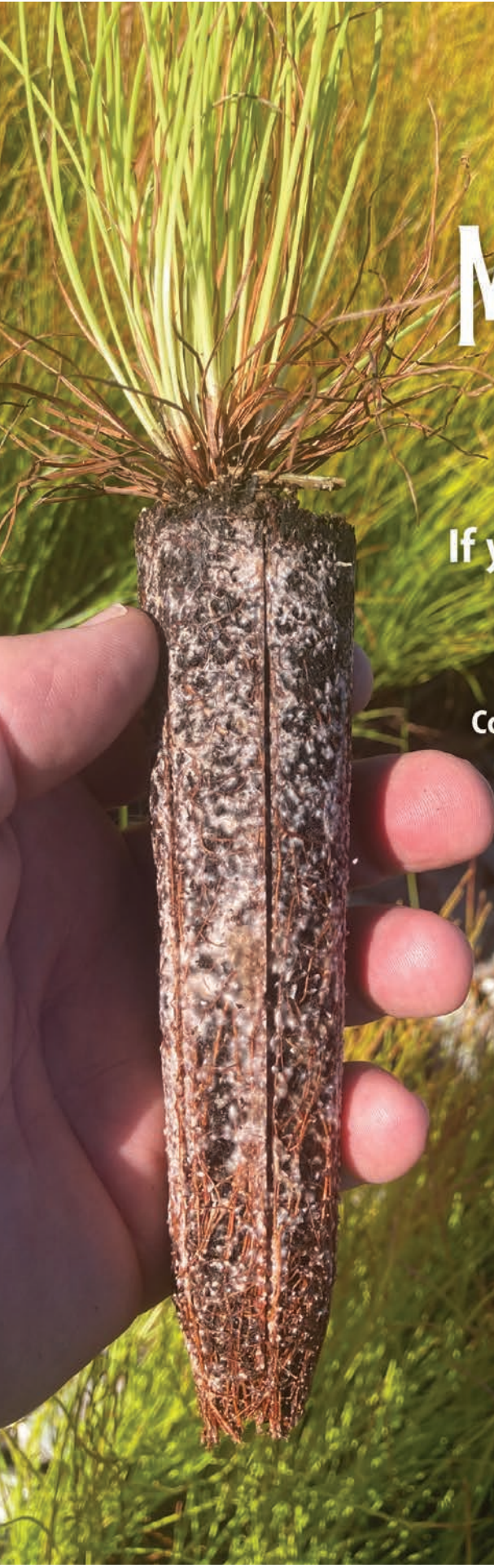




THE LONGLEAF LEADER

XVIII — ISSUE 2

SUMMER 2025



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PUBLISHER The Longleaf Alliance **EDITOR** Sarah Crate

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DESIGN Bellhouse Publishing

ADVERTISING Sarah Crate – sarah@longleafalliance.org

COVER Burning around Red-cockaded Woodpecker cavity trees protects these valuable resources during prescribed fire operations at Blackwater River State Forest in Florida. [Jacob Barrett]

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.



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

OUR LONGLEAF MOMENTUM



FROM THE PRESIDENT

With this Summer issue of *The Longleaf Leader*, we continue to celebrate 30 years of The Longleaf Alliance by highlighting longleaf restoration that has occurred during the last 30 years as well as sharing work that is happening now to ensure that longleaf continues to be a forest recovery priority moving forward.

Everyone who has contributed to longleaf pine conservation and restoration since 1995 has much to be proud of. We have made incremental strides towards bringing back this special ecosystem, one stand at a time. In the beginning, there was plenty to learn about this species and its particular requirements for establishment and management. Through trial and error and important research conducted by The Longleaf Alliance, universities, institutions like Tall Timbers and the Jones Center at Ichauway, we have gathered momentum in reaching our goal of eight million acres of longleaf in the Southeast. Since we began guiding forest owners in their longleaf efforts, we have found that peer-to-peer learning is one of the best ways to share information and expand impact. In the Landowner Corner section of this issue, we hear from landowners about lessons learned from their 30-year-old stands, along with their motivations for restoring the longleaf pine ecosystem. Many of you who are Longleaf Alliance members will identify with their experiences and have

mentored or set your own example for other landowners in your community.

It is exciting to see how far we have come with longleaf, but it is equally exciting to see the possibilities for the future. The Alliance is grateful to be coordinating the development of improved longleaf pine genetics along with our partners at universities, private nurseries, and state and federal agencies. This foundational work is critical to our future restoration efforts across the range. Without high-quality seedling material, we cannot meet our long-term shared regional goals. In Research Notes, Trevor Walker, a partner from NC State, provides us with an update on our collaborative tree improvement work that is being conducted through their Cooperative Tree Improvement Program.

Considerable progress is being made by each and every one of our partners that are spread out over the nine-state range of longleaf. *The Longleaf Leader* allows us to shine a light on the accomplishments and share the best practices employed by local implementation teams, landowners, and other partners. This is just one of the reasons why I love this publication so much. Sharing this information with you, our members, directly supports our strategies of raising awareness and increasing the understanding of treasured longleaf pine ecosystems. I hope that you get as much out of it as I do! Happy Summer!

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Kelly Petersen

2022-2024 Award Recipient

Using advanced genomic techniques on tissue samples from old-growth longleaf pine trees, Kelly will characterize molecular genetic diversity and population differentiation across the species range to inform restoration and conservation efforts.

*Ph.D. Student in Ecology
at the University of Georgia*



Ian Warr

2024-2026 Award Recipient

Ian's research aims to unravel poorly understood physiological processes in longleaf pine, specifically the role of below ground non-structural carbohydrate (NSC) reserves in its early life history stages.

*Graduate Student in
Forestry & Natural Resources
at the University of Georgia*

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[Longleafalliance.org](https://longleafalliance.org) > Education & Outreach

MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST | SUMMER

EVALUATE YOUNG LONGLEAF STANDS

- **Inspect recent longleaf plantings** and plan future treatments as needed.
- **Mow or spray problematic species** such as crabgrass, coffee weed, partridge pea, hairy indigo, and other emergent weeds. Old fields seldom burn well until there is sufficient grass cover to carry a fire.

