THE LONGLEAF LEADER

XVII — ISSUE 3

FALL 2024

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PUBLISHER The Longleaf Alliance EDITOR Sarah Crate
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COVER The Ruth McClellan Abronski Splinter Hill Bog Preserve managed by The Nature Conservancy in Alabama is home to one of the largest and most visually impressive white-topped pitcherplant bogs in the world. Numerous rare and declining species associated with seepage bogs, upland longleaf forest, and coastal blackwater streams are known to occur within this site. [Keith Tassin}

The Longleaf Leader is an official publication of The Longleaf Alliance, 12130 Dixon Center Road, Andalusia, Alabama 36420 and is published quarterly.

The Longleaf Alliance reserves the exclusive right to accept or reject advertising or editorial material submitted for publication. Advertising rates quoted upon request.

Postmaster: Send address changes to The Longleaf Alliance, 12130 Dixon Center Road, Andalusia, Alabama 36420. Periodicals Postage Paid at Montgomery, Alabama.

The Longleaf Alliance

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

CAROL DENHOF

{Samantha Dillon}

We Join Together for Tomorrow's Forests

Forest management requires patience, as these systems are generally not short-lived, and shaping a forest to meet objectives comes with long-term responsibilities. This is especially true for those who aim to restore longleaf pine. Longleaf landowners and land managers use the long view to envision a future forest, one that they may not see to maturity. They are dedicated to acting on the necessary steps now to ensure that new stands are established successfully while also implementing proper management practices to maintain a healthy stand moving forward. Many also take that extra step to place protections to conserve the land for generations.

In this issue, we hear from our friends at Aiken Land Conservancy about the conservation actions by the City of Aiken to protect 2,000 acres of the Shaws Creek Preserve in perpetuity. The City understood the connection between the land surrounding the Mason Branch Reservoir, the quality of the water held in that reservoir, and, in turn, the quality of the drinking water for the community. Because of the collaborative work of partners in the Aiken area, the long-term conservation easement that was put into place for the property sets the stage for longleaf restoration that is happening on-site, as well as the protection of the existing forest stands. We so love to share projects like these that are especially important as we look to maintain resilient forests that provide a wide variety of traditional and ecosystem benefits.

When this magazine arrives in your mailbox, we will be only one week away from the kickoff of our 15th Biennial Longleaf Conference in Sandestin, Florida, where attendees will have the opportunity to learn more about longleaf restoration-related work throughout the southeastern U.S. region, see first-hand important longleaf sites within the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP) landscape on the field tour, and of course, spend time catching up with old friends and making new ones over the week. Under the theme of "Joining Together for Tomorrow's Forest," we will explore relevant topics that address all the many facets of longleaf restoration and management and how we join them to build strong forests that will withstand the stressors of a changing climate. We at The Longleaf Alliance are excited to host so many of you this year in the heart of the GCPEP landscape. See you in Sandestin!

MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST | FALL

PREPARE FOR PLANTING LONGLEAF

Apply fall site-preparation herbicides.

- For effective treatment, foliar active herbicides such as glyphosate (Roundup®/Accord®) should be applied to pasture grasses before the first frost.
- Triclopyr (Garlon®) may be delayed until after the first frost to target waxy leaf competitors while minimizing impact to herbaceous groundcover.
- **Allow time for soil active herbicides to break down** before planting longleaf, especially when using imazapyr (Arsenal®/Chopper®) or Metsulfuron-methyl (Escort®/Patriot®). The waiting period will vary based on the rate applied, date applied, rainfall since application, and soil type.

Implement mechanical treatments for site-prep.

- Scalp agricultural sites. Remember to stay strictly on the contour and pick up the scalper regularly. Leaving these plugs (or mini-water bars) in the furrow will significantly reduce erosion.
- Subsoil or rip sites with hardpans, allowing sufficient time for the ripped furrow to resettle prior to planting (up to 2 months with several rain events). Do not plant seedlings directly into the sub-soiled/ripped furrow. Plant just beside the rip, and the taproot will find it.

PLANT LONGLEAF EARLY

It is never too early to plant longleaf if the following conditions are met: the site is prepared, there is adequate soil moisture, seedlings are available, and a planting crew is available.

PRIORITIZE PRESCRIBED FIRE

- **Clean up or establish fire lanes** for site prep or fuel reduction burns.
- Need better burning weather? **Conduct post-burn evaluations** to determine if previous burns, including woody control, achieved objectives.

GROUNDCOVER RESTORATION

Harvest native herbaceous seeds.

- Certain species, such as the Indiangrasses, ripen and fall in a very short time window (as little as one to two weeks).
- Wiregrass can lose all its ripe seed if a cold front blows through. Be prepared to collect when it's ready.

Order native seed for understory restoration.

- Seed from local ecotypes and endemic species is limited and expensive.
- Although some landowners and land managers have the time and expertise to collect their own, most restoration will occur with seed purchases from the few seed companies that sell southeastern sourced seed.

TREAT INVASIVE SPECIES BEFORE THE FIRST FROST

- For invasives with thorough coverage like cogongrass or climbing fern, the recommended prescription is 4% glyphosate with surfactant for glyphosate formulations that contain 41% active ingredient (4.0 lb./gal.). Map these infestations for follow-up treatments in spring and fall until control is achieved.
- In existing stands, avoid any herbicide contact with green needles of longleaf (or other desirable plants).

THIN LONGLEAF STANDS

Drier conditions typical of the fall season favor pine thinning operations.

CONSIDER WILDLIFE

- Avoid disturbance around intermittent wetlands, as some amphibians, especially salamanders, move to seasonal breeding ponds when heavy rains occur.
- Use caution with any mechanical operations around gopher tortoise burrows, as any newly hatched tortoises will be nearby, and their burrows are shallow.

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


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Q&A

A lot of helpful information is available in our Getting Started with Prescribed Fire *video.*

Q. Dear Longleaf Alliance,

I have just clearcut my loblolly and am interested in planting longleaf. I am hesitant to commit to longleaf because I live in an area of Alabama where prairie soils are somewhat prevalent. Only eastern red cedar and mock orange will grow on some areas on my property. Is it correct to assume that longleaf will do well in areas where my loblolly thrived if I avoid the true prairie soils?

Sincerely,
Pausing before Planting

Dear Pausing,

You are right to hesitate and question! Let's closely examine the soils map or WebSoilSurvey information. Prairie soils that form under the extensive root systems of grasses are typified by higher pH, carbon, and nitrogen levels and have higher fertility deep into the profile of the soil. These qualities do not suit pine development or survival. Moreover, with a taproot species like longleaf, we should strongly avoid those shrink/swell soils as they are too dense, hard, wet, and airtight for good longleaf root growth. Usually, there is a high water table over an impervious layer, which you can check for with a steel rod. Beware when you see the soil cracking as it dries into what looks like "alligator plates." Bulk density (bd) is likely another problem here; problems with root growth and water storage are limiting above a bd > 1.6 on clay/silt soils. We prefer to be below 1.5 and for pH to be below 6.5. (Sandy soils can be higher because the large particles promote root growth and aeration.) For all soils, trees of all kinds are impeded when bd > 1.8.

Thanks for reaching out with this interesting query about longleaf and southern prairie soils. Let us know what you decide to do, and as always, please call if you need further information and guidance.

Sincerely,
The Longleaf Alliance

A. Dear Longleaf Alliance,

My family planted longleaf pines with plans of prescribed burning. Ten years have passed, and we still haven't burned. The trees are growing taller, but oak saplings and other hardwoods are growing, too. We don't know when or how to burn without destroying our young forest. Can you help?

Sincerely,
Future Fire Bug

Dear Future Fire Bug,

Prescribed burning is an efficient and effective management tool, especially in longleaf pine stands. Typically, we recommend introducing fire to young stands after at least one year of growth and burning every two to four years. This depends on objectives, the ability of the fire to carry through the stand, and the conditions of the trees. The first fire should be implemented in the winter or dormant season, on a day with some wind (but not too much).

Planning the burn takes time.

- **Fire breaks must be established** to ensure the fire stays within the desired burn area.
- Monitoring the weather before, during, and after the burn day is critical.
- Consider splitting the stand into smaller units and burning them over several days.
- Mechanical and/or chemical treatments, in combination with prescribed fire, may help meet your objectives.

We encourage you to work with your state forestry agency, forester, contractor, or local Prescribed Burn Association (PBA) to implement the burn or to guide you through the process. You will find additional information on The Longleaf Alliance's YouTube channel and the Southern Fire Exchange (SFE) website (southernfireexchange.org/).

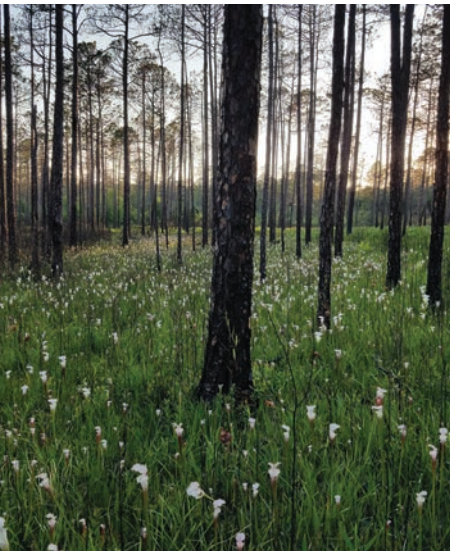
Sincerely,
The Longleaf Alliance

By Julianne Jones, The Longleaf Alliance

Groundcover

PLANT SPOTLIGHT

Sarracenia leucophylla Rafinesque | White-top Pitcherplant | Pitcherplant Family – Sarraceniaceae



White-top pitcherplants at Splinter Hill Bog, Alabama {Keith Tassin}

Native range of white-top pitcherplants {Based on data from USDA NRCS Plant Database; map derived from Noah Elhardt}

Description

The white-top pitcherplant is an herbaceous, perennial, carnivorous plant with specialized leaves that act as its namesake "pitcher"– narrow, hollow, cone-like leaves that serve as a pitfall trap for insects. The tops of *Sarracenia* pitchers are lined with an attractive nectar, while the bottom is filled with an acidic enzyme solution. Trapped insects are "digested," and the plant absorbs their nutrients as food. This carnivorous strategy is an adaptation to the nutrient-poor habitats in which they live.

Sarracenia leucophylla pitchers have distinctive white hoods or tops with red-purplish venation; the species name means "white-leaved." Sometimes also called crimson pitcherplant, the pitchers are green at the bottom and can reach heights of 1-3 feet tall.

Showy, dark red, umbrella-shaped flowers bloom in the spring and are situated on a tall stalk positioned away from the pitcher so pollinators can avoid the pitfall trap.

There are two flushes of pitchers – one in the spring and a more robust crop in late summer.

Habitat & Distribution

The white-top pitcherplant prefers sunny areas with low canopy cover, moist, low-nutrient soils, and regular fire intervals. It is often found in bogs, longleaf pine savannas, and disturbed areas such as roadside ditches and powerline cuts.

Native to portions of Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, and Alabama, it is considered vulnerable or imperiled in all four states. The white-top pitcherplant is mainly threatened by habitat loss, as well as fire suppression, hog damage, and poaching. It has been introduced and naturalized in areas outside its native range.

Related Species

The genus *Sarracenia* is confined to eastern North America and includes several species found in the Southeast, many of which hybridize readily. The yellow pitcherplant *(S. flava)* and purple pitcherplant *(S. purpurea)* are most ubiquitous, with the latter having a much wider range — from boreal Canada to subtropical Florida.

Commercial Availability

Pitcherplants can be acquired from many nurseries. However, it is important to only buy from reputable nurseries that guarantee their plants have not been harvested from the wild.

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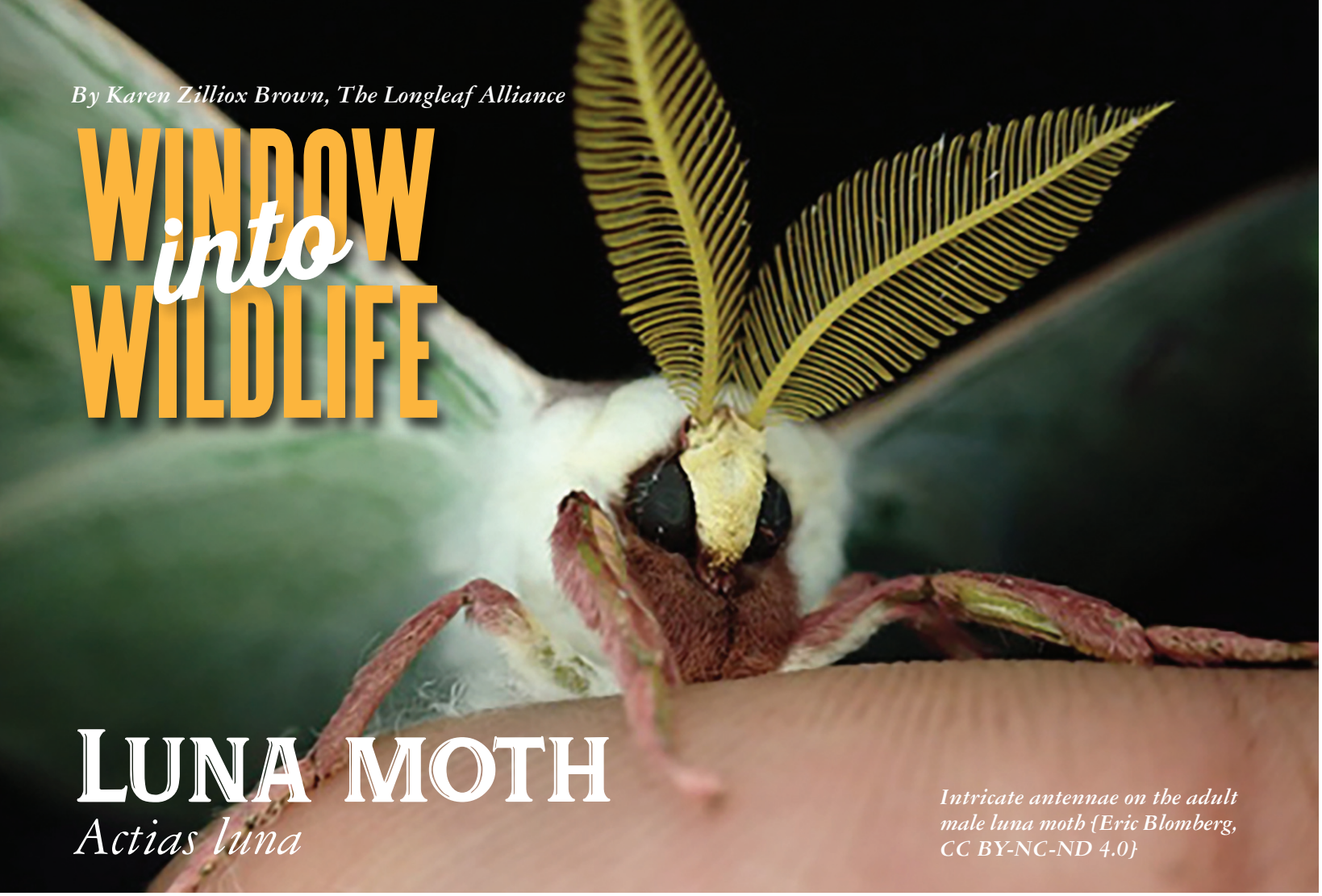
By Karen Zilliox Brown, The Longleaf Alliance

