizations and state-funded programs and are affordable, eye-catching mobile outreach opportunities. Consider one of these plates or other conservation-themed options – the choices are many.

Alabama's 'Treasure Forest 'I'd Rather Be in the Woods' benefits forest education for landowners and helps counties host Classroom in the Forest for 5th graders.

Florida's 'Protect the Gopher Tortoise' plate will be produced when 3,000 vouchers are purchased. Vouchers cost \$33 each, of which \$25 will directly go towards gopher tortoise conservation. (502 sold as of 11.28.23)

Georgia's 'Support Wildlife' benefits conservation practices in the Bobwhite Quail Initiative, Georgia's first and only state-funded incentive program for wildlife habitat conservation on private land.

Louisiana's 'Support Endangered Species' helps fund whooping crane conservation.

Most of the fee for **Mississippi's 'Support State Parks'** plate goes directly to enhancing the Magnolia State's natural resources and improving its parks.

North Carolina's 'Home of the Venus Flytrap' will support efforts of the North Carolina Botanical Garden Foundation, Inc. and the Friends of Plant Conservation, Inc. to conserve native plants and promote the restoration of healthy landscapes across North Carolina – waiting on approval by the General Assembly.

A portion of the fees collected for the **South Carolina Wildlife 'Painted Bunting'** is distributed to the SC Department of Natural Resources Game Fund.



The **'Keep Texas Wild'** rattlesnake plate supports non-game wildlife diversity by funding state projects that protect native species and their habitats.

A portion of the purchase fee of **Virginia's 'Protect Pollinators'** plate is transferred to the Virginia Department of Transportation to support the Pollinator Habitat Program. Previously, the program was funded only through revenue from the **'Wildflowers'** license plate.

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Winter Escape at Conecuh National Forest

Open Pond Recreation Area is a beautiful campground in the heart of the Conecuh National Forest.

Photos by Casey White

Longleaf Destinations

Scenic views, well-maintained facilities, and a diversity of recreational opportunities await you at Conecuh National Forest. Open Pond Recreation Area located in Covington County, Alabama, is the perfect home base to explore the Forest, with easy access to boating, fishing, hiking, and biking. The site's namesake, a 30-acre lake, is one of many sinkhole ponds common in the limestone topography of southern Alabama and Florida. The recreation area includes a day-use picnic area, fishing and boating access, and a campground with developed and undeveloped sites. Campsites are first come, first serve.

Open Pond has a long history of improvements by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, many of which remain today. The group shelter retains its original distinct design, and the Open Pond Fire Tower is listed in the National Historic Lookout Register.

A short 10-minute drive from Open Pond is the Blue Lake Recreation Area, a day-use swimming beach. Take a slower-paced trip on your road bike, or consider hiking there on the 4-mile connector trail.

Hit the Trail

The Conecuh Trail winds through the eastern portion of the Conecuh National Forest for more than 20 miles. There are two main loops; the 5-mile South Loop and the 13.5-mile North Loop are connected by a 4-mile link trail. Multiple trailheads allow for hikes of various lengths. Mountain bikers are also allowed to share the North Loop and Open Pond Loop trails.

The Conecuh Trail showcases the diversity of Conecuh ecosystems including longleaf uplands, cypress bottomlands, sink holes, streams, and springs with clear, icy blue water. Trail bridges provide easy access.

Conecuh Trail is at its best in late fall through early spring, when cooler weather and fewer bugs make for pleasant hiking conditions. Just be mindful of hunting seasons.