PREPARE FOR PLANTING LONGLEAF

- **Secure soil samples** from crop fields or pastures planned for longleaf restoration.
- **Check for hardpans** on former agricultural sites. If amelioration is needed, subsoil (rip) when dry; do so early enough to allow time and repeated rains to settle the furrow before planting.
- If you haven't yet, **order your longleaf seedlings now!** Find a list of preferred nurseries at longleafalliance.org.
- Secure contractors for **chemical site-prep treatments**. Proper timing of application yields better results. Foliar-active herbicides such as glyphosate should be applied to actively growing pasture grasses at their most receptive stage. If targeting waxy species, triclopyr may be applied now or delayed until after the first frost to minimize impact on herbaceous groundcover.

TACKLE INVASIVE SPECIES PROBLEMS

- **Repeated herbicide applications** are likely necessary to combat invasives such as kudzu, cogongrass, bermudagrass, climbing fern, lespedeza, bahiagrass, and fescue.

PRIORITIZE PRESCRIBED FIRE

- Continue **growing season burns** as the weather allows.
- **Conduct post-burn evaluations** to determine if previous burns achieved objectives, including woody control.
- Prepare for future burning by **creating firebreaks**.

NATURAL REGENERATION

- If natural regeneration is part of your plan, **conduct longleaf pine cone counts** to estimate the fall crop.



Longleaf pine seed is predicted to be limited for 2025. Landowners with fair or better crops may have a potential income opportunity if their longleaf stands are decent-sized and easily operable. TLA can help connect good sites with specialists seeking places to harvest for seed extraction and seedling production.

Look for large green 2nd year cones (center of image). The limb pictured has three age classes of cones: 1st year developing cone, 2nd year cone to mature this fall, and last year's cone (left to right). Visit <https://longleaf.info/cones> for more information on cone counting methods.

- **Perform a seedbed preparation burn** on mature longleaf stands with good cone crops before seed fall (usually October). The goal is to increase the likelihood that longleaf seed falls on bare mineral soil that is not so clean that predators can easily find/consume the new seed.

GROUNDCOVER RESTORATION

- **Order native seed early.** Seed from local ecotypes and some endemic species may be limited.

PLAN FOR COOLER WEATHER

- Now is a great time to **review, update, or create a management plan**.

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



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Q&A

Q. Dear Longleaf Alliance,

There are way too many beggar's lice in my understory! It's a big problem for visitors to my property. While quail hunting, we end up covered with those triangular, Velcro®-like seeds, and my guests complain. How can I change my land back to more broomsedge? The birds are all pen-raised, by the way.

Too Much of a Good Thing in South Carolina

A. Dear Good Thing,

Some will read this and say count your blessings as they work hard to get what you have! But we hear your concern and recall visiting places where we had a lot of combing to do after coming out of the field. We want to propose a solution that can retain the benefits of this high-value wildlife plant in the less-traveled areas while managing the problem in the areas of heavy travel.

Known by many common names (beggar's lice, beggar-ticks, tick-clovers, sticktights, hitchhikers), these are the fruits of *Desmodium* species, otherwise known as tick-trefoils. With more than 20 species recognized in the Southeast, this genus is important to the diets of quail, turkey, dove, small mammals, and songbirds, and the foliage is a high-preference deer forage. And, of course, as a legume they fix a lot of nitrogen in the soil, which increases soil fertility and productivity. *Desmodium* species are perennial plants with alternate, trifoliate leaves that tend to grow about three to five feet tall in areas of full sunlight. The seeds that ripen on these plants in the late summer or fall are covered with fine, hook-like hairs, which have perfectly evolved for dispersal via the fur of passing animals or the clothing of humans. And there is the "problem."

What can we do? Clothing choices matter and can cause more trouble! Denim and fleece are beggar's lice magnets. (According to some accounts, the seeds' architecture was the original inspiration for Velcro®.) Nylon and other slicker fabrics will offer less purchase for the seeds.

Removal can be done with a butter knife, comb, or credit card, gently sliding it between the seed and fabric (or your dog's fur), but it is easier with reusable microfiber wipes or cotton balls brushed against the grain.

To address your specific challenge, we are hesitant to recommend broadcast herbicide spraying as the chemicals that control *Desmodium* species would also result in collateral damage to other desirable legumes and forbs. So, what alternative approaches might help?

High mowing (over 8" tall) of the actual riding lanes might be one option to interrupt seed set before ripening occurs in late summer or early fall. The notion here would be to enjoy the benefit of good habitat on the bulk of the tract but to treat the travel corridors where the bird wagon typically goes, either to interrupt seed production or just before hunting season in the early winter.

You might try a light winter strip disking of those actual lanes if you can't set your mower higher than 8" and see the response you get in a few limited test locations based on various disking times. Go light to avoid creating any ruts or soft areas.

Or the chemical alternative, which we would still just try on the traveled areas, would be a wicking application or a directed spray of Garlon® 4 as a 4-5% solution applied before mid-July, to control the plants where foot traffic will occur and promote more grasses.

Meanwhile, keep those reusable wipes handy as you fine-tune the hunting lanes on the rich habitat you are fortunate to have on your land!

Sincerely,
The Longleaf Alliance

PS. A few other plants known to hitch a ride share similar common names. *Hylodesmum* species were once grouped with *Desmodium* but occur in mainly shady, forested settings. In the aster family, *Bidens* aka beggar-ticks aka tickseeds have elongated bur-like seeds. Less common in the Southeast, *Hackelia virginiana* (stickseed) has round fruits covered with dense prickles.