WINDOW *into* WILDLIFE



LUNA MOTH

Actias luna

Intricate antennae on the adult male luna moth {Eric Blomberg, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0}

The luna moth, an iconic North American silk moth, is practically unmistakable in identification. With the creamy green shade of the adult's wings, elongated hindwings, and conspicuous eyespots, observers are fortunate to catch a glimpse of this fleeting beauty.

DESCRIPTION

Luna moths have bright green to greenish-yellow wings, reddish-brown edges, and large eyespot markings. Their wingspan can range from 7.5 to 10.5 cm on average.

Females and males are visually similar in size and appearance, though male adults appear more yellowish than females, and females may be slightly larger in comparison. Male antennae appear more intricate; the feather-like structures are highly sensitive to detecting the female pheromone during mating.

Luna moth adults are considered nocturnal; they are mostly inactive during the day.

HABITAT AND LIFE CYCLE

Luna moths occur throughout the eastern U.S. and Canada, inhabiting forested ecosystems that contain some degree of hardwoods, which is why you may be lucky enough to observe them in a longleaf pine habitat with components of native broadleaf trees.

Larval host plants include an exhaustive list of hardwoods; many sources indicate a preference for sweetgum. Other native species, such as persimmon, hickory, winged elm, red oak, white oak, tulip poplar, and others, serve as suitable host plants for larval development.

The larvae are harmless, and while they can consume a considerable amount of foliage, their populations are not at a level to raise concern over damage to host plants.

In the southern U.S., adults first appear in March-April, with the second and third generations appearing 8-10 weeks apart into the fall. Northern portions of the range may see one to two generations per year.

PREDATION AND ADAPTATION

Luna moths spend just a short time as adults; they must reproduce within the span of seven nights or so. That makes their survival through maturity the driver behind several defense mechanisms.

Easily identified luna moth in larval stage, distinct green color, pale yellow lateral stripe, and rows of spiracles, or respiratory openings {Mark Sturtevant}

The only moth to be featured on a U.S. postage stamp, 1987 {United States Postal Service, courtesy of Smithsonian National Postal Museum}

Luna moth on longleaf pine {Brady Beck}

Green wings allow the moth to blend in with the foliage of hardwood trees when they lie dormant during the daylight hours.

Their characteristic hindwings with elongated and curved tails disrupt the echolocation used by bats, the most common predator of the luna moth. The wing shape also tends to direct predator strikes to the tail, not the body.

Large moon-like eye spots confuse predators, making the moth appear to be a larger animal. While many vulnerable prey species employ this adaptation, these face-like eyespots on luna moths are in places where even if attacked, the moth could survive.

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Herbicide lancing in dense thickets on RMS land {Charlie Abeles}

TEAM TIPS FOR USING HERBICIDE INJECTOR LANCING

By Haley Welshoff, The Longleaf Alliance

Do you need a safer and more efficient way to control unwanted woody vegetation?

One management strategy being used more frequently by The Longleaf Alliance's *Ambystoma bishopi* (AMBBIS) Restoration Team is **herbicide injector lancing.** Lancing can prevent herbicide drift and runoff in highly sensitive conservation-focused areas. The team uses this tool to pretreat our habitat restoration areas to selectively kill undesirable trees with little to no off-target herbicide effects.

What is a herbicide injector lance? How does it work?

These 5-foot-long metal tubes use a gravity-fed, spring-loaded head to drive a shell of herbicide through the bark of a tree and into the cambium layer. Each "injection" contains a small amount of chemical held in a water-soluble capsule within a brass shell.

To use a lance, the operator places the gripping teeth against the trunk of the offending tree. Then, firmly press the lance against the tree with a fast thrust of the arms (a true push; don't hold back). The pushing force drives the brass capsule into the tree trunk.

The tree's sap dissolves the chemical casing over time, releasing the herbicide. This closed application system kills the roots, trunk, and foliage without harming neighboring plants. These systemic herbicides kill the tree completely, with rarely any regrowth or suckers. The remaining dead tree and stump can either be removed or left to decompose naturally (and function as a beneficial wildlife tree in the meantime).

Why and where do we use lancing?

The AMBBIS Restoration Team is restoring wetlands that have been severely impacted by the encroachment of woody species, including titi, sweet gum, and myrtle leaf holly. The goal is to remove the mid-story, re-opening the wetlands to promote habitat for imperiled species like the reticulated flatwoods salamander. We began pretreating restoration areas via herbicide injector lances based on the suggestions and successes of our partners at Eglin Air Force Base and Virginia Tech.

Lancing accelerates our ability to mechanically remove hardwoods by reducing them to lighter dead stems.

Approximately 6-12 months after lancing, the crew clears the completely dry and leafless trees, cutting and carrying the stems from the wetland to prepare for future prescribed burning. With a short, upfront investment, this work is orders of magnitude easier for crews, especially with stands of larger diameter trees.

Herbicide lancing saves time and effort from returning to an area to treat resprouts. Other herbicide application methods are problematic when the encroaching vegetation is too tall to foliar spray and/or dense and large enough to be burdensome to cut and treat with herbicide (aka the cut stump method). Treating stumps can result in undesirable resprout, whereas lancing permits very little room for resprout potential.

Lancing above the water level at Escribano Point Wildlife Management Area {Samantha Dillon}

ART staff demonstrate how to herbicide lance hardwoods {Samantha Dillon}

Most of our work is on public lands, but recently, our crew began herbicide lancing on private lands stewarded primarily by Resource Management Service (RMS). The wetland we are treating consists primarily of large sweetgum and very branchy *Ilex* species, with occasional red maples and water oaks along the wetland's basin edge. We selectively treat these trees, leaving a few larger ones for wildlife and canopy cover until the scattered pines restore dominant canopy cover over time. The increased efficiency of herbicide lancing in a large wetland like this is very beneficial compared to cutting and hauling large-diameter trees from the get-go.

Insights from the team – pros, cons, and things to watch out for in the field.

Increased Crew Safety: In our restoration "tool belt," chainsaws and brush cutters tend to be our primary sources of progress and success. Pretreating vegetation makes hauling and clearing easier, more efficient, and safer in the long run because the material is lighter (saves our blood, sweat, and tears for another day). Crews also do not need to mix, pour, and spray herbicide into an open environment – the herbicide is contained within the lance and then goes straight into the tree.

Weather Conditions Matter: Although you can use herbicide lances rain or shine, we recommend keeping the lances from getting wet or internally holding moisture, especially during the hot summer months. Herbicide within the pellets is held in a "dry, stable form" within a water-soluble capsule, but temperature and humidity can modify that integrity. Also, note that the manufacturer advises operators to avoid freezing temperatures since herbicide has difficulty dissolving when bark and cambium are frozen (see EZ-Ject® Lancing Guide by Arbor Systems).

Maintenance is Key: With consistent usage comes consistent maintenance. Our crew has learned that cleaning out the lances after every workday prevents future sticking and clogging.

Difficult to Maneuver: Standard lances are 5 feet long, so it can be challenging to operate in dense vegetation. Snagging the lance on branches, vines, and adjacent tree stems is common.

When The Trees Have Wet Feet: If operating this tool in a wet environment, be sure to only inject capsules well above the water level to avoid potential drift and runoff that may be hazardous to plants in water adjacent to treated areas.

Up-Front Investment is Worth Every Penny: Purchasing herbicide pellets is costly, especially if you're treating a lot of big trees. Despite the cost and wait time, it is still worthwhile to pretreat and return later to remove wood vegetation compared to clearing live vegetation from the start, especially for smaller hand crews. Lancing crews can operate in multiple wetlands at once by using that "wait time" to focus on clearing or lancing other sites.

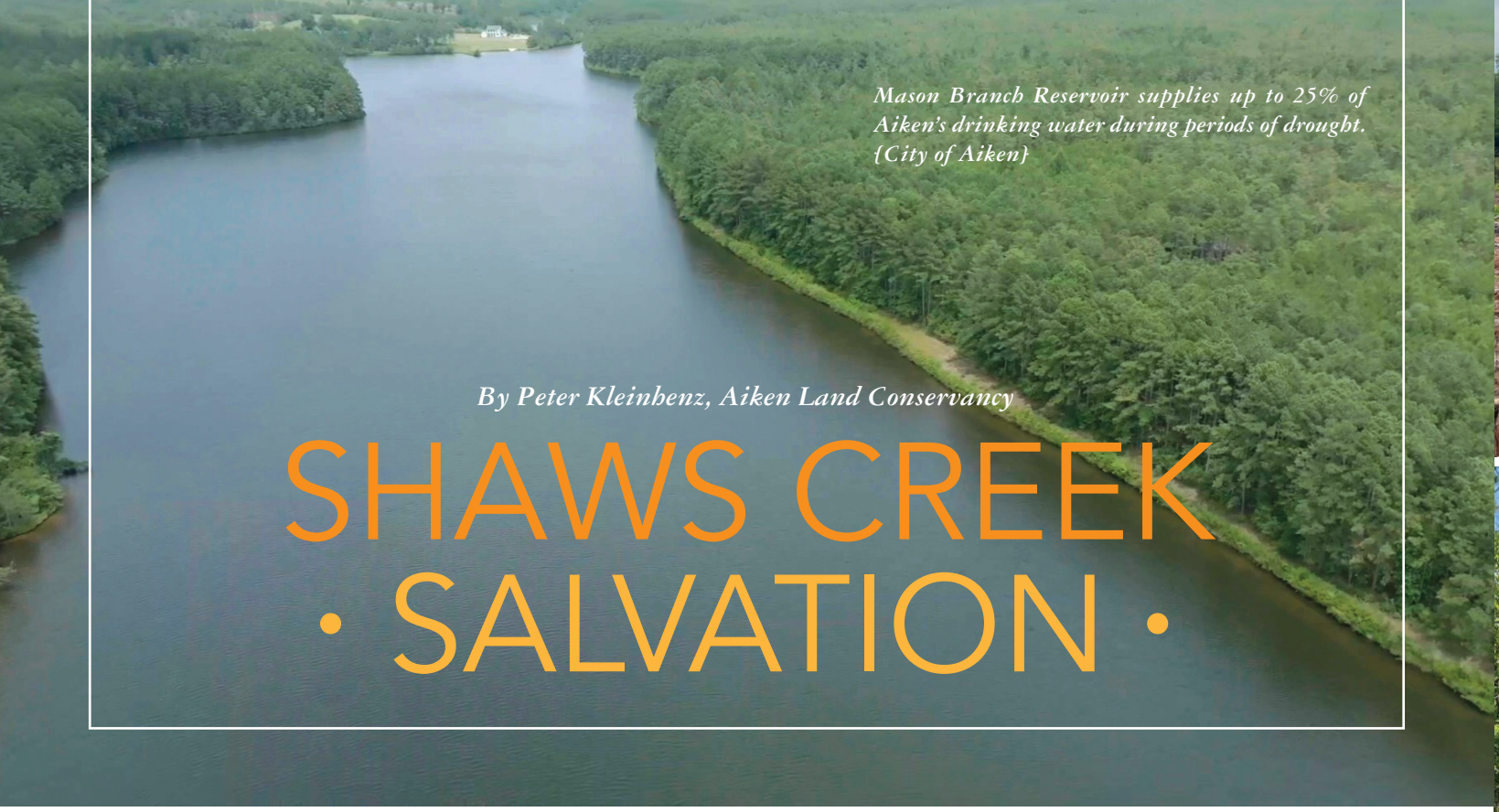
Herbicide safety

Always wear appropriate personal protective equipment when applying herbicides. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for operation, maintenance, and storage. Also, check the restrictions for the use of herbicide capsules in your state. **The EZ-Ject® Lance by Arbor Systems may only be sold in states where each capsule is registered.**

Scan Me!

longleaf.info/ez-ject

The Longleaf Alliance's *Ambystoma bishopi* (AMBBIS) Restoration Team (or A.R.T. for short) is part of the greater AMBBIS team working on reticulated flatwood salamander conservation in the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership. In addition to salamander head-starting and population monitoring, our field staff restores critical wetland habitat through mechanical, chemical, and prescribed fire treatments.



