

G.U.I.D.E.-ing Longleaf Toward a Sustainable Future



Alliance staff members on a prescribed burn at Blackwater River State Forest (Julianne, Haley, Abe, Kaiden, & Jacob)

2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND SUCCESSES from The Longleaf Alliance

The Longleaf Alliance's G.U.I.D.E.-ing framework (Growing - Understanding - Improving - Diverse - Ecosystems) identifies our key strategic objectives to ensure a sustainable future for longleaf pine ecosystems. In 2024, Alliance staff, board, members, and conservation partners have many collective successes to celebrate, from Texas to Virginia.

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

Longleaf Forever, a short documentary film, made its public YouTube debut in 2024. Quickly reaching over 10,000 views, The Alliance's YouTube channel blew its previous watch record out of the water. *Longleaf Forever* was created by Magic Kumquat Productions and produced in partnership with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources T.E.R.N.

A six-month "Saving Our Savannas" educational series hosted by the North Carolina Botanical Garden had more than 3,000 participants registered at one of the 50+ programs, and online recordings have 3,000+ viewings. The Longleaf Alliance (TLA) was a partner serving on the Steering Committee with four TLA representatives serving as featured speakers (Dr. William Owen, Sarah Crate, Ad Platt, and former board member Julie Moore).

Burner Bob® the Bobwhite Quail, TLA's iconic mascot promoting the benefits of prescribed fire, had a very busy year, attending more than 15 in-person events and partaking in his first "Burner Bob® Goes to College."

UNDERSTANDING — We collect and share technical information about longleaf through science-based education,

outreach, and technical assistance, adjusting our methods to benefit each audience.

In addition to hosting the 15th Biennial Longleaf Conference in Florida in the fall, Alliance staff kept very full calendars all year with more than 275 technical assists to landowners and partners and reaching approximately 11,750 people through workshops, field days, learn and burns, webinars, and academies.

Longleaf Academy Program

With support from our partners, TLA staff offered six Academy sessions in 2024. Along with our core course offerings, we were thrilled to incorporate new learning opportunities into the program this year. In March, The Longleaf Alliance partnered with the Poarch Band of Creek Indians and The Nature Conservancy to bring a Longleaf 101 Academy to Perdido River Farms in Atmore, Alabama. Highlights included a tour of tribal lands where longleaf has been restored, and a visit to the PRT nursery, where managers took the class through the production line for longleaf seedlings.

Fire & Longleaf 301: Beyond the Black, was produced in cooperation with Tall Timbers in May of 2024. This new Academy curriculum was designed to attract highly experienced fire practitioners, landowners, and professionals alike. The course featured talks on developments in fire science, panel discussions, field tours, and growing season demonstration burns. The Wade Research Foundation funded the development of this advanced Fire & Longleaf Academy.



A.



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C.



D.



E.

A. James Agerton, Poarch Creek natural resources manager, guiding a tour of tribal forestry lands for Longleaf 101 Academy participants (Ad Platt) B. Fire 301, a new Academy Program debuted in 2024 (Jacob Barrett) C. Prescribed fire demonstration with the Aiken Prescribed Fire Cooperative (Bennett Tucker) D. TLA staff and family members at the “Pints for Pines” volunteer planting event with Three Rivers Land Trust and Appalachian Mountain Brewery. Sales from AMB’s Long Leaf IPA support TLA tree planting fund. (Sarah Crate) E. Cogongrass outreach at a student Farm Day in Alabama. (Emma McKee)

Climate Smart Forestry

The Longleaf Alliance released *Managing Longleaf Pine Forests for our Future: A Longleaf Pine Climate-Smart Guide* in partnership with Clemson University and The Nature Conservancy. The guide helps define climate-smart management for longleaf forests and describes practices landowners can do to meet their objectives while also providing wildlife benefits and sequestering carbon. Several webinars also occurred highlighting the Guide and climate-smart principles like carbon markets, longleaf conversion using underplanting, and forest management for storm resilience.

The Owen Fellowship

In 2024, the second Owen Fellowship was awarded to Ian Warr, master's student at the University of Georgia, to support his investigation of physiological processes in longleaf pine, specifically to unravel the role of belowground non-structural carbohydrate reserves in its early life history stages. The Owen Fellowship of The Longleaf Alliance aims to advance longleaf pine research through a \$20,000 scholarship award for a graduate student. Recipients participate in the Biennial Longleaf Conference and contribute to *The Longleaf Leader*. As a two-year award, the application period for the 2026-2027 Fellowship will be announced in April 2025..