While there are many native *Desmodium* species, there are also non-native species to look out for – creeping beggarweed (*Desmodium incanum*) is a pantropical species found in disturbed areas in Florida, into southern Georgia and Alabama, and some parts of Texas. [Bob Peterson]



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*As of 12/31/2019


By Joel Lett, The Longleaf Alliance

PLANT SPOTLIGHT *Invasive*

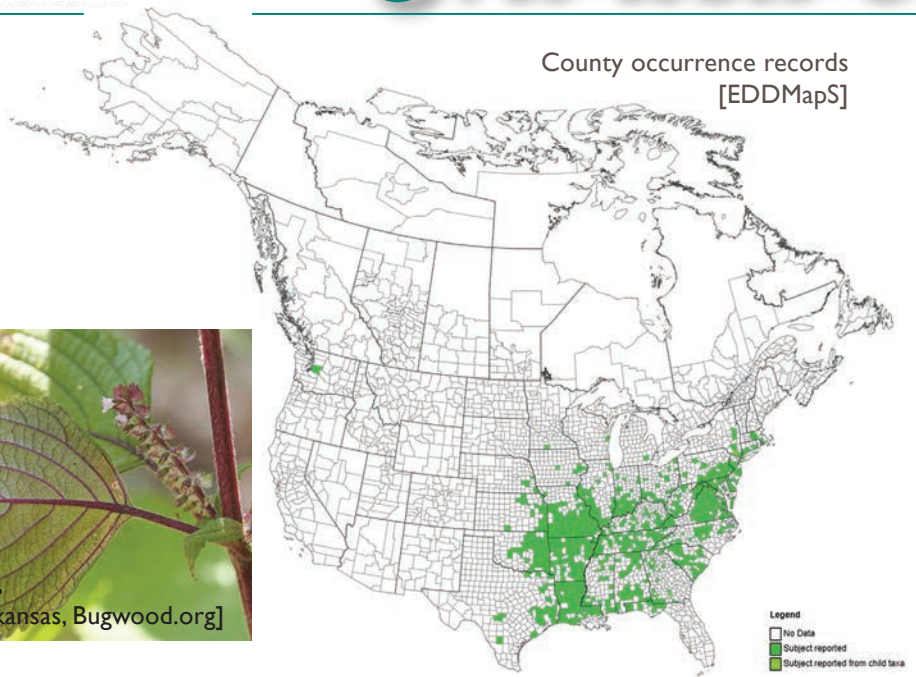
Perilla frutescens (L.) Britton
Perilla Mint, Beefsteak Plant
Mint Family – Lamiaceae



[Nancy Magnusson,
CC BY-NC 2.0]



[Marisa Williams,
University of Arkansas, Bugwood.org]



Description

Perilla mint is an annual broadleaf weed from Eastern Asia. Averaging 2 feet in height, the plant is easily identified by its ribbed, square stems and oppositely arranged, serrated broad leaves. Additionally, the leaves vary in color, ranging from green to purple, particularly on the underside.

Flowering occurs from July to October with a spindly, hairy, spike-like inflorescence bearing purple or white flowers.

Distribution & Habitat

Perilla mint grows in disturbed areas with full sun to partial shade, often found in pastures, fence lines, road edges, and shaded woodlots. A prolific self-seeder, it can spread to natural areas and outcompete native species.

Resistant to heat and drought, it is widely distributed throughout the central and eastern portions of the United States, with reports of it occurring in all nine states in the longleaf range.

Livestock Impact

Deriving from the mint family, this plant has many medicinal and culinary properties and is safe for humans to consume. It can often be found in Asian markets and some supermarkets. However, perilla mint is highly toxic to livestock, domestic animals, horses, and some ruminants, especially when in bloom. Little is known about the amount needed to cause mortality, but it can occur as quickly as a few hours to a couple of days. Mass casualties have been reported where perilla has become primary forage.

Treatment

Small populations may be manually removed due to the plant's shallow root system, but larger perilla mint infestations are best treated with herbicide. Preemergent options (applied prior to seed germination) include products such as Grazon and WeedMaster®, whose active ingredients may be dicamba, picloram, or aminopyralid.

Postemergent products (applied to seedlings through the early flowering stages) may also include 2, 4-D or glyphosate. Remove livestock from the infested area until the treatment is successful to reduce the risk of accidental grazing.

Always consult with a professional on mixed solutions or attend a herbicide class at your local extension office.

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WINDOW *into* WILDLIFE

By Ashlynn Moretti, The Longleaf Alliance

Florida Black Bear

Ursus americanus floridanus

[FWC, CC BY-ND 2.0]

The Florida black bear is one of the 16 unique subspecies of the American black bear. It is Florida's largest land mammal and is the only bear species native to Florida.

Description

Florida black bears have a glossy black fur coat with a light brown muzzle and sometimes have a white chest patch. Adult males typically weigh 250–350 lbs, with the largest in Florida reaching 760 lbs. Females are smaller, usually 130–180 lbs, with a record weight of 460 lbs.

Diet & Behavior

Black bears are omnivores; 80% of their diet is plant based. Some of their favorite foods are acorns, berries, palmetto fruits, insects, and occasionally small animals. During fall, they roam around in search of food to build up a fat reserve for winter. However, unlike their northern relatives, they do not hibernate fully. They enter a state known as torpor, a semi-hibernation period, where their activity is reduced, and they often relax in their den.

Population Status

Florida black bears once roamed the entire state, but in the mid 1970s, populations dwindled to approximately 300 individuals located on less than 20% of its historic range. As a result, the State of Florida listed the species as threatened. However, with conservation efforts led by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), they were delisted in 2012 due to population recovery and growth. Florida now has an estimated population of over 4,000 individuals occurring in about 50% of the state.

Threats

Even with the increase in their population, it is important to note that threats still exist. Florida black bears are negatively impacted by habitat loss and fragmentation, vehicle collisions,



[Nokuse Plantation]



[FWC, CC BY-ND 2.0]



Black Bear Range 2020

and increased human-bear conflicts. To ensure that the Florida black bear population continues to grow, FWC has continuous management and conservation efforts in place and regularly conducts population and range surveys.