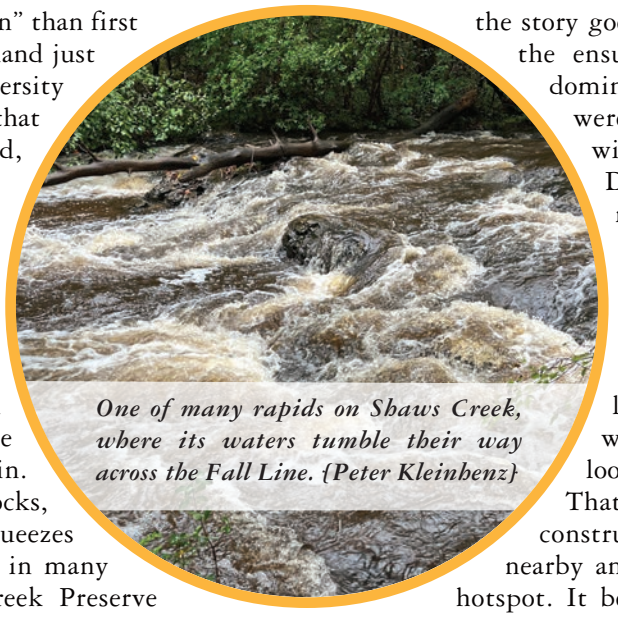
Mason Branch Reservoir supplies up to 25% of Aiken's drinking water during periods of drought. {City of Aiken}

By Peter Kleinhenz, Aiken Land Conservancy

SHAWS CREEK • SALVATION •

Driving down the orange, beaten-down sand of Mason Branch Road in Aiken County, South Carolina, it'd be easy to give a passing glance at the pines bordering the road and do nothing more. Sure, the scattered chunks of rock and the occasional bloom of milkweed may indicate that more hides behind the green pine "curtain" than first meets the eye. As it turns out, the land just out of sight contains incredible diversity and a story worth telling; a story that has been decades in the making and, in short, a story of salvation.

Shaws Creek flows 25 miles from the southeastern portion of Edgefield County, South Carolina, down through the heart of Aiken County before reaching the South Fork of the Edisto River. Along its route, Shaws Creek crosses the Fall Line, that barrier distinguishing the Piedmont from the Coastal Plain. Here, Shaws Creek tumbles over rocks, and its width decreases as it squeezes between steep-sided bluffs. Here, in many ways, the story of the Shaws Creek Preserve begins.



One of many rapids on Shaws Creek, where its waters tumble their way across the Fall Line. {Peter Kleinhenz}

Back in the 1870s, John W. Seigler constructed and operated a grist mill at this site. The churning waters turned a waterwheel that ground wheat into flour and corn into cornmeal. The Seigler's Mill community grew up around the site, complete with a sawmill and a kiln where formerly enslaved African Americans produced pottery akin to the famous Edgefield pottery created just a few miles north. Water, as it often does, brought people together and a community was created.

Seigler's Mill ultimately became Seigler's Station, which eventually became Eureka when a weary traveler finally located the town and unknowingly (and sarcastically, the story goes) uttered the new town name. In the ensuing century, the longleaf pine-dominated sandhills surrounding Eureka were gradually cleared to be replaced with farms and rows of loblolly pine. Despite the alterations, the area remained rural, and Shaws Creek flowed as always. But Shaws Creek was not finished with its role as a community focal point.

Several miles away, Aiken, South Carolina began to prosper in the late 1800s with the arrival of wealthy visitors from the Northeast looking to escape often-brutal winters. That prosperity continued with the construction of the Savannah River Site nearby and Aiken's status as an equestrian hotspot. It became apparent to City of Aiken leaders that a more reliable source of drinking water would be needed to supply this booming population.

In the early 1980s, Mason Branch, a tributary of Shaws Creek, was dammed just above Mason Branch Road, and a 92-acre lake known as Mason Branch Reservoir was formed. This reservoir allows for water to be released during droughts to augment the flow in Shaws Creek which, in turn, feeds the City of Aiken's Water Treatment Plant six miles

This clearcut once contained dense, planted loblolly pine, but thanks to grant funding, this area will soon be planted with longleaf pine. {Peter Kleinhenz}

A construction site box left from 2016 highlights how close the property came to being intensively developed. {Peter Kleinhenz}

The partial ruins of Seigler's Mill still stand along Shaws Creek, and are protected within a conservation easement held by ALC. {Peter Kleinhenz}

downstream. In these instances, Mason Branch Reservoir can provide as much as 25% of the drinking water consumed in the City of Aiken.

The land around the reservoir remained forested for decades, with much of it used for commercial timber production. By the mid-1990s, Aiken's growth was creeping northward toward the reservoir, but years went by with no major changes to the surrounding land. That changed in 2016 when over 600 forested acres within a mile of Mason Branch Reservoir were converted into solar panels. Almost simultaneously, plans were submitted to develop the land around the reservoir into a golf and equestrian community with 4,300 homes. This development would have significantly impacted the reservoir, Shaws Creek, and Aiken's drinking water. The City of Aiken recognized that they needed to do something to protect their water supply and boldly purchased over 2,000 acres to buffer Mason Branch Reservoir. Seemingly, the drinking water supply of Aiken was protected…or was it?

The City of Aiken had no plans to sell or develop the land around the reservoir, but members of the City Council are elected. What if future Council members or constituents felt differently? For this reason, the Aiken City Council at the time, along with City of Aiken staff, felt that permanently conserving the 2,658 acres they owned with a conservation easement was the right thing to do.

Aiken Land Conservancy (ALC), an accredited land trust that operates in Aiken County, took on the task. With financial support from organizations like The Longleaf Alliance, International Paper, The Nature Conservancy, and Bartlett Tree Experts, ALC staff and board members worked closely with the City of Aiken to complete an application to the South Carolina Conservation Bank to partially fund a conservation easement. Essentially, these funds provide cash to compensate a landowner for giving up certain rights, such as the right to intensively develop the land, in order to protect the conservation values of the property in perpetuity. Months later, the South Carolina Conservation Bank awarded $1.9 million in funding to the project, and in May of this year, the conservation easement was completed. But the story does not end there.

So often, we think that conservation of land equates to the conservation of habitats and species. We often fail to recognize that, in many areas, active management must occur for habitats to function as they should. Such is the case at the Shaws Creek Preserve, where a fire-craving longleaf pine ecosystem once flourished.

Before the conservation easement was even recorded, ALC, in consultation with the City of Aiken, The Longleaf Alliance, Sandhills Forestry, and Black Magic Land Management, began putting the pieces together to ensure that restoration happened as quickly as possible. Dense

stands of loblolly pine needed to be harvested and replaced with longleaf pine. In areas already containing longleaf, prescribed fire was needed for light to once again reach the forest floor.

Fortunately, a unique grant opportunity through the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative allowed many of these needs to be met. The Initiative offers grant funding to land trusts applying management that benefits birds. This year, Aiken Land Conservancy received a $25,000 grant to work with The Longleaf Alliance and Sandhills Forestry to restore longleaf pine on 50 acres of clearcut loblolly pine plantation on the Shaws Creek Preserve. The grant will also fund an outreach event where private landowners can visit the restoration site to learn how to restore longleaf on their own properties, as well as an interpretive sign describing the restoration.

Scenic waters of Shaws Creek {Peter Kleinhenz}

The support does not end there. In 2023, ALC joined the Burning for Birds Conservation Collaborative, a network of five land trusts from across the Southeast that work to apply fire in areas likely to benefit declining bird species, such as Northern Bobwhite Quail and Bachman's Sparrow. This endeavor also receives funding support from the Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative, and the Shaws Creek Preserve will be one of the beneficiaries. Furthermore, The Longleaf Alliance committed to providing funding support for prescribed burning and midstory reduction work on the property.

Collaboration and partnership have accelerated the restoration of the Shaws Creek Preserve, and the future looks bright.

Despite this, the need for active management of the property will always continue. The application of fire at regular intervals, the threat of invasive species, future public access, and the drinking water supply will demand attention indefinitely. Aiken Land Conservancy will need to monitor the conservation easement annually and defend it in perpetuity if its conservation values are to stay intact forever. So, unlike many stories, this one has no end. But, in this case, that's exactly how it should be.

LIVING THE DREAM IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS

SHARING A PASSION FOR LAND STEWARDSHIP {UF IFAS}

Doug and Teresa Moore of South Prong Plantation are the **2024 Gjerstad/Johnson Landowners of the Year**. The award honors a private landowner for ensuring the future of the longleaf ecosystem on private land. The Moore family will be recognized at the Regional Longleaf Awards Program during the 15th Biennial Longleaf Conference at the Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort in Miramar Beach, Florida.

By Ginger Feagle, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Landowner Assistance Program

Doug and Teresa Moore own and actively manage South Prong Plantation in Northeast Florida as a working, multi-use timber operation that integrates diverse groundcover and prime wildlife habitat. Purchased in 2002 as commercial timberland, they have successfully converted 450 of the 1,600 acres of slash and loblolly pine plantation into longleaf pine, with ongoing work to convert the remaining acres.

Including the pine plantations, South Prong Plantation encompasses more than 2,400 acres of pine flatwoods, cypress swamps, bottomland hardwoods, and creeks, along with old homesteads and evidence of cultural history. The Moores appreciated the diversity of the property and the wide variety of wildlife that calls it home. Mr. Moore recognized the site's conservation value, which serves as the headwaters of the south prong of the St. Marys River, the feature that gives the property its name.

Mr. Moore achieves his forestry goals by following a written management plan and basing each year's decisions on environmental factors that favor the ecological outcomes of a healthy longleaf forest. Specifically, an annual harvest plan is defined using multiple smaller acreage cuts, creating a mosaic of age-structured longleaf stands across the landscape. As mature stands are harvested, they are replanted with longleaf pine as soils allow. Mr. Moore shares his preference for planting fire-tolerant longleaf pines with fellow private landowners, explaining that an early introduction of prescribed fire improves wildlife cover, food, and overall ecosystem health. Mr. Moore's efforts to improve wildlife habitat were recognized nationally by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in 2020.

Mr. Moore's habitat management message is exemplified when he highlights the state-endangered Chapman's fringed orchid (*Platanthera chapmanii*) during his field tours. He shares that this terrestrial species has benefitted from fire by establishing one of its most prolific populations in North Florida. To encourage conservation of the species, Mr. Moore welcomed biologists to voucher the species' locations, collect seed for banking, and enjoy the bear, deer, turkey, and fox squirrel on the property.

South Prong Plantation is a certified Tree Farm and

A.

B.

C.

D.

A. Doug Moore inspects a young longleaf pine after planting {Camila Guillen, UF IFAS} B. Longleaf pine planted in 2014; pictured here eight years later {Ginger Feagle, FWC} C. Mr. Moore often hosts tours to explain forestry and wildlife management at South Prong Plantation. In 2023, the Moores hosted the Groundcover 201 Longleaf Academy, including a visit to the thinned timber stand pictured here. {Jacob Barrett } D. Doug and Teresa Moore, South Prong Plantation {Christopher M. Demers, UF IFAS}

Hear more from the Moores and see South Prong Plantation in this video from the Florida Tree Farm Program.

implements the program's sustainable forestry standards to protect wood, water, wildlife, and recreation. In 2022, Doug and Teresa were recognized for these efforts with the National Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year award. Reflecting on this honor, Mr. Moore said, "This award is important to me, not only because it recognizes my hard work, but it recognizes all the agencies and people that helped me get there, and possibly, encourages others to better manage their forest."

That desire to assist others on their forest stewardship journey is reflected in the numerous events, field tours, and visitors to South Prong. Mr. Moore shares his knowledge on topics such as pine species selection, planting, harvesting, prescribed fire, best management practices, and wildlife management. He also supports local landowner-led conservation initiatives through the North Florida Prescribed Burn Association and the Baker County Landowner Group. Just last year, The Longleaf Alliance's Groundcover 201 Longleaf Academy visited to observe how native groundcover plants successfully responded to prescribed fire under planted longleaf pine.

Mr. Moore's passion for helping others stems from his own journey. After 30 years working his family's dairy farm, he shifted to his lifelong dream of owning and managing timber and conservation land. With a background primarily in livestock management, Mr. Moore got started by seeking out every resource for forestry and wildlife management available. He found help from the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF IFAS) Extension and state and federal agencies like the Florida Forest Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Now a Certified

Burning young longleaf {Doug Moore}

Chapman's fringed orchid {Ginger Feagle, FWC}

Prescribed fire at South Prong Plantation promotes forest health, wildlife habitat, and rare plant populations.

Burn Manager, he seeks to assist other landowners with prescribed burning and forest/wildlife management.

Located in the Florida Wildlife Corridor, and, importantly included in the regional Ocala to Osceola Wildlife Corridor known as the 020, the Moores recognize the importance of protecting their land and have recently finalized a conservation easement with Florida's Rural and Family Lands Protection Program. Future activities at South Prong include constructing a cracker-style house to interpret North Florida's cultural history amongst the longleaf pines and an interpretive exhibit to educate about the area's historical turpentine activities.