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

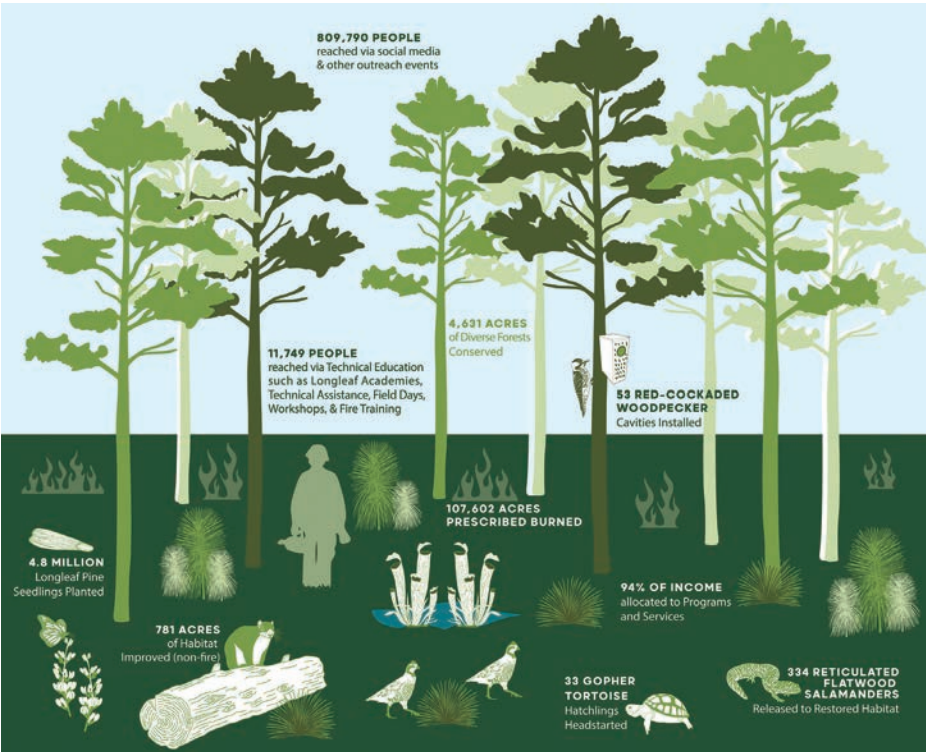
Aiken Prescribed Fire Cooperative

The Aiken Prescribed Fire Cooperative (APFC) was established to assist landowners and community members in accomplishing more prescribed burning in the South Carolina counties of Aiken, Barnwell, and Edgefield. Its mission is to promote safe and effective prescribed burning to enhance natural resources, reduce wildfire risk, and support land management goals within these counties by sharing resources, such as knowledge, equipment, and personnel. Members from The Longleaf Alliance, Hitchcock Woods Foundation, Clemson Extension, Tall Timbers, SC Forestry Commission, and Aiken Soil and Water Conservation District, as well as several landowners, meet monthly and act as a steering committee for the APFC to develop bylaws and file Articles of Incorporation as a marketing/educational cooperative, as a South Carolina charity, and as a 501(c)3. APFC has organized several workshops, including Developing a Burn Plan, Establishing Fire Breaks, and Learn & Burns. The group elected a Board of Directors at the first annual meeting on Sept 24, 2024. APFC plans to conduct additional workshops and training events this winter to build a network of knowledgeable and confident burners. APFC’s success can be attributed largely to the SoLo-ACE (South Lowcountry and ACE Basin) Longleaf Partnership, which has built trust among the partners and landowners for many years.



F. Touring the PRT nursery's longleaf production in Alabama {Ad Platt}

G. AMBBIS team members processing samples from a restored wetland {Samantha Dillon}



Ambystoma bishopi (AMBBIS) teams continued to assist partners with prescribed fire, invasive species control, wetland restoration, reticulated flatwood salamander recovery, Red-cockaded Woodpecker cavities, and other habitat improvement activities in Alabama and Florida.

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

Shaws Creek Preserve in Aiken County, South Carolina was officially conserved through a conservation easement. TLA fulfilled a critical need by covering due diligence expenses related to the 2,658-acre conservation easement transaction. The 92-acre Mason Branch reservoir which is surrounded by the Preserve provides critical drinking water for 25% of the City of Aiken residents. The Longleaf Alliance, Aiken Land Conservancy, and the City of Aiken will continue to collaborate to restore longleaf pine. This project is a prime example of how longleaf pine forests protect drinking water.

Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership Landscape

This year marked five years since the Cogongrass Partnership took shape in Northwest Florida and southern Alabama. The project started with part-time TLA staff support and grew to being led by an Invasive Species Coordinator, Emma McKee, and Invasive Species Technician, Joel Lett. Milestones include:

- 6,554 miles of right-of-ways (ROW) surveyed for cogongrass infestations
- 14,021 acres of land surveyed for invasive species
- 1,540 individual cogongrass infestations identified, leading to a total of 108.95 acres of cogongrass treated
- Additional invasives treated – 7.64 acres of Japanese climbing fern, 7.1 acres of kudzu, 742 Chinese tallow trees, and 193 mimosa trees.

But the work did not stop in the woods; over 41,000 people were reached through education and outreach efforts including meetings, presentations, tours, events, interviews, and social media posts. Amplifying the impact of this work even further, private landowners are becoming ambassadors of the invasive species control effort.

The Alliance is extremely proud of the Invasive Species staff and GCPEP field teams' hard work to support the stewardship of the landscape. The Ecosystem Support Team (EST) and

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

The Longleaf Alliance, working in collaboration with restoration partners, supported the planting of 5.8 million longleaf pine seedlings on 10,558 acres during the 2023-2024 planting season. Projects were completed on both private and public land, with funding from American Forests, Arbor Day Foundation, Enviva, National Forest Foundation, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, and USFWS Partners Program. We also continued our tree planting program with Appalachian Mountain Brewing.