References

Daigle, B. 2024. *Tell Me About: Florida Black Bears*. Florida Museum, University of Florida

[www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/earth-systems/blog/tell-me-about-florida-black-bears; Accessed 8 May 2025]

Florida Fish and Wildlife Resource Conservation Commission. 2025. *Florida Black Bear* [myfwc.com/research/wildlife/terrestrial-mammals/bear; Accessed 8 May 2025]

The Florida black bear is considered an **umbrella species** — a species whose protection in turn protects numerous other species and habitats. They demonstrate the importance of conservation and preserving Florida's wild spaces. Educating yourself on this species, respecting wildlife corridors, and supporting local bear conservation initiatives are ways to further their populations for generations to come.

Fun Facts

- These bears have a great sense of smell! Their sense of smell is seven times better than a bloodhound.
- Florida black bears are extremely intelligent and curious! They have food preferences and can be quite picky, leading them to get in trouble—especially when they find their favorites in garbage cans.
- Florida black bears also live in southern Georgia and Alabama.

Lion's Mane, *Hericium erinaceus*
[Dan Phiffer, CC BY-NC 2.0]

LONGLEAF ECOSYSTEM

eats

By Alan Patterson, The Longleaf Alliance

Lion's Mane (*Hericium* spp.)



Bear's Head, *Hericium americanum*
[Joshua C. Doty, naturetreasurehunt.com]



Coral Tooth, *Hericium coralloides*
[Alexey Sergeev]

IN ECOSYSTEM EATS,

WE DISCUSS EDIBLE MUSHROOMS AND PLANTS FOUND IN THE LONGLEAF ECOSYSTEM, HOW AND WHEN TO FIND THEM, AND HOW TO IDENTIFY THEM. WE WILL ALSO SHARE RECIPES FOR OUR BOLDER READERS TO TRY.

The genus *Hericium* has three species found in the eastern United States. *Hericium erinaceus* (**lion's mane**) grows as a single or conglomeration of rounded bodies, giving it an almost cloud-like appearance. *Hericium americanum* (**bear's head or bear's tooth**) branches out with long teeth flowing from the ends of each branch. *Hericium coralloides* (**coral tooth**) grows fractally, resembling a coral that lacks the long flowing teeth of the other two species. While these species have distinct growth characteristics that make them easy to tell apart, they are all choice edible mushrooms and are interchangeable in a culinary setting.

In the Southeast, look for these fungi in the fall and winter; as it prefers cooler temperatures for fruiting, *Hericium* fungi

vary from smaller than a quarter to several pounds from a single fruiting body. They are a saprophytic species, growing on rotting wood or in wounds of live trees. Multiple fruiting bodies are often found on the same log or tree. The flesh is soft and firm and has a brilliant white color that begins to shift to orangish-brown with age. These fungi are easily peelable and have a texture similar to crab meat, making them a popular vegan meat replacement option.

In addition to their culinary popularity, they are also "functional mushrooms," meaning they contain compounds such as L-ergothioneine that have a variety of therapeutic benefits, making them a delicious and healthy addition to your diet.

RECIPES WITH
LION'S MANE MUSHROOMS
TO TRY AT HOME



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Burning around Red-cockaded Woodpecker cavity trees protects these valuable resources during prescribed fire operations at Blackwater River State Forest in Florida. [Jacob Barrett]

By Jasmine Little, The Longleaf Alliance

FIRE SMART: BEST PRACTICES FOR SAFEGUARDING VALUABLE ASSETS DURING PRESCRIBED BURNS

As prescribed fire practitioners, we understand fire's critical role in supporting healthy landscapes. From reducing hazardous fuels, enhancing soil health, improving water quality to supporting wildlife habitat, fire is an indispensable tool in ecosystem management. However, many burn units have areas that need added protection – assets that add complexity to a burn operation and require extra care.

Luckily, basic strategies can allow you to burn safely around valuable assets, reduce risk, and build confidence on the fireline.

Potential Assets in Your Burn Unit

In today's landscape, prescribed fire often occurs in the wildland-urban interface — areas where human structures meet natural vegetation. Common assets in these areas include buildings, power lines, boardwalks, signage, trail infrastructure, fencing, and tree stands.

Beyond human-made infrastructure, there may also be **natural resources** in your unit worth protecting, such as active **Red-cockaded Woodpecker** cavity trees, **old-growth** trees with deep duff mounds, and trees with **large raptor nests**. Dead standing **snags** on the edge of your fireline could pose a threat to containment and, therefore, may also need protection if removal before the burn is not possible.

Pre-burn Planning and Preparation

Becoming familiar with your unit before you burn is crucial to avoiding accidental damage to valuable assets. **Scout the unit** thoroughly, mark all assets on your burn map, and flag them in the field if they're not easily visible. **Clear ground litter and brush to create a buffer** around each asset. A good rule of thumb is to clear an area with a radius of **twice the predicted flame height** based on the surrounding fuel type and moisture level.

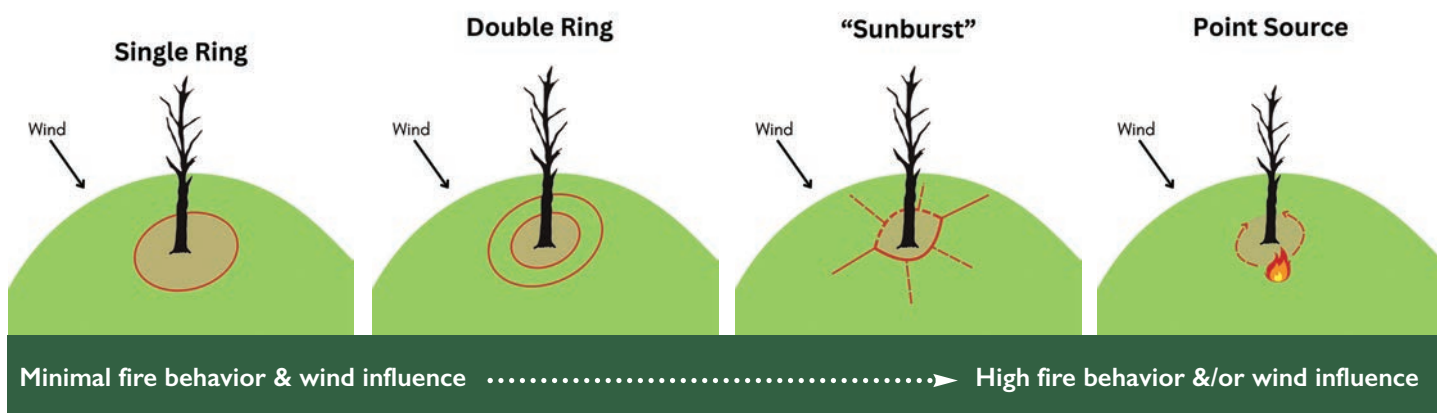
During the Burn: Safe Firing Techniques

Choose your **firing technique** based on your observed fire behavior, which is influenced by:

- **Weather** (humidity, wind, temperature, soil moisture, atmospheric stability)
- **Topography** (slope and aspect)
- **Fuels** (moisture, continuity, and size)

Keep in mind: **fire pulls toward other fire**, a dynamic that can be overridden by strong winds. Evaluate whether your fire behavior is predominantly **wind-driven or fuel-driven** before lighting around assets.

FIRING PATTERNS



When burning around multiple structures, **start with the furthest downwind asset** to reduce the chance of your head fire affecting untouched areas.

There are three basic ways fire can spread. A **backing fire** spreads against the wind or downslope, providing the least intense fire behavior. A **head fire** moves with the wind or upslope and has the most intense fire behavior. A **flanking fire** spreads at a 90° angle perpendicular to the wind, producing moderate fire behavior. Utilizing parallel flanking fires that slowly pull towards each other is a great way to "build black" (burned areas without available fuels) while still controlling fire intensity.

Common Firing Patterns

A **ring fire** around an asset is best used in situations of low fire behavior and minimal wind. Be careful – if the ring is relatively small, it may pull flame inwards towards your asset. Rings are great for larger assets such as buildings.

A **double ring** is effective if you have minimal fire behavior and wind influence. It relies on fire influencing itself as it draws fire away from the base of the asset as the two concentric rings interact and pull together. Use caution, as this introduces a lot of fire very quickly around your asset. If your fire behavior is wind-driven, this method may be a bit too aggressive.

I often use a **sunburst** firing technique when I fire around valuable assets, namely RCW trees, and I have a reliable breeze. Begin by lighting the **downwind side** of the asset, then extend **hooks or "rays" outwards** on both sides. With a consistent breeze behind it, a head fire will start to quickly pull the fire away from the base of the asset. Slowly continue walking the fire around the asset, adding **perpendicular rays** to gradually build black. Once a complete ring has been made around your asset, assist the backing fire on the upwind side by drawing the fire backward with more rays, creating flanking fires that slowly pull together. This method leverages all three

firing patterns for balanced control when you have low-to-moderate fire intensity and consistent winds.

For high-intensity fire behavior or strong winds, consider using **point source** fire around your asset. Start with a **single dot of fire on the downwind side**, allowing the backing fire to progress slowly. Add more dots cautiously if needed, especially on the upwind side.

Patience is key with all techniques. You can always add more fire, but once it is lit, it is hard to take it back. Start light and build.

Is it ever feasible to headfire an asset? Surprisingly, yes—a flash of hot, fast fire started on the upwind side of relatively **heat tolerant assets** such as treated (or wet) lumber in good condition and metal boxes can be used in times when black must be built quickly. Consider **wetting the asset** just before lighting to minimize the damage and be ready to address potential hot areas on the structure once it's safe to do so. This method is best used for assets you don't mind getting charred.

During Mop-Up

After the fire during mop-up, revisit your assets to ensure no lingering heat remains. Use the **cold trailing method**—carefully feel around with the backside of your hand for any remaining hot spots. This final step helps prevent reignition and ensures full containment.

Prescribed fire is a powerful, cost-effective natural resource management tool. We can protect valuable assets with thoughtful planning and strategic ignition while still achieving our objectives. By preparing effectively and addressing potential hazards head-on, we can reduce our reliance on heavy equipment, conserve water, and build confidence in our fire operations.

Looking Back

AT THE LONGLEAF ALLIANCE

Part II: Growing Tall (1999-2014)



Participants at the first Longleaf 101 Academy [September 2008, Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center]

Thirty years ago, the future of longleaf pines and its associated ecosystems was dire. Under the leadership of Dean Gjerstad and Rhett Johnson, an 'alliance' of organizations and individuals came together in 1995 to promote the ecological and economic value of longleaf pine ecosystems. Thanks to early efforts of staff, The Longleaf Alliance grew to become a clearinghouse of the best science and information, to conduct trials where needed, and to provide outreach and technical assistance to a growing number of practitioners.

Spreading the Flame

In the very early days of The Longleaf Alliance, Dean and Rhett recognized the need for a minimum standard of knowledge about how to establish, manage, and grow longleaf – especially for those providing advice to others. With Mark Hains (Research Coordinator, 1996-2015) and John McGuire (Outreach Coordinator, 2000-2007) working as the first Alliance staff, this small (but mighty!) group worked extensively with partners and traveled the region meeting landowners to improve people's perception of longleaf, share lessons learned, and ultimately increase longleaf forest acreage. By the end of 2004, staff presented or hosted over 450 workshops in a span of nine years, about one per week! As Rhett has remarked, "We were like Johnny Appleseed — on the road all the time."

Their dedication and work in those early days laid the groundwork for the growth of our education and outreach programs under JJ Bachant-Brown (Outreach Coordinator, 2008-2013), including the first publication dubbed *The Longleaf Leader*. The title was suggested by Richard Shelfer of Tallahassee, FL in a newsletter-naming contest in 2008 and transitioned over to the magazine in 2014 under editor Carol

Denhof. The first Longleaf Academy, Longleaf 101, debuted in 2008, later followed by new Academy programs – Understory 201 (2011) and Herbicides & Longleaf 201 (2012).