In just two decades, Mr. Moore's dedication has turned this short-rotation pulpwood property into a prime example of multi-use management featuring longleaf pine. "It has always been a passion of mine to own a large timber property that I could manage, share and introduce others to learning more about our great outdoors. I am living my dream." **The Moores have become true champions of promoting healthy longleaf pine ecosystems on private lands.**

Mapping out the 5-YEAR BLUEPRINT FOR LONGLEAF

By Jason Dockery, Alabama Forestry Commission, Longleaf Partnership Council Chair

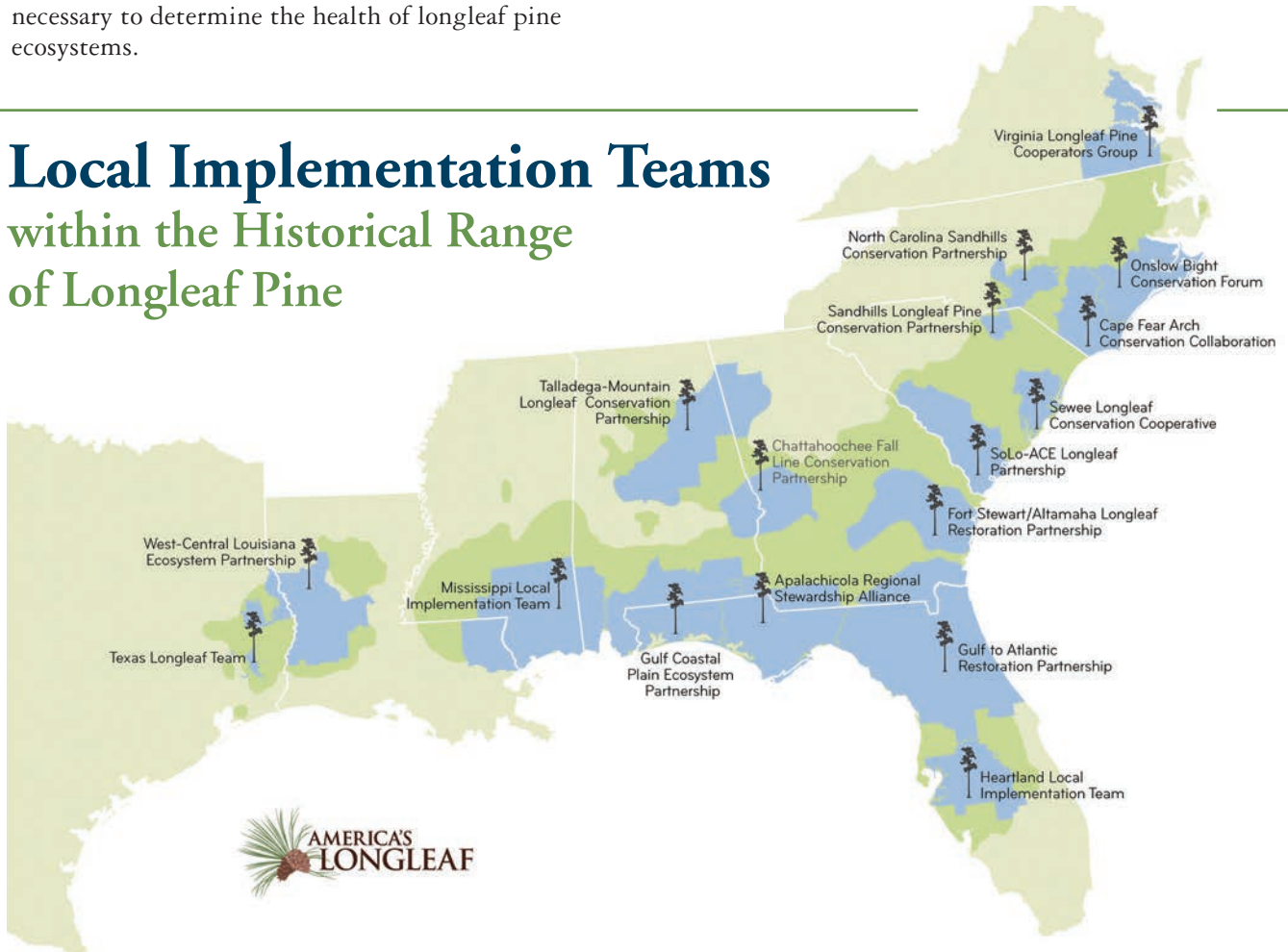
In preparation of the Longleaf Partnership Council (LPC) annual fall meeting (taking place in conjunction with the 15th Biennial Longleaf Conference), council members were busy over the summer drafting America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative's *Strategic Priorities and Actions (SPA) 2025-2029*. The Council considers the SPA document critical to achieving the goals and objectives presented in the second iteration of the *Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine* and the goal of eight million acres of longleaf pine forest in the Southeast by 2040. As such, we will invest time presenting the draft at this meeting, focusing on the priorities, specific actions, and responsible entities outlined in the SPA document.

A few highlights anticipated in the SPA 2025-2029 include:

- Improved monitoring of acreage and other key metrics necessary to determine the health of longleaf pine ecosystems.
- Assessment for each strategy's objectives and priorities to assist the Council in evaluating progress.
- Section describing Longleaf for All and its role with America's Longleaf – Longleaf for All is incorporated into several strategies to ensure the network and platform improves and enhances under-sourced participation in forest-related programs, practices, and activities, as well as ensure all landowners can reap the economic, ecological, and cultural benefits of owning forested land in the Southeast.

The Longleaf Partnership Council members and its partners are accomplishing great things across the range. We are looking forward to our fall meeting and the Longleaf Conference. I hope to see you all in Florida!

Local Implementation Teams
within the Historical Range of Longleaf Pine



MANAGING LONGLEAF PINE FORESTS FOR OUR FUTURE: A CLIMATE-SMART GUIDE

By Colette DeGarady, Tom O'Halloran, and Lisa Lord

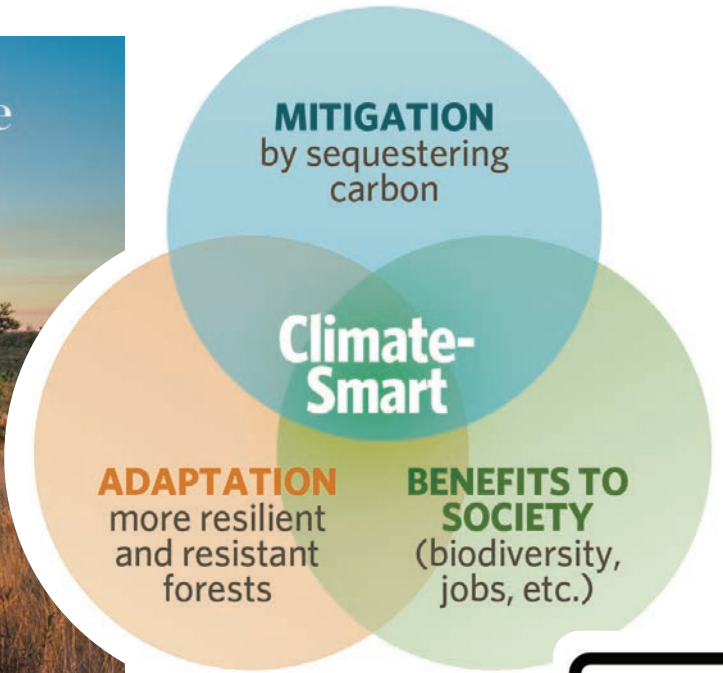
In the Southeast, where fires, floods, droughts, hurricanes, and other wind events shape the landscape, longleaf pine continues to be a testament to resilience. The trees and the diverse forests anchored by them are adapted to thrive in wide-ranging and challenging conditions. For forest landowners and managers across the Southern United States, understanding land management practices that meet their objectives and foster positive ecological outcomes while mitigating risks is an important strategy as we move toward a future with climate uncertainties.

One approach, known as climate-smart forestry, seeks to ensure both the resilience of ecosystems and the communities dependent upon them. A newly released guide, ***Managing Longleaf Pine Forests for Our Future***, provides landowners with a resource for understanding climate-smart longleaf pine forest management. This concept is an extension of sustainable forestry where the priority is on using forest management practices that can help mitigate the effects of climate change and provide ecological, climatic, and economic benefits for landowners, their communities, and society.

"Every decision we make in managing our forests has broader implications," notes Dr. Thomas O'Halloran, a researcher at the Baruch Institute of Coastal Ecology & Forest Science at Clemson University and one of the lead authors of this guide. "Healthy longleaf pine forests are well known to support diverse wildlife, but they also play a critical role in mitigating climate change effects." By maintaining robust longleaf pine ecosystems, landowners not only secure their interests but also contribute to broader conservation efforts.

The guide outlines ten core management practices. Some of the listed practices include reforestation and afforestation, extending rotations, groundcover restoration, and silvopasture with an accompanying list of their benefits, emphasizing climate mitigation, wildlife habitat conservation, and increased resilience. By adopting or implementing these practices, landowners and managers can increase carbon sequestration and manage forests with multiple benefits.

The ***Managing Longleaf Pine Forests for Our Future*** climate-smart guide is the first of its kind for longleaf and is a pivotal tool as the imperative to manage forests wisely grows. By embracing these practices, landowners and managers can chart a course toward a future with thriving forests, communities, and ecosystems.



View this guide online at https://longleaf.info/climate-smart

Naval Air Station Whiting Field Recognized as Best Base in the Navy

FLORIDA

By Zach Harris, Naval Air Station Whiting Field Public Affairs, and Vernon Compton, The Longleaf Alliance

NAS Whiting Field prescribed burn with partners {Kaiden Spurlock}

Naval Air Station (NAS) Whiting Field was recently recognized as the recipient of the 2024 **Commander of Chief's Annual Award for Installation Excellence for the Navy.** This award recognizes the outstanding and innovative efforts of the people who operate and maintain U.S. military installations. NAS Whiting Field Commanding Officer Captain Paul Flores credited Whiting's robust community engagement as a major factor in the installation's ability to execute its mission. "Community-military partnering is integral to the success of NAS Whiting Field," said Flores.

One example of this is NAS Whiting Field's involvement with the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP); they have been a very engaged partner since the early years. They bring that same spirit of cooperation, collaboration, and action that has made GCPEP successful in terms of longleaf ecosystem management and restoration.

NAS Whiting Field shines as an example for others to follow, from forestry to prescribed fire to invasive species control to base buffering through a nationally recognized and partner-based land protection program.

Heartland Longleaf Local Implementation Team Poised to Plant More Longleaf

FLORIDA

By Cheryl Millet, The Nature Conservancy

Future longleaf planting site at Disney Wilderness Preserve after a prescribed fire {Ryann Blennerhassett}

The Heartland Longleaf Local Implementation Team (HLIT), in south central Florida, is ready to grow longleaf pine's southernmost reaches. Included in a collaborative proposal to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), longleaf establishment projects in this region will be funded for the 2025-26 and 2026-27 planting seasons. This will accelerate restoration as a complement to the work the partners are already doing in the region, and the HLIT steering committee is ready to hit the ground running.

Planting projects include lands owned by the Florida Forest Service, Florida Park Service, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Manatee County, Polk County, Bok Tower Gardens, and The Nature Conservancy. In the meantime, this is a busy fire season, getting controlled burns on the ground in longleaf and other habitats in the region.

National Old-Growth Amendment – Kisatchie National Forest Hosts Tour of Old-Growth Forests

By Will deGravelles, The Nature Conservancy

LOUISIANA

Kisatchie National Forest Old Growth Field Tour {CC Richmond}

The USDA Forest Service led a field meeting in July at the Kisatchie National Forest's Catahoula District to discuss and demonstrate old-growth principles and management as relating to forest types found in the Southern Region of the Forest Service (known as Region 8), with special attention paid to longleaf pine. Over 40 people were in attendance, representing federal, state, non-profit, tribal, and private interests from Louisiana and across the Southeast, all with a keen awareness of the importance of the benefits of old-growth forests, the threats they face, and the critical need for local expertise in designing adjustments in management to encourage old-growth where most appropriate. The meeting included stops at the Croker Field Study (long-term stand dynamics in longleaf planted by the Civilian Conservation Corp in the 1930s, with many individuals far older than this), a mixed pine stand being converted to longleaf pine dominance, and a currently mature longleaf stand to discuss the implications of old-growth management on wildlife.

The tour was part of a broader effort to solicit input and feedback on the National Old-Growth Amendment developed in response to the 2022 Executive Order 14072 calling for "Strengthening the Nation's Forests, Communities, and Local Economies." This executive order guided the agency toward a process to define and inventory mature and old-growth forest conditions on federal lands. An initial threat analysis of these forests on National Forest and Bureau of Land Management lands suggests that current management activities may not be responsive to rapidly changing disturbances and conditions. A wealth of information on the Amendment and related Environmental Impact Statement is available at the National Old-Growth Amendment website: https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/old-growth-forests/amendment.

Searching for Indigo Snake DNA

By Houston Chandler, Director of Science, The Orianne Society

GEORGIA

Eastern indigo snake {Andrea Fuchs}

Eastern indigo snakes (*Drymarchon couperi*) are the longest snake species native to North America and inhabit various habitats, including longleaf pine forests. Despite being listed as threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, indigo snake populations continue to face a variety of threats, most notably continued habitat loss and fragmentation. Somewhat counterintuitively, when considering their size, one of the current challenges for effective indigo snake conservation is documenting the presence of snakes on sites without contemporary observations.

The Orianne Society is currently working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Genomics Center, and the Central Florida Zoo to test the efficacy of using environmental DNA (eDNA) as a survey technique for indigo snakes. Sampling for eDNA has become widespread in aquatic environments in recent years, and the technique has started to transition to terrestrial habitats. The method relies on detecting DNA in soil samples that animals have left behind as they move through the environment.

We have completed both a controlled experiment and a field study, collecting many soil samples to be tested for snake DNA. Field collection sites included Fort Stewart (Georgia), Conecuh National Forest (Alabama), and Apalachicola Bluffs and Ravines Preserve (Florida). Preliminary results suggest that it is possible to detect indigo snake DNA in soil samples. The project is expected to conclude this year once the lab work is completed and a cost comparison between common survey techniques that might be used for indigo snakes is conducted. Adding eDNA as one of the potential survey techniques for indigo snakes will benefit their conservation in the coming years.