About the Forest

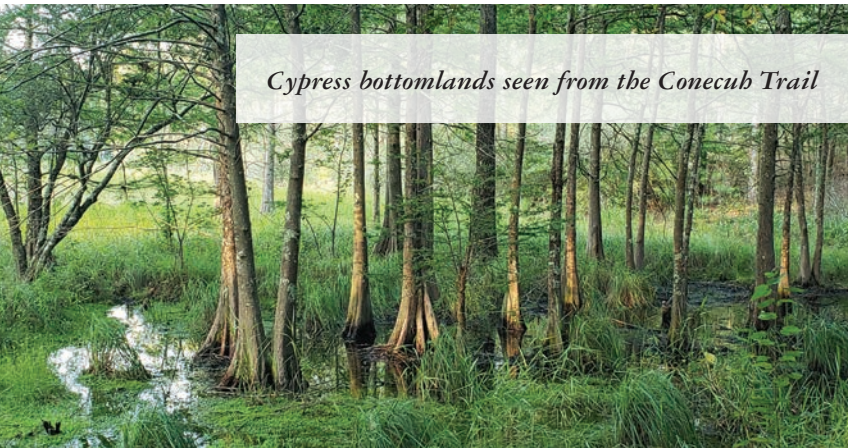
Conecuh National Forest is the southernmost national forest in Alabama, encompassing 84,000 acres between Andalusia, Alabama, and the Florida line. This public land jewel supports prime examples of habitats and associated species found in natural ecosystems of the lower coastal plain, including many upland longleaf pine forests maintained by regular prescribed burning. This rich ecological backdrop provides a setting for a wide variety of outdoor activities. Explore the recreation map at <https://longleaf.info/conecuh>.



longleaf.info/conecuh



Scenic paddle at Blue Pond



Cypress bottomlands seen from the Conecuh Trail



Sunrise over Open Pond



Access to the nearby swimming beach at Blue Pond Recreation Area is included with Open Pond camping fees.



Biking is a great way to explore Conecuh National Forest – carefully share the roads or trails open to mountain bikes.

THE ALLIANCE WELCOMES

New VP for Business



The Longleaf Alliance is pleased to announce that **David Padgett** of Andalusia has joined the longleaf team as the Vice President for Business.

David grew up in Brewton, AL, was raised in the forest industry, and is a graduate of Auburn University with a degree in Agricultural Economics. Before joining TLA, David worked with a multitude of forest landowners and farmers as a lender with the Farm Credit System. When David is outside of the office, he is active in forest and wildlife management on his family farm in Conecuh County, AL.

David is working out of TLA's main office at the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center in Andalusia, AL. Please join us in welcoming David to The Alliance. We are very glad to have him on board!

On staff with The Alliance since 2021 – first as a Wetland Ecosystem Support Team member and then with the Ecosystem Support Team – **Alexis Feysa** recently transitioned to a new role in the GCPEP landscape, joining the Jackson Guard Natural Resources team at Eglin Air Force Base as an employee with Colorado State University. We miss Alexis on our field teams but look forward to working with her as a GCPEP partner.



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By Lynnsey Basala, *The Longleaf Alliance*

There is No Longleaf Alliance Without You

It is undeniable that prices are high and rising. Inflation has taken its toll on The Longleaf Alliance's members and conservation partners. Yet, once again, you have shown that you are steadfast in your support so TLA can effectively put your donor dollars into action. The Longleaf Alliance allocated 93% of its income to programs and services in 2023 because you continued to prioritize restoration, stewardship, and conservation of the longleaf pine ecosystem. TLA would not be the organization it is today without the unsung heroes who give their hard-earned money to support the mission. Every single donation, regardless of the amount, is accepted with gratitude and enthusiasm.

This list of 2023 Supporters contains those who contributed monetary or in-kind goods between October 1, 2022, and October 1, 2023. The Longleaf Alliance is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by law.



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The Palustris Society was founded by several members of The Longleaf Alliance Board of Directors to further the legacy Rhett Johnson and Dean Gjerstad created to protect and restore longleaf forestlands. Since its inception in 2015, thirty-six members representing nine states across the longleaf range have joined this elite group of dedicated conservationists who share a dream of restored and viable working longleaf forests. Members pledge \$10,000 or more to The Longleaf Alliance to be paid over a period of up to five years.

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University of Georgia
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alabama Partners
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Coastal Programs
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Georgia Partners
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, North Carolina Partners
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, South Carolina Partners
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Partners
USDA Forest Service, Apalachicola National Forest
USDA Forest Service, Conecuh National Forest
USDA Forest Service, DeSoto National Forest
USDA Forest Service, Kisatchie National Forest
USDA Forest Service, National Forests in Alabama
USDA Forest Service, Talladega National Forest

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Alabama
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Georgia
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, South Carolina
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Louisiana
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Mississippi
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Texas
Virginia Division of Forestry