The Regional Longleaf Conference, first hosted by The Longleaf Alliance in 1996, continued biennially, moving across the Southeast to accommodate the nine-state geography of longleaf enthusiasts. Special interest conferences for montane longleaf, groundcover, and nursery production occurred in "off-years." Countless workshops, field days, technical articles, brochures, films, and webinars provided the best available information and support to landowners, managers, policy makers, educators, and the public.

Cutting Edge Research for Science-based Management

Pivotal research supported by The Longleaf Alliance advanced longleaf pine establishment, showing the importance of treating longleaf pine according to its unique needs. Alliance staff collaborated on studies evaluating seedling types (bareroot vs. container), planting techniques, site preparation, prescribed fire, and more. Mark Hains was instrumental in developing tried and true techniques for site preparation and planting that changed the game for longleaf establishment.

In partnership with numerous supporters and organizations, The Alliance installed dozens of demonstration areas across the Southeast to test techniques and add field components to outreach events. Showing (instead of telling) took management recommendations into real world scenarios. The Alliance continues to share these findings widely through site visits, trainings, publications, and film—building a strong network of knowledge across the species' range.

Growing as an Organization

The Longleaf Alliance originally operated as a project within Auburn University. Both Alliance co-founders were University employees – Rhett retired as Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center Director in 2006, and Dean retired from Auburn University's School of Forestry in 2008. Early Alliance staff were contracted through Auburn, an arrangement that continued until Mark Hains left in 2015. While we still maintain our Auburn connection with our headquarters at the Dixon Center, The Longleaf Alliance incorporated in 2007 and subsequently received approval as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to meet the growing outreach demands, engage in regional issues, and serve expanding partner networks.

As project opportunities increased and grant funding expanded, additional staff came onboard, moving The Alliance from a small team of four in 2000 to 13 with the transition of the Gulf Coast Plain Ecosystem Partnership in 2012.

Leadership changes also occurred with E.J. Williams serving as Executive Director (2010-2011) and Rhett Johnson stepping out of retirement to fulfill director duties until Robert Abernethy assumed the role of President (2012-2019).

Today, The Longleaf Alliance's mission is carried out by 27 staff led by Executive Leadership (President Carol Denhof, Vice President for Development Lynnsey Basala, and Vice President for Operations Ad Platt) with guidance from 14 members on the Board of Directors.

The Longleaf Alliance is proud to have been engaged in this work over the last 30 years. From longleaf-related education and outreach to rare species recovery to tree and groundcover establishment to habitat management, every facet of our work contributes to the sustainable future of the longleaf ecosystem.



A. In 2012, The Longleaf Alliance expanded to include the Gulf Coast Plain Ecosystem Partnership and the Ecosystem Support Team. B. Longleaf pine site preparation and seedling type demonstration, established in 1998-99. C. Dean Gjerstad & John McGuire at the 3rd Montane Longleaf Conference (2008). D. The “ABCs” of Longleaf Alliance Research listing the plethora of new, ongoing, and completed research projects [Excerpt from the Fall 2007 Newsletter] E. Longleaf planting depth studies (established in 1998-2003) resulted in new planting recommendations – plant seedlings with the plug exposed to prevent the terminal bud being covered post-planting.



THIRTY-YEARS OF

CULTIVATING A DREAM: RESTORING LONGLEAF IN RETIREMENT

By Emma McKee, The Longleaf Alliance

Living in Gulf Breeze, Florida, **James Neyman** worked in financial services for 35 years, but he dreamed of having land for retirement. "Some people like tennis, some play golf, I like to grow longleaf pine trees," explained James. He has worked hard to create a beautiful longleaf pine woodland for an escape from city life.

James's 375-acre tract is nestled in the small town of Walnut Hill, Florida. This is in an interesting area, with foothill remnants of iron rock, artisanal wells, and sugar white sand throughout. The property, along with neighboring tracts, was owned by Georgia Pacific. After being clear-cut in the early 1990s and broken into smaller parcels, much of the timberland was converted into agriculture fields for cotton or peanuts.

When James purchased his tract in 1998-99, a few mature longleaf trees remained, and natural regeneration was underway in some areas. **(Now those trees are 30 years old!)** James went to work right away in other portions of the property, handplanting his first longleaf plugs in 2000. When his children were younger, James maintained food plots for deer and turkey hunting, but he has since transitioned those areas into young longleaf pine stands.

James's property now contains stands ranging from a 30-year-old mix of longleaf and hardwoods to 25-year-old longleaf and 10-year-old longleaf. "Having a variety of maturing stands helps promote the diversity of wildlife here. We see so many birds of prey, gopher tortoises, snakes, field mice, and Bobwhite Quail. And that's the goal." In 2015, James also planted five acres of wildflowers to support native pollinators and honeybees with funding through the Natural Resources

Conservation Service.

Forest ownership hasn't been without challenges, however. There is a pipeline that runs from Jay, Florida all the way to Mobile, Alabama, with no agreement or easement, so this had to be considered while formulating his management goals. Hurricanes Ivan (2004) and Dennis (2005) damaged 40-50% of the young longleaf, so James allowed natural regeneration to fill the impacted areas. To this day, the effect of these storms is still visible, posing one of the greatest challenges he faces as a private landowner. The spread of invasive species is also a constant battle. He keeps each unit on a two to three year burn rotation, typically during the dormant season, with herbicide application in the growing season and regular maintenance throughout the year.

As a one-man operation, James utilizes any assistance possible, including cost-share from Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Florida Forest Service for planting longleaf, prescribed fire, and fire break maintenance. He also receives support through the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership invasive species program. Over the years, James has observed a significant shift in available assistance; compared to his first five years managing longleaf, programs and funding were improving these last five years. He understands firsthand how crucial this support will be for fellow landowners in the future.

James enjoys his little slice of native North Florida plants and wildlife by spending his days watching the birds, collecting honey, and planning the next project.