South Carolina Sandhills Assists with Establishing Native Understory

By Charles Babb, SC Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership Coordinator

SOUTH CAROLINA

Bradley Melton uses the SLPCP's native seed planter to establish a mixture of locally collected native grasses and forbs between rows of newly established longleaf seedlings. {Charles Babb}

The Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership (SLPCP) is helping landowner Brad Melton create his vision to restore 100 acres of row crops to a traditional longleaf forest.

In 2021, the family vegetable farm was planted in longleaf pine through the USDA-NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Melton's ultimate goal is to create high-quality quail and turkey habitats.

The SLPCP used its seed harvester to collect native grasses and flower species within the Local Implementation Team (LIT) boundary, then used its native seeder to plant a five-foot-wide strip between rows of planted longleaf.

A dormant season burn was conducted in 2023, which has helped reduce brown spot needle blight, control weeds, and provide bare soil for seed contact and subsequent germination.

Melton also thinned 40 acres of mature woodlands to a 50 basal area and will implement prescribed burning this winter to improve additional habitat.

"Brad is committed to creating a native open forest like we had when longleaf was king," said Babb. "By planting understory seeds now, we are creating excellent wildlife habitat and allowing the native seed bank to fill over the next 10 years."

Babb admitted that as the longleaf grow, they will begin to shade out the understory. "But by establishing a good seed bank, the understory will bounce back with the additional sunlight when the trees get their first thinning."

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is NRCS' flagship conservation program. It helps farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners integrate conservation into working lands.

SoLoACE Longleaf Partners' Summer Gathering

By Jennie Haskell, The Longleaf Alliance

SOUTH CAROLINA

SoLoACE Partners tour a recently restored depressional wetland to discuss gopher frog research at Webb WMA. {Jennie Haskell}

Many South Lowcountry ACE-Basin (SoLoACE) partners attended a summer meeting at the Webb Wildlife Center in Garnett, SC, to collaborate on longleaf pine projects. The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources hosted the meeting and provided a tour of current wetland restoration project efforts. Restoration activities included timber removal, hardwood control, and prescribed burning to develop wetland habitat with native groundcover and re-introducing gopher frogs. The gopher frog reintroduction has been closely monitored with radio transmitters to investigate their movements and predation of the head-started frogs. This project is ongoing as there are several prescribed treatments for depressional wetlands and many opportunities to learn about gopher frog habits.

Partners also heard formal presentations of projects across the SoLoACE landscape. These included the Aiken Land Conservancy's Shaw Creek Preserve land protection and longleaf restoration project, Beaufort County's St. Helena Agroforestry Demonstration Farm with Center for Heirs' Property Preservation, the release of the new *Managing Longleaf Pine Forests for our Future* climate-smart guide and information about blockchain technology and emerging markets, the progress with the Aiken Prescribed Fire Cooperative, the unveiling of the new SoLoACE Longleaf Partnership logo, and regional updates such as the release of the America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative's (ALRI) Accomplishments Report 2023. As with all partnership meetings, time was spent sharing special longleaf projects and opportunities for collaboration and networking.

Supporting Inclusive Networks in TNC for Good Fire

By Deb Maurer, The Nature Conservancy – North Carolina

NATIONAL

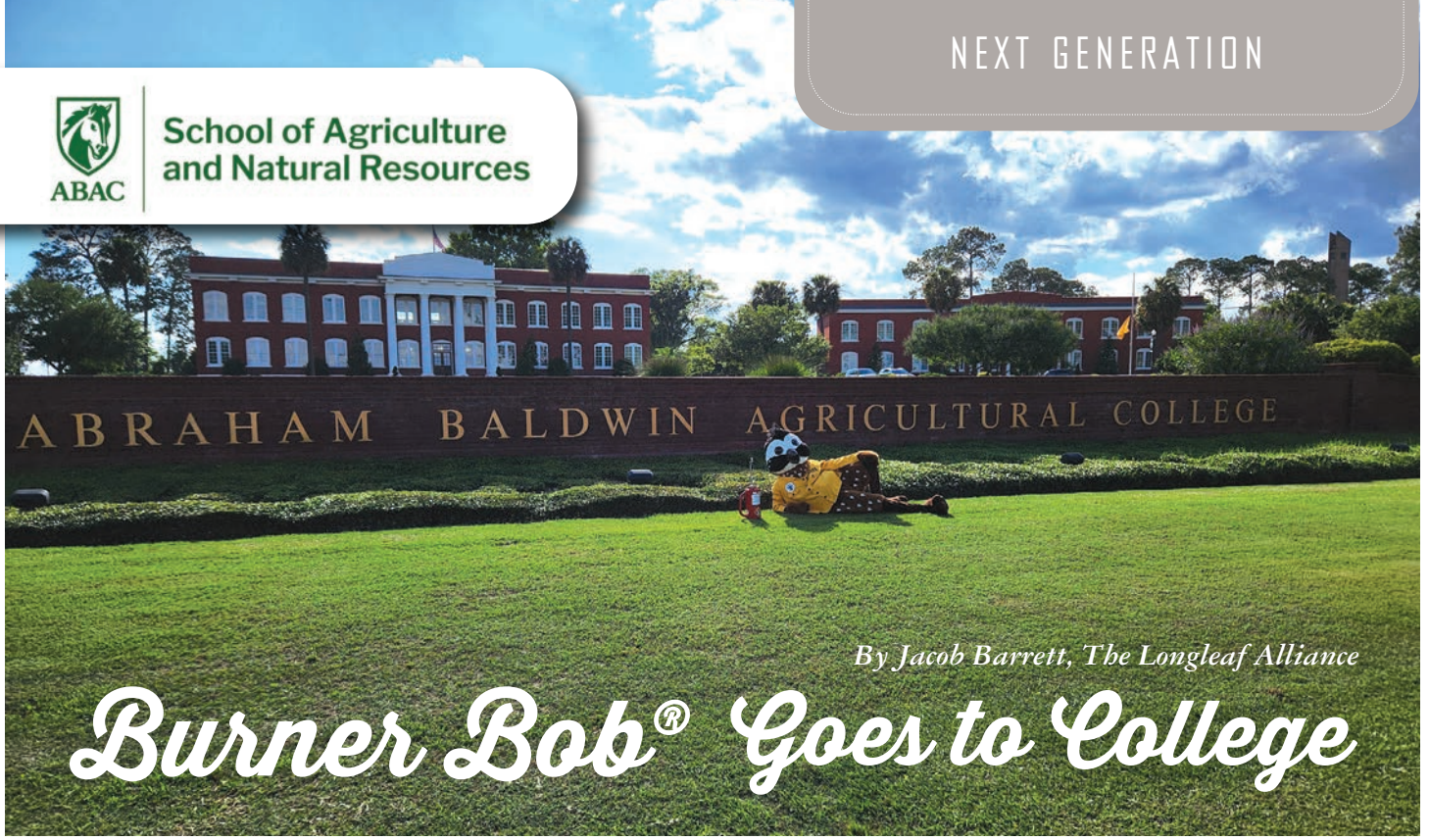
WIF Mentee and Mentor on the fire line together in Arkansas {Mia Larson}

Good fire is about stewardship of land, water, and cultural resources, maintaining plant and wildlife habitat, and mitigating wildfire; for practitioners, good fire is community, career growth, and often a core part of personal identity. Not all fire practitioners have experienced the same acceptance, encouragement, or security in navigating their fire journey.

In 2022, a group of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) fire practitioners started Women in Fire (WIF) as part of the Women in Nature employee resource group, dedicated to empowering women of all races and ethnicities and binary or non-binary identities in fire management. WIF aims to offer safe and inclusive spaces to address the challenges inherent in being underrepresented in the field of fire management. One of our goals is to provide opportunities for one-on-one mentorship relationships that help advance and empower fire leadership, qualifications, and practitioner knowledge. WIF also provides space for conversation around topics that are important to support the experiences of women and non-binary fire practitioners (e.g., handling harassment, feeling isolated, dealing with imposter syndrome, and forging pathways for career advancement).

In 2023-24, we supported eight mentees and seven mentors paired based on goals, skills, gender identity preference, and regional preference. Supported through TNC's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) fund and TNC's North America Fire program, we funded mentee travel across the country to visit mentors. Experiences were positive, and mentees were able to have individualized conversations, work on task books, support fire operations, and advance leadership skills. We will continue to expand the program in 2024 with support from TNC's North Carolina chapter.

School of Agriculture and Natural Resources
ABAC



By Jacob Barrett, The Longleaf Alliance

Burner Bob® Goes to College

Burner Bob® may already know a lot about longleaf pine ecosystems and prescribed fire, but he is always eager to learn more! Join him as he visits schools with forestry and wildlife programs in the longleaf landscape, where students are learning what is needed to become the next generation of longleaf professionals.

A Visit to Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College

If you're a bit of a traveler, odds are you have found yourself on Interstate 75 in the southern part of the Peach State. Between dodging the seemingly constant speed traps, you may have noticed Exit 64, which reads "Tifton ABAC." It would be interesting to know how many attentive passengers scramble for their phones to dive into their search engines to sleuth "what is an ABAC?" If they did, they would quickly discover that "Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College" would warrant a rather large exit sign. Burner Bob® isn't very tech-savvy, and his feathers don't jive with phone screens, so he stopped by the "The Yow," the college's Forestry and Wildlife Building, to learn more.

Tifton, Georgia is in the heart of longleaf country. This region boasts a rich history of row crop agriculture, turpentine, timber production, prescribed fire, and intensive Northern Bobwhite Quail management. For decades, Tifton has served as a crossroads for travelers on Highways 82, 41, 319, and Interstate 75. But it has also served as a crossroads of knowledge for everything within the agricultural and forest management disciplines.

Forestry and Wildlife Programs

The Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) forestry program began in 1954 by Vernon Yow, and the wildlife program followed suit in the mid-1960s by Charlie Marshall, both programs offering an Associates of Applied Science (AAS). The Forestry and Wildlife programs shifted to offering a Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) in 2011. They later converted to a Bachelor of Science (BS) program for both tracks in 2016 and added the Conservation Law Enforcement track.

The Department of Forest Resources continues to grow and increase their "hoof print" (Go Stallions!) as the program has graduated class after class of high-quality and well-prepared students into the workforce. Since 2015, the department has averaged 250-300 students.

ABAC programs include more forestry/wildlife-related courses than any other forestry or wildlife program in the eastern U.S.

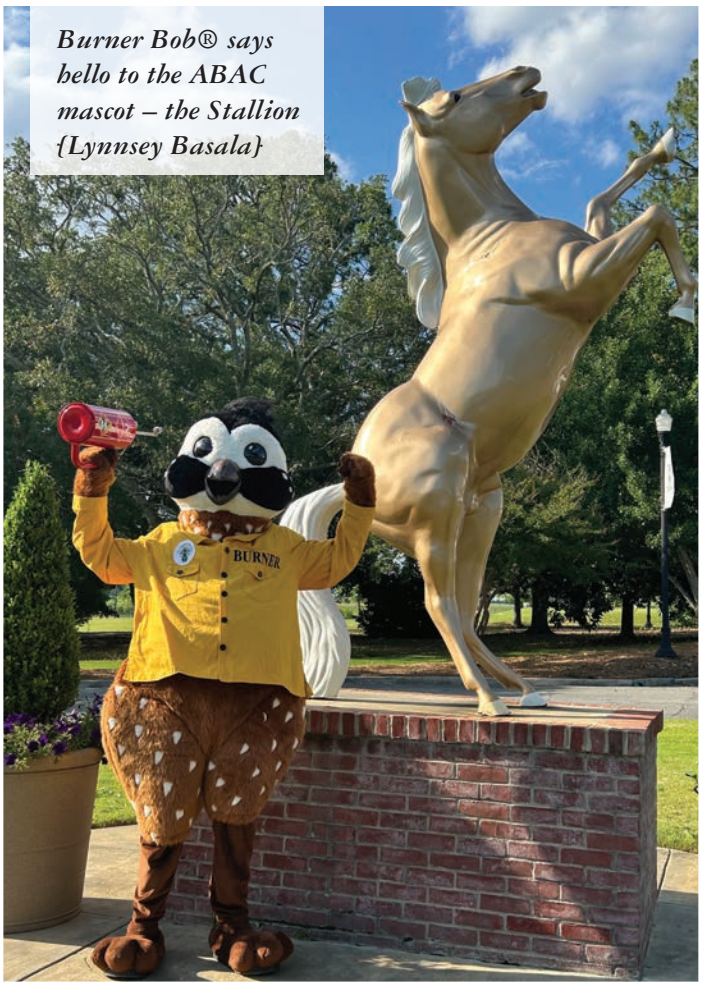
Students can earn their Bachelor of Science in Natural Resource Management in one of three tracks:

- **FORESTRY:** Society of American Foresters Accredited
- **WILDLIFE:** Curriculum satisfies standards for Associate Wildlife Biologist certification through The Wildlife Society
- **CONSERVATION LAW ENFORCEMENT:** Developed in cooperation with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the most direct education route to become a game warden

Why Choose ABAC?

Students choose ABAC forestry and wildlife programs over larger universities for various reasons, but lower tuition costs and more hands-on learning are among the top. Historically regarded as one of the most demanding majors on campus, ABAC's Forestry and Wildlife programs require students to perform high academically to earn their degrees, which forges a solid, work-ready graduate for their respective field.