Nonprofit Conservation Partners

Alabama Forest Owner's Association
American Forest Foundation
Anonymous
Anonymous
Arbor Day Foundation
Audubon South Carolina
Bicknell Family Charitable Fund
Charleston Natural History Society
EJK Foundation
Ellen A. Jacobs Charitable Fund
Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida
Friends of St. Marks Wildlife Refuge
Gulf Power Foundation
Henry Fair Family Fund
Hitchcock Woods Foundation
Hobcaw Barony
Lillian C. McGowin Foundation
Louisiana Ecological Forestry Center
M.C. Apfel Trust
Mobile Botanical Gardens
Murray H. Gaskins Senior Charitable Fund
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
National Wildlife Federation
National Woodland Owners Association
National Wild Turkey Federation, North Carolina Chapter

National Wild Turkey Federation, South Carolina Chapter
NextEra Energy Foundation, Inc.
Norfolk Southern Foundation
North Carolina Sandhills Prescribed Burn Association
North Carolina Tree Farm Program
One Tree Planted
Quail Forever
Sid & Vivian Beech Trust
Simon & Louise Henderson Foundation
South Carolina Bluebird Society
South Carolina Tree Farm Committee
Southeast Regional Land Conservancy, Inc.
Southeastern Wildlife Exposition
Sustainable Forestry Initiative
The Amazon Smile Foundation
The Conservation Fund
The Horton Trust
The Joel & Alexis Konczal Charitable Fund
The Jones Center at Ichauway
The National Audubon Society
The National Forest Foundation
The National Wildlife Federation
The Nature Conservancy, Alabama Chapter
The Nature Conservancy, Georgia Chapter
The Nature Conservancy, Louisiana Chapter
The Nature Conservancy, South Carolina Chapter
The Richard & Rita Porterfield Educational Trust
The Sledge Foundation, Inc.
The Solon & Martha Dixon Foundation
The U.S. Endowment for Forestry & Communities, Inc.
The Walthour-Moss Foundation
Three Rivers Land Trust
Turner Foundation, Inc.
Wade Research Foundation



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THE Owen Fellowship

OF THE LONGLEAF ALLIANCE



Photo by Forest Landowner Magazine

"I'm obviously passionate about longleaf but am also passionate about education. I decided to combine these two with a bequest to The Longleaf Alliance to endow a scholarship for advanced studies in the longleaf ecosystem." William Owen

Last Call for Applications!

Now in its second round, The Owen Fellowship of The Longleaf Alliance is an exciting program we are proud to offer in conjunction with the 15th Biennial Longleaf Conference to be held Fall 2024 and subsequent conferences. The Biennial Longleaf Conference is The Longleaf Alliance's regional event, the largest and longest-running longleaf event in the country.

The award will be given to a graduate student in the amount of \$20,000. The recipient will attend the 2024 conference, submit an article for publication in *The Longleaf Leader* quarterly magazine, and will submit a poster and presentation about the research at the 2026 conference.

Dr. William Owen is a professional musician, educator, and landowner in Virginia. Through his work on the Board of Directors of The Longleaf Alliance, he was inspired to endow a fellowship for advanced studies and research in the longleaf pine ecosystem. He hopes The Owen Fellowship will encourage the next generation of longleaf leaders.

Required Application Materials

- Applicants must be a member of The Longleaf Alliance (\$25 student rate).
- A proposal describing the research project and the specific funding needs (2-page, single-spaced maximum). Relevance of the research project to the protection, management, and range wide impact of the longleaf pine ecosystem must be clearly stated.
- Applicants must identify all other current funding for their research and justify the need for The Owen Fellowship Award. Salaries not supported. Biennial Longleaf Conference expenses are covered by TLA and William Owen. You may include participation in other conferences in your proposed budget.
- A curriculum vitae.
- A letter of support from the faculty advisor overseeing the research.
- An unofficial transcript.
- A high-resolution photo of the applicant.
- Brief project synopsis.

Complete applicant form and submit required materials at <https://longleaf.info/fellowship>. Please contact Lynnsey Basala, Vice President for Development, at Lynnsey@longleafalliance.org with questions.



THE Owen Fellowship

OF THE LONGLEAF ALLIANCE



TIMELINE

of Pertinent Dates



Applications received
September 1, 2023 - January 12, 2024.

A committee will review applications **January 15 - March 29, 2024.**
There will be a required Zoom interview for Semi-Finalist Candidates.