LONGLEAF RESTORATION

in Escambia County, Florida

ROOTED IN THE LAND: REVIVING A FAMILY FOREST

By Ad Platt, The Longleaf Alliance

Ted Hassebrock lives on the land where he was born and grew up in Escambia County, Florida. His parents raised four children, crops, and livestock on about 180 acres, property acquired by his father in the 1940s for \$6/acre. As the siblings grew up and moved away, the farm transitioned back to forest, and the ownership was divided. Ted and his sister inherited mostly forested land, and his two brothers mostly the pastures and row crop fields, which they later sold. They agreed to split the proceeds if timber was cut within the first 20 years to make it more equitable.

Ted's 30-year-old stand began in 1995 when he planted longleaf pine in an old pasture with the goal of "putting things back like they once were" and make the land more wildlife-friendly. The forest became an important buffer as the neighbors became much more abundant. He does not ever plan to clearcut and is very interested in observing birds, fox squirrels, and other wildlife. He wants to make the property more quail-friendly – but not for hunting. Ted enjoys hearing and seeing them again, even if they are just passing through.



Ted enrolled in Natural Resources Conservation Service programs that have continued to help with the management of the forest, particularly with emerging invasive issues. Cathy

Hardin with the Florida Forest Service has been consistently helpful in his management efforts for several years. The North Florida Prescribed Burn Association has been a big help with burns. Rod Allen usually comes over, and Ted has gone to about five other PBA burns. He looks forward to doing more of that and getting his property back into a regular three-year burn rotation.

Ted's professional career involved office jobs, but the woods bring him peace, relaxation, and privacy. He would like to see more people making this choice and less fragmentation of rural lands to maintain the rural character we all enjoy. The most significant change he has seen on his property is more wildlife, which suits his objectives perfectly. He regularly sees more deer, fox squirrels, Redheaded Woodpeckers, and birds of all kinds, especially Eastern Bluebirds and Purple Martins, all adding to his enjoyment of his land.

The Georgia Forestry Commission's Montane Longleaf Pine Seed Production Area was evaluated for individuals that were prolific cone producers. Here, a heavy cone-producer is selected.

PROGRESS TOWARD A SECOND-GENERATION LONGLEAF PINE GENETIC RESOURCE

By Dr. Trevor Walker, Assistant Professor, Co-director of Cooperative Tree Improvement Program, North Carolina State University

Longleaf pine is the second-most planted species in the southern United States, with around 100 million seedlings produced annually, comprising around 10% of the conifer seedlings produced in recent years (Newell and Bowersock 2023). However, only around 30% of the longleaf pine seedlings come from seed orchards, with the rest from wild collections. Grafted seed orchards have several advantages over wild seed collections, such as more consistent cone production, better seed germination, and known genetic origins.

There are several important benefits to knowing the genetic origin of seedlings. Firstly, longleaf pine, like other forest tree species with large natural ranges, has important provenance variation that affects adaptability. The provenance refers to the natural genetic origin of a tree prior to any seed transfer/movement (such as if a plantation was planted using a non-local seed source). Longleaf pine genetics with coastal/southerly provenances, such as the Lower Gulf Coastal Plain or the southern Atlantic Coastal Plain, are not as cold-hardy and potentially suffer freeze damage if planted in the Upper Gulf, Piedmont, or Virginia Coastal Plain (Schmidtling 2001). Further, seedlings of inland/northerly provenances will grow slower and not thrive if planted in more coastal/southern regions. It is critical that landowners plant seedlings that have the appropriate provenance for their region.

Knowing the genetic origins of seedlings also gives landowners options to select for improved growth, straightness, and disease resistance. While genetic

improvement for longleaf pine has received much less investment than loblolly pine and slash pine, there have been important efforts. The USDA Forest Service and state forestry agencies have all made "plus-tree" selections for stocking first-generation seed orchards. After selecting plus-trees, their genetic merit must be validated with progeny testing, where seedlings from multiple parent plus-trees are planted side by side in experimental trials. Several organizations have established longleaf pine progeny tests, including the university tree improvement cooperatives at NC State University, Texas A&M University, and the University of Florida. Once a progeny test is old enough for dependable assessment and is measured (geneticists call this "phenotyped"), the parent trees with the most desirable genes (e.g., for growth, stem form, or disease resistance) can be identified. Further, the best-looking trees in the test (the progeny) can be identified as second-generation selections.

In 2024, the Cooperative Tree Improvement Program at NC State University initiated a five-year project with The Longleaf Alliance to improve the genetic resource for longleaf pine. The goal of the project is to secure a genetically-robust set of longleaf pine trees in grafted genetic archives (i.e., clone banks). These clone banks would act as scion repositories for stocking seed orchards with well-characterized longleaf pine genotypes. The primary source of trees would be second-generation selections from progeny tests. These selections must meet the adaptability, diversity, and productivity needs of the longleaf pine reforestation community.

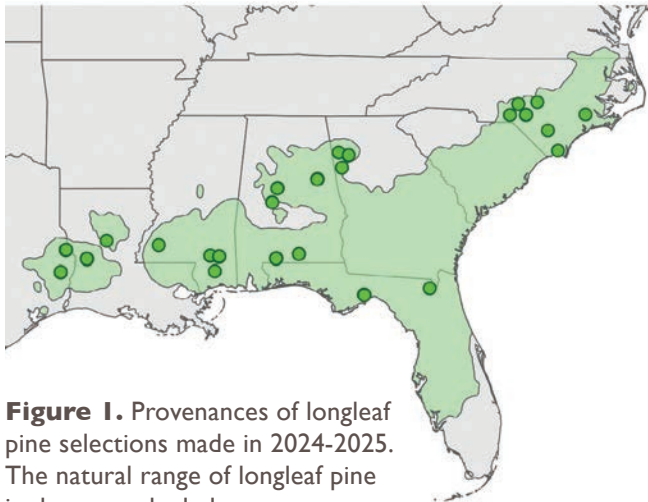


Figure 1. Provenances of longleaf pine selections made in 2024-2025. The natural range of longleaf pine is shown as shaded area.