In-field learning occurs off and on campus. Off-campus, students are exposed to a variety of management goals across different land ownership types. The John W. and Margaret Jones Langdale Forest, ABAC's 944-acre educational school forest, is heavily utilized, being only 12 minutes from campus and boasting a classroom and lab facility on site. Students are involved in academic and management activities directly related to the management of the Forest's resources. Recognizing that prescribed fire is an integral piece of the Coastal Plain's plant communities, ABAC emphasizes getting drip torches into the hands of its students. In the Fire Ecology and Silviculture courses, students gain experience with burning stands of longleaf, slash, and loblolly pine. They have the benefit of being able to see the active fire and its effects months after the event.



Burner Bob® says hello to the ABAC mascot – the Stallion {Lynnsey Basala}

Clubs and Accolades

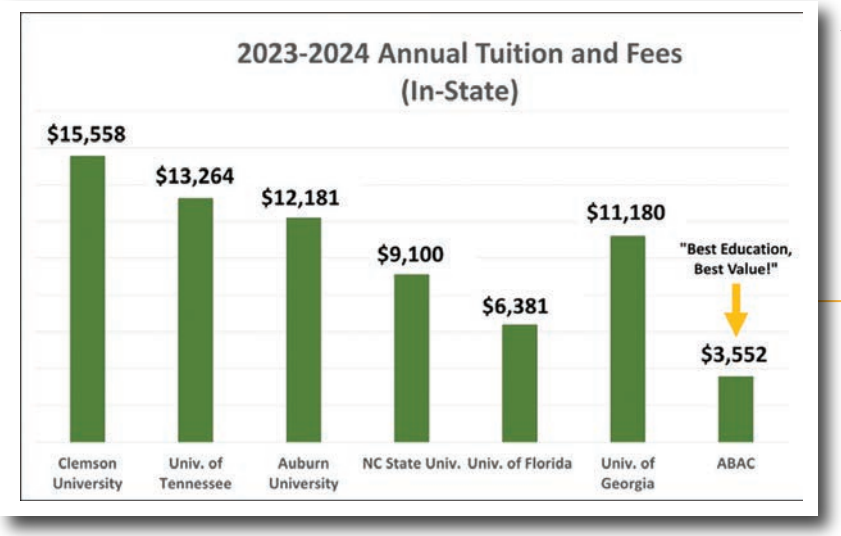
The ABAC Forestry Club is a student chapter of the Society of American Foresters, and the ABAC Wildlife Society is a chartered student chapter of The Wildlife Society. Wildlife and forestry professionals attend club meetings every two weeks to serve as guest speakers. Club members also attend state, regional, and national professional meetings and conferences, which are excellent networking opportunities to meet professionals and make internship/job connections.

The ABAC Forestry Club competes in academic and timbersports events at the annual Southeastern Forestry Conclave against teams from 13-14 colleges and universities. The ABAC Wildlife Society competes in the Southeastern Wildlife Society Conclave each spring, where wildlife students from 22-23 colleges and universities compete in a variety of academic, physical, and artistic events. In 2023 and 2024, the ABAC Wildlife Society placed 2nd overall behind Mississippi State. Their success is a testament to the level of preparation they receive in their educational endeavors. ABAC Wildlife Society also made national news when they were named The Wildlife Society's National Student Chapter of the Year in 2014.

Becoming Natural Resource Professionals

Since ABAC launched its bachelor's degree, job placement rates within two months of graduation have been 100%. Their degree program is designed to educate and train students to be applied managers of forestry and wildlife resources. Students are given the hands-on skills needed for success in their careers. The most common phrase and compliment that employers use to describe ABAC graduates is "work ready."

ABAC students learn hands-on skills used in forestry and wildlife management.



ABAC offers very affordable tuition to Georgia residents.

Burner Bob® loves to interact with students and is always up for a road trip, so if you're interested in inviting him to your school, please reach out to The Longleaf Alliance!

A further breakdown of where students gain employment reveals:

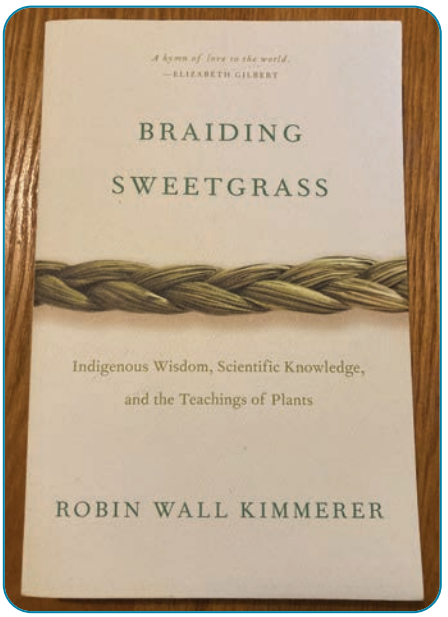
- Approximately 80% of the forestry graduates find employment in private industry for consulting companies, timber companies, or as procurement foresters. The remaining forestry graduates primarily work for the Georgia Forestry Commission.
- Wildlife graduates are primarily employed by state wildlife agencies, especially the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Other employers include private plantations, USDA-Wildlife Services, and conservation organizations such as Quail Forever, The Orianne Society, and The Longleaf Alliance.
- Approximately two-thirds of current Georgia Department of Natural Resources game wardens graduated from ABAC.

For more information, visit www.abac.edu or contact Dr. William Moore at wmoore@abac.edu.

By Robin Wall Kimmerer
Published by Milkweed Editions 2013
Reviewed by Cody Pope, The Longleaf Alliance

Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants

In her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, author and botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer highlights the intertwined relationship between people, plants, and the land through an Indigenous and Western European lens. An enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, Kimmerer draws inspiration from "Skywoman Falling," the shared telling by the original peoples throughout the Great Lakes where sweetgrass, or Wiingaashk, was the very first plant given by Skywoman.

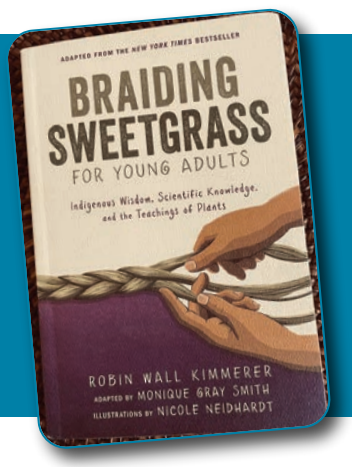


By separating the book into sections of essays based on the process of planting, tending, picking, braiding, and burning sweetgrass, she can tell stories and share knowledge while staying with the overarching theme and making connections to botany, philosophy, and the human experience. The essays cover a myriad of topics, including the Three Sisters garden, pecans, the Honorable Harvest, as well as Kimmerer's experiences as a mother, educator, and community member. The author is skilled at finding silver linings in tough situations and concludes the essays in a humbling manner that makes the reader grateful for the connection to the living world around them.

Kimmerer describes *Braiding Sweetgrass* as "[A] braid of stories ... woven from three strands: Indigenous ways of knowing, scientific knowledge, and the story of an Anishinabekwe scientist trying to bring them together in service to what matters most."

Braiding Sweetgrass received the 2014 Sigurd F. Olson Nature Writing Award and has appeared on several bestseller lists. I recommend this book to anyone who is a fan of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Indigenous ways of knowing, plant science, and a good story. If you're a fan of mosses, I'd also recommend her book *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses*. Look for her newest book later this year, *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Natural Reciprocity in the Natural World*.

"[A] braid of stories ... woven from three strands: Indigenous ways of knowing, scientific knowledge, and the story of an Anishinabekwe scientist trying to bring them together in service to what matters most."



A version of *Braiding Sweetgrass* for young adults is also available. Adapted by Monique Gray Smith with illustrations by Nicole Neidhardt, this revisioning of Kimmerer's words makes the book's concepts accessible to a much wider audience, one that goes beyond age.

By Wendy J. Ledbetter, The Longleaf Alliance

UPCYCLED PAPIER MÂCHÉ WILDLIFE WITH RACHEL ROMMEL-CRUMP

Rachel, how did you begin creating wildlife-inspired papier mâché?

I started working with papier mâché during the COVID-19 pandemic. I had a friend who was sharing her papier mâché art on social media. I thought it looked fun and wanted to apply my love of wildlife to the craft. The first piece I created was a Painted Bunting, and then a spotted salamander as a gift for my husband. Since that time, I've mainly created birds, although I've made everything from a glorious scarab beetle to a monarch butterfly wall hanging.

What materials do you use?

The bases of my papier mâché creations are formed with upcycled/re-used items such as plastic packaging, netting that onions/fruit are often packed in, and cardboard. The materials are then held together and shaped using masking tape. I use repurposed metal wire for hangers on my ornaments. The wire was previously used in my husband's field research to hang acoustic recording devices and wildlife cameras. The creations are then papier mâchéd the old-fashioned way with water, flour, and newspaper. Several layers are added, and each layer must dry completely before adding a new one. Once the birds are dry and strong, they're sanded and hand-painted with acrylic paint. The birds are finished with a clear, water-based glue and a sealer.

How do you create such accurate likenesses?

I use my personal experience observing birds, online photos, and illustrations from my Sibley field guides. They help me create the shape and paint the birds with their distinguishing field marks.

What is your favorite "longleaf" bird, and why?

As they're a specialist and an ambassador for longleaf conservation, my favorite is the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker. However, when visiting a pine forest, I look forward to seeing many of my other favorite birds, such as the Red-headed Woodpecker, Eastern Bluebird, Brown-headed Nuthatch, and Pine Warbler.

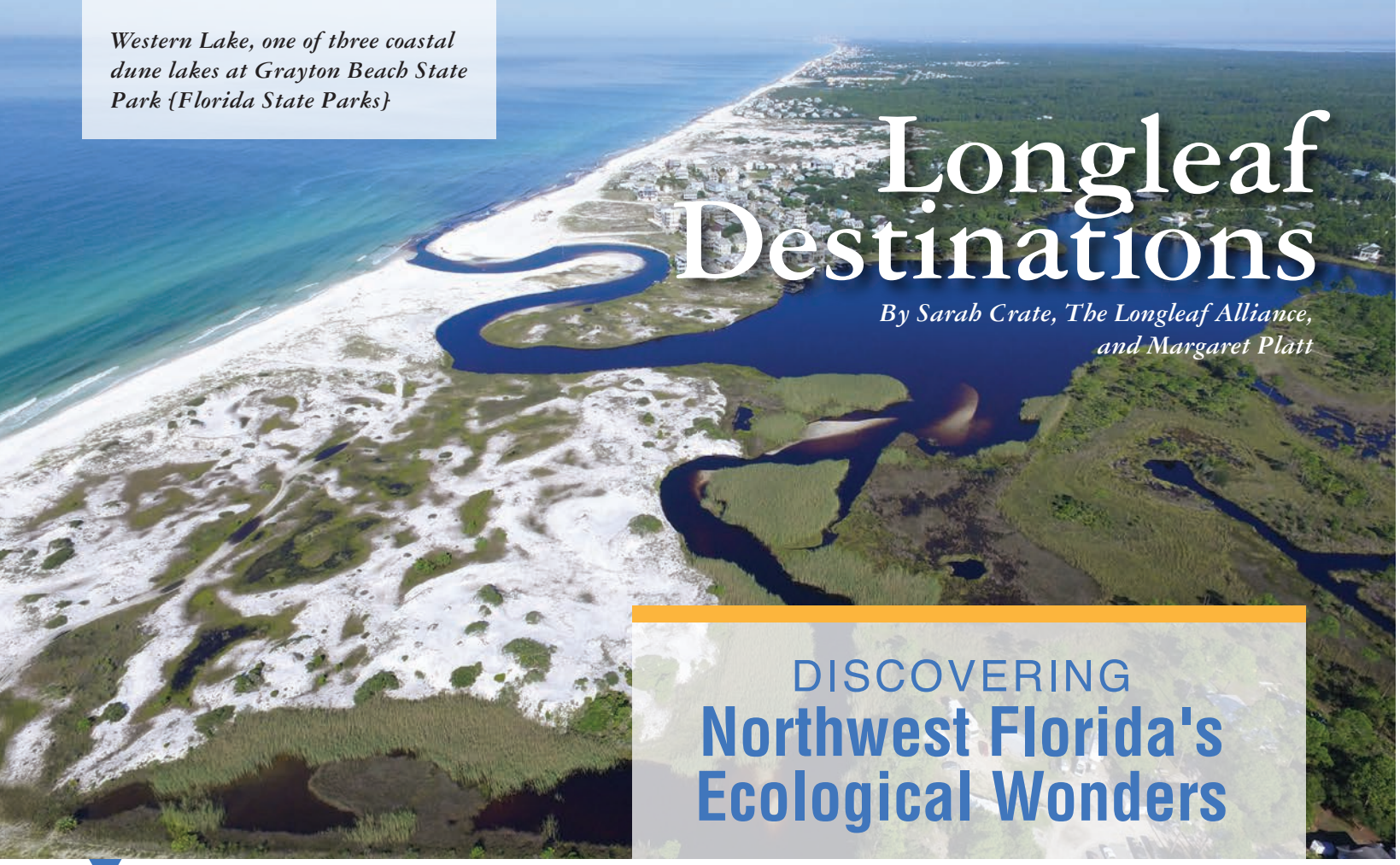
I also have a special place in my heart for reptiles and amphibians. I'm so grateful for folks working in longleaf conservation who provide essential habitat for species such as Louisiana pine snake, gopher tortoise, Eastern indigo snake, frosted flatwoods salamander, and gopher frog.

What is your connection to longleaf?

I spent a large part of my life in Houston, Texas. Pine forests around Houston were a notable habitat of my youth, and later, I spent a lot of time in the East Texas pineywoods both for recreation and work. Many years ago, I worked on black bear education and community outreach, and reptiles, amphibians, and other wildlife research in the Big Thicket National Preserve.