Fellowship Award Recipient announced on **April 1, 2024.** \$10,000 fellowship award will be disbursed by **June 1, 2024.** Awardee must attend the 15th Biennial Longleaf Conference in **Fall 2024.**

\$10,000 fellowship award will be disbursed by **June 1, 2025.**

Awardee must write an article for publication in *The Longleaf Leader* quarterly magazine in **Fall 2025.**

Awardee must present research at the 16th Biennial Longleaf Conference in **Fall 2026.**

HEARTPINE

By Kevin McIntyre, The Jones Center at Ichauway

As I settled down in my tent the evening after arriving at my first week-long Boy Scout summer camp, I was lulled to sleep by the sounds of cicadas and crickets, with a backdrop of low rumbling thunder from far away. The next thing I knew, that distant rumble had turned into a crashing tempest of wind, lightning, and pouring rain. When I awoke, I realized something resembling a rushing mountain stream ran through my tent. The rest of the night was largely a sleepless exercise to stay dry and keep the tent from falling in, but the morning broke bright, clear, and sunny. Everyone hung their belongings out to dry and trudged down a sandy hill to the dining hall. I don't remember what we had for breakfast or what I did with the rest of the day, but I will never forget the smell of the woods after that summer rain as we walked down the hill, a scent I had never experienced before.

My friend Ad asked me to write the Heartpine column for this issue of *The Longleaf Leader*. You never have enough time to do all the things you want to do, and I began to think of how I might politely decline. But Ad is one of my favorite people, and "sure" is what came out of my mouth. As I started thinking about putting pen to paper and how I might

approach this, I kept thinking of the word "heartpine." Heartpine...heart of the pine, pine of the heart...what exactly is the heart of pine?


I sit here at my desk looking at souvenirs that serve as the most literal examples of the phrase: a chunk of wood carved out of a tree for a Red-cockaded Woodpecker cavity insert, a sample of some recycled heart pine flooring, and a cookie from an old-growth longleaf that began its life 300 years ago. As I reach for broader interpretations, I think of many different things.

The incomparable beauty of a well-managed mature longleaf forest; its open structure affording views that roll on to the horizon.

The excitement and pure fun of burning the woods and the satisfaction of seeing the results of prescribed fire unfold over time.

The rarity of many of the plants and animals that call longleaf forests home, tenaciously hanging on as their habitat declined over the decades.

The deep roots of longleaf in our cultural history, the "tree that built America."



The community of people that have come together around this ecosystem for so many different reasons is truly the heart of the pine.

Perhaps most importantly, there is the passion that people feel for longleaf pine forests, something that stirs the soul and creates an almost inexplicable devotion to this ecosystem. Maybe the community of people that have come together around this ecosystem for so many different reasons is truly the heart of the pine. But why are we so drawn to longleaf?

I have a theory that connects to that stormy summer night at camp. That was a long time ago, and a lot of water has flowed through the tent since then, figuratively speaking. The smell the next morning? It was longleaf pine that scented the humid air as we walked down the trail on that sandy hill, and it was different than any other woodsy smell I had experienced up to that point in my life. I next found that scent again years later in a National Forest as I sought to add the RCW to my bird list. I even went back by the old Boy Scout camp a few years ago to make sure I wasn't succumbing to nostalgia, and yes, those big pines were indeed mostly longleaf, albeit on a somewhat degraded sandhill site that could use some fire. I've been fortunate to spend a lot of time in the longleaf woods, and every time, every single time, the smell of longleaf pine

after a rain takes me back to that morning 50-plus years ago like it was yesterday (never mind how much that "plus" is).

I suppose I've come to what some call the autumn of life. I'll be retiring soon, and I look forward to living life a little more slowly and finally getting around to doing all those things you never have the time for. I find myself thinking a lot about time these days, how fast it goes by, and that more of mine has passed than what remains. I wonder if one of the reasons we are so drawn to longleaf pine might be that it allows us to transcend, just a little bit, the constraints of the relatively short time we have on this earth. We revere the old-growth trees that remain today, the same trees that stood for centuries before we were born. We plant seedlings, hoping they will live long beyond our days. We trust the generations after us to fulfill our vision through their stewardship, turning what we've started into fully realized longleaf pine ecosystems. Maybe the hint of an upper hand on Father Time is the heart of the pine and a part of what drives the passion and dedication of the longleaf community. It's something to think about in your spare time.