About the Artist

Rachel Rommel-Crump is a consultant working in Texas focusing on public engagement for wildlife/conservation action, strategic communication, policy advocacy, and grant administration. In addition to her conservation consultant work, she serves on the board of the Native Prairies Association of Texas. With her husband, she volunteers for restoration activities at one of the Association's properties to benefit local wildlife and migrating/wintering songbirds.



Western Lake, one of three coastal dune lakes at Grayton Beach State Park {Florida State Parks}

Longleaf Destinations

By Sarah Crate, The Longleaf Alliance, and Margaret Platt

DISCOVERING Northwest Florida's Ecological Wonders

Your travels to the emerald green waters of the Gulf of Mexico in Sandestin, Florida, the destination of the 15th Biennial Conference, may be an incentive to take an extra day or so to discover other interesting sites in the area.

Exploring the GCPEP Landscape

The 15th Biennial Longleaf Conference will bring longleaf enthusiasts to the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP) landscape. Sixteen public and private partners in GCPEP manage more than 1.3 million acres across northwest Florida and southern Alabama, including unique aquatic resources and some of the world's best-remaining longleaf pine ecosystems. We encourage you to explore nearby sites in South Walton County, as well as destinations worth the road trip to surrounding areas.

Topsail Hill Preserve — Paradise in a Florida State Park

Santa Rosa Beach, Florida

Topsail Hill rises like a ship's sails over white sand beaches and the emerald waters of the Gulf of Mexico. The park's namesake is a dune with an elevation of 25 feet above sea level, formed as wind piles up sand that is then trapped by the roots of sea oats and other specially adapted plants. The beaches, dunes, and marshes here have been shaped by wind and water for much of the past two million years. This 1,600-acre Preserve has three miles of pristine beaches and is a prime location for birding and hiking. The State Park offers camping for everyone.

Blackwater River State Park – History & Nature Collide

Holt, Florida

The Blackwater River State Park and the adjacent Blackwater River State Forest are renowned for their historic trams, sawmills, and former timber industry, particularly near Milton, Florida. The geographical distribution of mills along the streams is a fascinating aspect of the Park's history. Rivers have served as vital transportation routes in Florida for over 10,000 years, hinting at the possibility of ancient human activity in this area.

Today, the Park provides many recreational opportunities along the sandy banks of the Blackwater River. Several hundred feet of raised boardwalk trail are accessible from the pavilion parking lot. A Florida Emeritus Champion Tree, an Atlantic white cedar, stands along the boardwalk.

Blackwater River State Park is a key stop on the Great Florida Birding Trail and is home to a diverse range of species, including Mississippi Kites. The successful reintroduction of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker into the Park's longleaf pine is a testament to its conservation efforts.

The Only Place to See this Ecological Treasure in the Southeast

Walton County is home to 15 named coastal dune lakes along 26 miles of the Scenic Highway 30A coastline. These lakes are a unique geographical feature only found in Madagascar, Australia, New Zealand, Oregon, and Northwest Florida.

Coastal dune lakes share an intermittent connection with the Gulf of Mexico. Streams, groundwater seepage, rain, and storm surges feed the lake water. During periods of high water, an opening to the Gulf called an outfall mixes fresh and salt water, forming temporary estuaries and nursery grounds. The lakes vary from entirely fresh to significantly saline. The changing water chemistry in the coastal dune lakes makes them dynamic, biologically diverse ecosystems.

There are many things to do on and around the dune lakes, such as camping, boating, fishing, paddling, biking, hiking, and more. State lands bordering dunes lakes provide great access and recreational options; Topsail Hill Preserve State Park, Grayton Beach State Park, Deer Lake State Park, and Point Washington State Forest all offer unique views of the lakes, and wonderful spots for birding.

Point Washington State Forest – Longleaf Greenway

Santa Rosa Beach, Florida

During the fall months, the array of wildflowers in bloom offers visitors to Point Washington State Forest a colorful journey. One of the highlights of this state forest is the Longleaf Greenway Trail - a 14.2-mile out-and-back trail. The Eastern Lake Trails offer additional mountain biking, birding, and hiking loops of varying lengths. There is a day-use fee to enter from sunrise to sunset, so make sure you come prepared.

Bike, Hike, & More – Extensive Trail Networks Await

South Walton County alone has more than 200 miles of hiking and biking trails. A broader look across the GCPEP landscape opens a myriad of options, many of which are tied into the Florida National Scenic Trail, thanks to the outstanding efforts to connect critical conservation lands.

In addition to the natural trails offered in the area, visitors may enjoy Timpoochee Trail, named after Timpoochee Kinnard, influential Chief of the Euchee tribe. Running 18.5 miles along Scenic Highway 30A, this paved trail is open to pedestrians and bikers and offers views of 12 of the 15 coastal dune lakes.

Art and nature lovers alike will enjoy the Monarch Art Trail, a one-mile paved path featuring eight original sculptures to celebrate the annual migration of monarch butterflies. The Cultural Arts Alliance offers a self-guided audio tour (using your mobile phone) where you can learn about the pieces and artists. The trail runs parallel to South Watersound Parkway between Highways 30A and 98 and is accessible via Timpoochee Trail.

Defending Our Natural Resources

Department of Defense (DoD) lands in the GCPEP landscape support immense biodiversity and provide key habitat connectivity while meeting their national defensive

▲ *Gulf of Mexico's picturesque Emerald Coast, named for its clear blue-green waters {Guy Zimmerman}*

◀ *Longleaf Greenway Trail at Point Washington State Forest {Florida Hikes}*

▲ *The U.S. Navy Blue Angels have called Naval Air Station Pensacola home since 1955 and can be seen practicing on select days throughout the year. Additionally, formal airshows take place here in July and November. {Heather Cassida}*

mission. Six important installations and ranges call the region home, including Eglin and Tyndall Air Force Bases, Pensacola and Whiting Field Naval Air Stations, Hurlburt Field, and Naval Support Activity Panama City. Visiting the unique natural areas of these properties is not always possible considering their military activities; instead, consider a visit to these fascinating facilities in the area that are open to the public. Be sure to check each website for visiting hours and access requirements.

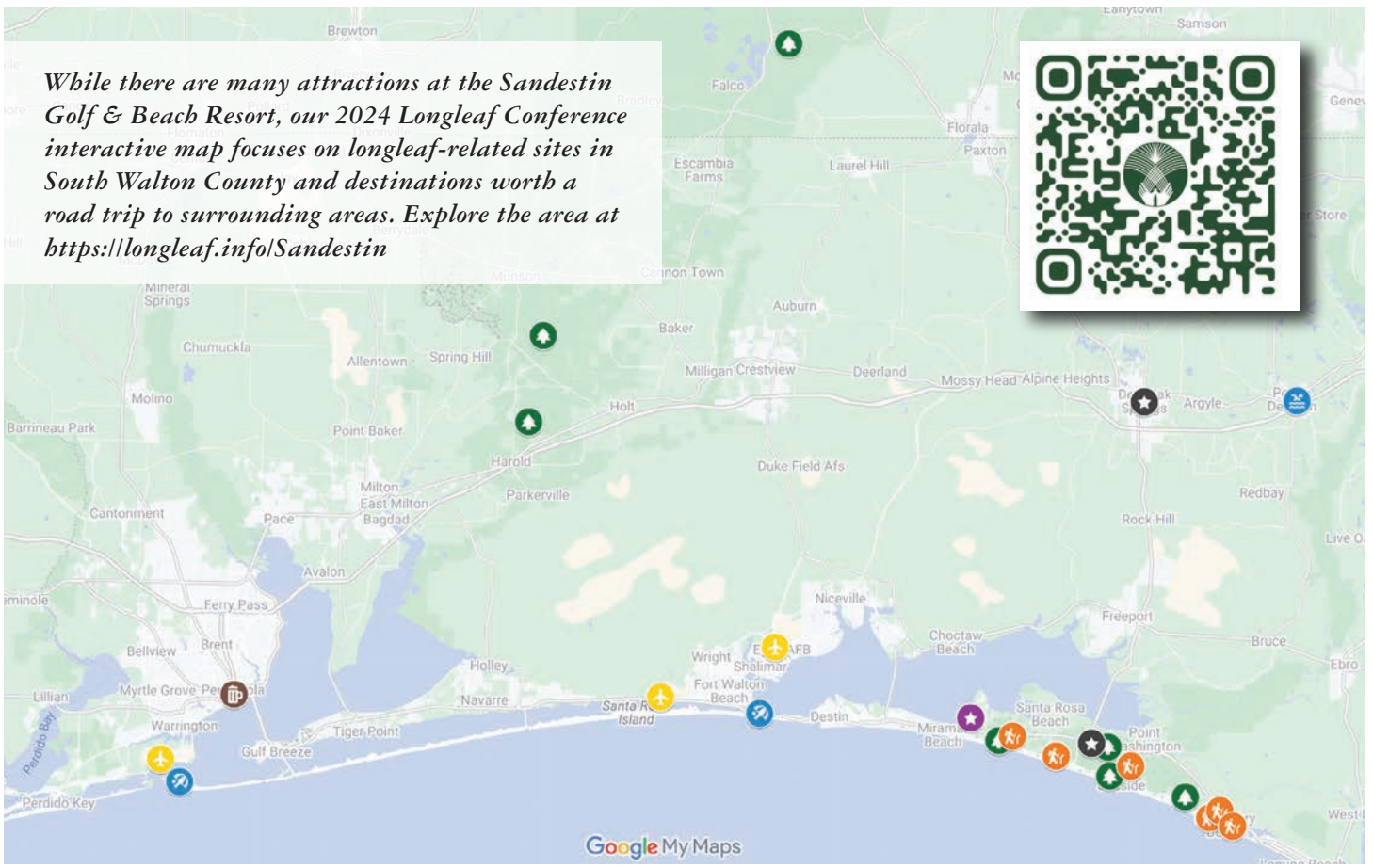
The National Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola is the world's largest naval aviation museum. Discover over 4,000 artifacts and over 150 beautifully restored aircraft representing Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard aviation. Civilian visitors must use the West Gate and show identification to enter Naval Air Station Pensacola. Admission is free.

Explore the Hurlburt Field Memorial Air Park, which reopened this year after over two decades, allowing visitors to experience the history and legacy of Air Force Special Operations Command firsthand. Located west of Fort Walton Beach, this outdoor park is a place of remembrance and celebration through exhibits and displays. Each legendary and incredible aircraft represents a chapter in our military history. Public restrooms, water, and trash bins are not available.

The Air Force Armament Museum is a military aviation museum adjacent to Eglin Air Force Base in Valparaiso, Florida. Driving onto the grounds, visitors will see an array of aircraft on display. The fastest plane ever built, the SR-71 Blackbird is the centerpiece flanked by numerous planes from World War II, Korean, Vietnam, and Gulf War eras. There are over 29 different aircraft at the Museum. It is supported by the private, non-profit Air Force Armament Museum Foundation. Admission is free. Tours are self-guided. Photography is permitted and encouraged.

For a historical perspective, the Gulf Islands National Seashore offers multiple sites. In addition to camping and beach access, visitors can explore historic structures like Fort Pickens, Battery Cooper, and Battery Worth. The Naval Live Oaks area has a wonderful display depicting how longleaf and live oak were used to build naval ships in the early 1800s and how protection of these resources became vital for national security. Entrance fees or a National Park pass are required for the Gulf Islands National Seashore, which includes six areas in Florida and six in Mississippi.

A. Looking out on the Choctawhatchee Bay {Karen Zilliox Brown} B. Topsail Hill Preserve State Park {Alexander Hatley, CC BY 2.0} C. Kaleidoscope*, a 12-foot tall figure made of 304 stainless steel butterflies by Jonathan Burger, is one of eight sculptures on the Monarch Art Trail. {Moon Creek Studio, courtesy of Cultural Arts Alliance}*



CELEBRATING OUR LONGLEAF LEADERS

The Regional Longleaf Awards Program, offered in conjunction with the Biennial Longleaf Conference, recognizes individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to longleaf restoration and conservation across the southeastern U.S. Award recipients will be recognized at the 15th Biennial Longleaf Conference held at the Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort in Miramar Beach, Florida, on Wednesday, October 9, 2024.

INDIVIDUAL AWARD RECIPIENTS

BILL BOYER NATURAL RESOURCE PROFESSIONAL

JON SCOTT
NATIONAL FISH & WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

Jon Scott plays a crucial role in managing NFWF's Longleaf Landscape Stewardship Fund. Jon's efforts have significantly increased funding available for longleaf pine restoration with new partners like the Bezos Earth Fund. He encourages partners to find novel and ambitious ways to address shortcomings in our collective work, and his leadership elevates longleaf efforts across the landscape. Jon is a passionate conservationist and a valuable asset to the longleaf community.

EMERGING LEADER

Lauren Pharr is a Ph.D. candidate in Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology at North Carolina State University researching the impacts of climate change on brood reduction in the Red-cockaded Woodpecker.

At the same time, Pharr participates in many initiatives to promote diversity in nature and field safety. She is co-founder of the nonprofit Field Inclusive, which seeks to support marginalized and historically underrepresented minorities who work in the natural science field. Lauren is actively involved in science communication, including serving as editor for an upcoming book on Inclusive Nature.

LAUREN PHARR
NC STATE UNIVERSITY & FIELD INCLUSIVE

GJERSTAD/JOHNSON LANDOWNER OF THE YEAR

Doug and Teresa Moore own and actively manage South Prong Plantation in Northeast Florida as a multi-use timber operation that integrates prescribed fire, diverse groundcover, and wildlife habitat. Mr. Moore's dedication has turned this property into a prime example of forest stewardship featuring longleaf pine. The Moores are true champions of longleaf pine ecosystems on private lands, hosting numerous education events for landowners and youth.

DOUG & TERESA MOORE
SOUTH PRONG PLANTATION

BURNER BOB® PRESCRIBED FIRE CHAMPION

BILL RIVERS
THE NATURE CONSERVANCY, LOUISIANA

Bill Rivers has been a leader in prescribed fire for The Nature Conservancy in Louisiana and Mississippi since 2000. Of the 200+ fire operations he has led, many were in the wildland/urban interface along the Gulf Coast, requiring technical expertise in a challenging landscape. Bill mentors new fire leaders and offers guidance to conservation professionals across the country.

TRUE LONGLEAF CHAMPION

BRUCE HAGEDORN
EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE NATURAL RESOURCES

Bruce Hagedorn, Chief of Natural Resources at Eglin Air Force Base, has dedicated 33 years to preserving Florida's ecosystems. His leadership in the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership and efforts in recovering species like the Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Okaloosa darter have been pivotal. Eglin's military mission is top priority, yet Bruce's team excels in longleaf pine restoration, prescribed fire, and wildlife programs, transforming the Air Force base into a model for longleaf ecosystem management and restoration.

TRUE LONGLEAF CHAMPION

Mike Oliver's career spans six decades, focusing on forest conservation in the southeastern U.S. He played a key role in initiatives like the Wetlands Reserve Program, the Longleaf Pine Initiative, and the Shortleaf Pine Initiative, collaborating with numerous partners. His work with NRCS in Texas and Tennessee emphasized ecosystem restoration and prescribed fire. Recently retired, Mike is recognized for his lifetime dedication to forest conservation in the South.

MIKE OLIVER
NRCS STATE FORESTER "RETIRED"
TEXAS AND TENNESSEE

2024 REGIONAL LONGLEAF AWARDS

"The Regional Longleaf Awards allow us to shine a light on the individuals and organizations that are making meaningful contributions to the overall longleaf restoration effort. We are honored to recognize such a well-deserving group of award recipients this year and show our appreciation for their dedication to this ecosystem that we all love," said Carol Denhof, President of The Longleaf Alliance.

CONSERVATION PARTNER RECIPIENTS

Forest Investment Associates — The Palustris Corporate Achievement

FIA's commitment to sustainable timberland management benefits clients and the global environment by simultaneously enhancing timber production and protecting forestland resources. FIA fully subscribes to the National Alliance of Forest Owners® Commitment to Sustainable Forest Management and manages all properties according to their own Stewardship Policy. FIA has been a supporter and Corporate Conservation Partner of The Longleaf Alliance for twenty-five years. Their commitment to ensuring a sustainable future for the longleaf pine ecosystem is significant and long-standing.

Nonprofit Conservation Partner — Trust for Public Land™

The Trust for Public Land creatively secures funding and successfully completes complex land protection projects. In Northwest Florida, they have protected over 13,000 acres of Wolfe Creek Forest, now part of Blackwater River State Forest, and preserved 1,000 acres near military lands, now managed by Santa Rosa County, providing crucial wetland and rare species habitat. The Trust's mission is, "We create parks and protect land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come." Their work will be evident to everyone who enjoys and benefits from these natural areas in the years to come.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TEAM ACHIEVEMENT

Fort Stewart/Hunter Army Airfield Environmental & Natural Resources Division

Fort Stewart/Hunter Army Airfield is the largest Army installation east of the Mississippi River. With 285,000 acres under their management, the Environmental & Natural Resources Division excels in prescribed fire, habitat restoration, and species recovery programs, contributing significantly to environmental protection and ecosystem conservation.

USDA FOREST SERVICE TEAM ACHIEVEMENT

Francis Marion National Forest & Santee Experimental Forest

The Santee Experimental Forest, located within the Francis Marion National Forest in South Carolina, is pioneering research and longleaf pine restoration at the watershed scale. The Forests prioritize knowledge sharing and partner engagement to bridge the gap between research and on-the-ground efforts to restore the landscape.

USDA United States Department of Agriculture — East Texas Plant Materials Center

Natural Resources Conservation Service

The mission of the East Texas Plant Materials Center is to develop plant-based solutions for conservation needs in the western coastal plain through the selection of native plants, plant-based technology development, and public outreach and education. Currently, the Center is focused on understory species for longleaf and shortleaf pine habitat restoration, working closely with the East Texas Natives Program. This collaboration and the many other roles of the East Texas Plant Materials Center are crucial in supporting private landowners who are implementing groundcover restoration.

Georgia Partners for Fish & Wildlife

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program is a national program from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that restores and enhances wildlife habitats through technical assistance and cost-sharing opportunities for private landowners. Since 2002, the Georgia Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program has impacted nearly 29,000 acres across 228 projects. These efforts include planting longleaf pine, promoting prescribed fire, and controlling invasive vegetation. The restoration projects benefit both landowners and endemic species like the American chaffseed, Eastern indigo snake, gopher tortoise, and Bachman's Sparrow.

The Board of Directors Welcomes New Chair and Members

The Longleaf Alliance is pleased to announce Dr. William "Bill" Owen as the next chair of the Board of Directors. He succeeded Amanda Haralson, who served in this role since the fall of 2022.

William Owen is an accomplished musician and author whose interest in longleaf pine began when he inherited the family farm in Virginia. He has since planted over 1,200 acres of longleaf on his property, Raccoon Creek Pinelands. In addition to five years of service on TLA's board, Owen was inspired to encourage the next generation of longleaf leaders by endowing The Owen Fellowship for advanced studies and research in the longleaf pine ecosystem.

Joining Board leadership as Vice Chair is **Patrick Franklin**. Patrick is the Vice President of Special Operations at Bartlett Tree Experts and forest landowner in North Carolina. He has served on The Alliance's board since 2019.

The Alliance extends a heartfelt thank you to Past Chair **Amanda Haralson** for her leadership. We look forward to carrying on our work together as she continues to serve on the Board of Directors. Our gratitude also goes to **Mickey Parker** and **Mac Rhodes** for their contributions from 2018-24.

The Alliance also welcomes two new members. Holly Henderson and Scott Mooney began their terms on October 1st.

Holly Henderson is a fourth-generation East Texas landowner. Holly and her two sisters collectively own multiple functioning pine plantations around East Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Florida, with their primary focus in East Texas. They approach land management with the goal of maintaining a healthy balance between economic growth and implementing sustainable forest management best practices. The Henderson family is passionate about longleaf pine conservation and wildlife preservation and has worked with the National Wild Turkey Federation and Texas Parks and Wildlife to re-establish the Wild Turkey population in Angelina County. Through this partnership, the Family introduced close to 100 turkeys onto their property over the last four years. They are also working with a start-up company to research the effects of natural fungal biomes in inoculated seedlings while promoting carbon sequestration through their forests. Holly's true love is being in the natural world, hiking, hunting, fishing, and enjoying the quiet solitude of the forests. When not in East Texas, Holly follows her love of the wild outdoors through travel. She looks forward to further supporting The Longleaf Alliance through her service on the Board of Directors.

Scott Mooney is the Senior Vice President of Acquisitions for Resource Management Service, a leading Timberland Investment Management Organization (TIMO), managing over 2 million acres of timberland in the southern U.S. and Brazil on behalf of its investor partners. In this role, he is responsible for sourcing and closing new acquisitions, strategic divestitures, and conservation transactions. Throughout his career in the TIMO industry, dating back to the early 2000s, Scott has helped source and close 80 forest transactions for institutional and high-net-worth investors, encompassing nearly 3 million acres. He has also worked on numerous large-scale landscape conservation projects, including longleaf pine restoration initiatives in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, and Virginia. His first exposure to the longleaf ecosystem was as a forestry intern at the Fort Stewart–Hunter Army Airfield in southeast Georgia. Scott graduated from the University of Georgia's Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, earning a Master of Forest Resources in Forest Business Management and a Bachelor of Science in Forest Resources. Scott currently serves on the board of the Forest Landowners Association and the Dean's Advisory Committee at the University of Georgia Warnell School. He resides in Greenville, South Carolina with his wife and three daughters.

Taproots

A LEGACY PROGRAM OF THE LONGLEAF ALLIANCE

WHAT CAN WE DO TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Not just today, but for tomorrow, what will our legacy be?

In 2020, The Longleaf Alliance launched 'Taproots a Legacy Program' to perpetuate longleaf pine throughout its range. Just as the noted taproot contributes to the strength and superiority of longleaf, The Alliance seeks a founding group of strength-giving individuals who have committed, or will commit, to make a bequest to The Longleaf Alliance through their will or estate plan. Together we are celebrating our past, but more importantly, we are creating a solid foundation not only for the future of the organization but support for protecting and promoting our cherished longleaf ecosystem.

When you notify The Alliance of your planned gift, either in the form of a bequest, retirement plan or insurance policy, you become a member of 'Taproots a Legacy Program' of The Longleaf Alliance. This is an inclusive program; no gift amount is too small - nor too large. Members are visionaries who demonstrate their confidence in the mission of The Longleaf Alliance by creating a legacy beyond their lifetimes to help insure the future of longleaf and The Alliance. Gifts in any amount can be designated to 'The Longleaf Alliance Endowment Fund.'

It is our desire to appropriately thank and recognize donors now for their sustaining gifts to be made in the future. Taproots members may self-identify or remain anonymous per the comfort level of the donor. Donors will be recognized in print and at select events.

To name The Longleaf Alliance as a beneficiary, please include the following information:

Legal Name: THE LONGLEAF ALLIANCE INC
Address: 12130 Dixon Center Road Andalusia, AL 36420-7161
Tax Identification Number: 75-3263645

If you have already included us in your planned gifts, please contact us at 314-288-5654 or Lynnsey@longleafalliance.org.

By Lynnsey Basala, The Longleaf Alliance

The Longleaf Alliance's Annual Giving Campaign

October 1 – December 31

Help Us Reach Our $140,000 Goal!

On behalf of our staff and Board of Directors, we are excited to officially launch the 2024 Annual Giving Campaign this month.

By participating in TLA's one major campaign in 2024, you are allowing our organization to dream beyond grant deliverables and work throughout the Southeast to guide restoration, stewardship, and conservation of the longleaf ecosystem.

We are looking to the future of longleaf by collaborating with our partners to develop systems that scale up our restoration efforts and better deliver ecosystem benefits. We are also focusing on the following bottlenecks that are currently limiting regional longleaf efforts:

- Facilitating improvements throughout the longleaf supply chain to develop a Premium Product Market
- Identifying where longleaf supports and enhances ecosystem service markets
- Improving longleaf seedling quantity and quality to accelerate restoration and create better products

Your year-end consideration is vital as we embark on new challenges, work strategically, aggressively pursue our goals, and take longleaf to the next level.

You should have received mail detailing our collective successes over the past year. If you are unable to locate the annual campaign letter and contribution form, please complete the remittance form enclosed in this Fall Issue and mail your donation to our office headquarters. Thank you for taking the time to review this piece and supporting The Alliance's mission, thus speeding the restoration of the longleaf pine ecosystem.

Every little bit helps.

"Though I started basket coiling as therapy, it turned into a movement with an informal group of kindred spirits. I now travel the state of Louisiana preaching the gospel of the longleaf pine forests. We support the conservation efforts as members of The Longleaf Alliance by raising awareness of the critically endangered longleaf forest ecosystem through lecturing, teaching, and demonstrating the art and craft of basket making."

Geraldine Zelinsky,
Founder of Northwestern Louisiana Basket Makers

By Amanda Haralson, Past Chair, Board of Directors of The Longleaf Alliance

In decades of serving and leading Boards of Directors for nonprofit organizations as well as my own career in the nonprofit sector, serving on the Board of Directors of The Longleaf Alliance continues to be a stellar experience. **From the founding Board and early staff through current staff and Directors who serve as volunteers, The Alliance epitomizes the beauty and accomplishments of people passionately committed to preserving and re-establishing the diverse, mystical, fire-dependent ecosystem of the longleaf pine – the tree that built America.** Providing leadership and working respectfully and collaboratively with other nonprofits, public, private, and corporate sector entities, universities, and individual landowners is a complex endeavor the staff of The Alliance manages artfully. From Board governance and approval of planning strategy through implementation by staff, the passion for this ecosystem and the mission of The Longleaf Alliance guides every decision, providing an overarching sense of unity and shared purpose.

Three elements of The Alliance that I find impressive are 1) the decentralized delivery of services across the nine-state region, which reduces operating costs while still enabling boots-on-the-ground from Virginia into east Texas, 2) the increased utilization of technology for the delivery of services, and 3) the investment of effort in the Board nominating process – the lifeblood of a nonprofit organization.

Of note in recent years is

- the clarity of messaging and communication, growth of financial contributions to The Alliance along with growth in grant support, and awareness of the need to increase the endowment yet more to assist with the ever-present need for general operating support;
- the forward thinking work of the Board Committees;
- the Owen Fellowship to recognize young scholars increasing scientific knowledge relevant to the preservation of the longleaf ecosystem;
- the increased emphasis on accountability and performance metrics to move steadily toward more awareness and greater understanding; more acres planted, preserved, and re-established; more habitat improved and diverse forests conserved; and more ecosystems increased.

The role The Longleaf Alliance plays in calling attention to the effectiveness of the longleaf ecosystem in protecting water quality, recharging aquifers, and combatting climate change is particularly important.

As I transition from Chair to the position of Past Chair, I do so with gratitude for the opportunity to lead and with confidence in my talented fellow Directors who govern with respect, vision, integrity, and commitment. Chair William Owen brings boundless enthusiasm and a can-do spirit to inspire and deliver for the future. Most importantly, an expression of thankfulness to the Leadership Team of The Longleaf Alliance: Carol Denhof, Ad Platt, Lynnsey Basala, David Padgett, and ALL staff, members, donors, and funders – especially the unsung heroes who understand the importance of funding general operating costs!