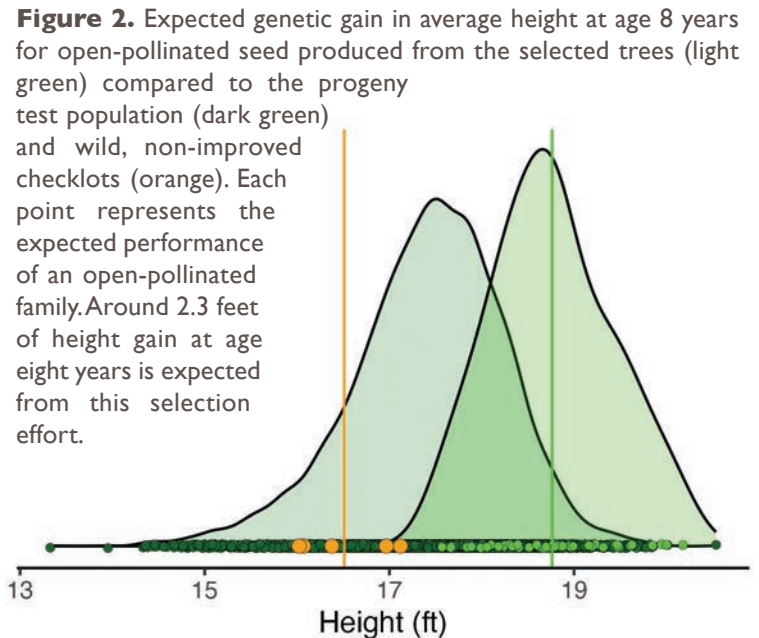


Figure 2. Expected genetic gain in average height at age 8 years for open-pollinated seed produced from the selected trees (light green) compared to the progeny test population (dark green) and wild, non-improved checklots (orange). Each point represents the expected performance of an open-pollinated family. Around 2.3 feet of height gain at age eight years is expected from this selection effort.

So far, this project has been met with enthusiasm and hands-on support from the seed production community. Several accomplishments have been made this past year:

- Rayonier established a genetic archive of ~ 4 acres with second-generation longleaf pine selections. These came from a NC Forest Service progeny test established in 2011 and were the first round of selections in the project.
- A second round of selections was made from a progeny test established in 2011 by Milliken Advisors. The Langdale Company grafted these onto ~200 rootstock trees, which will be planted into a genetic archive in winter 2025-2026. Graft success looks great so far at 95+%!
- The Georgia Forestry Commission selected six trees from their Montane-sourced Longleaf Seed Production Area. The trees were selected primarily based on abundant cone production and good stem form.

We anticipate the project culminating in securing around 300 selections by 2028. So far, 54 selections have been made with origins that span the natural range of longleaf pine (**Figure 1**). As the project continues, it will be important to ensure that each provenance and ecotype in the longleaf plantation restoration effort has adequate representation in the genetic archives.

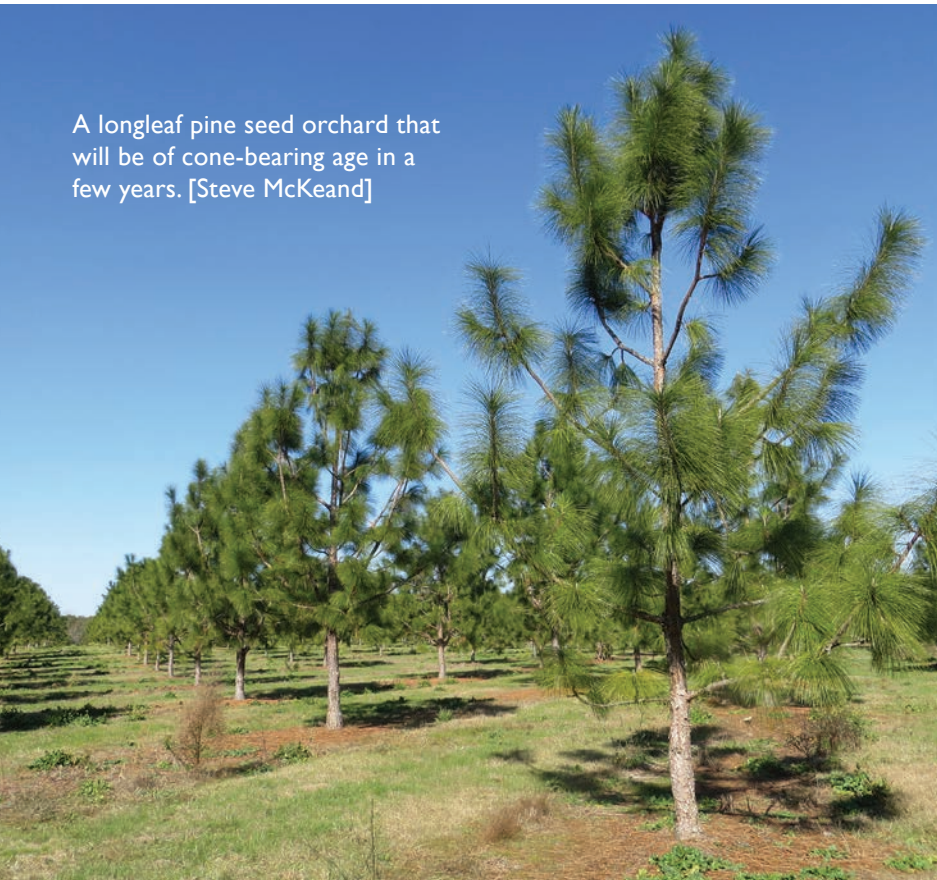
Of the trees selected so far, 48 come from a longleaf pine progeny test series established by the Cooperative in 2011. The entire progeny test series has around 6500 trees, and the 48 selected represent thriving individuals from families with good performance (**Figure 2**). On average, open-pollinated families from the selected individuals are expected to be 2.3 feet taller at age eight years than wild, non-improved longleaf pine. Families with excessive pitch canker and fusiform rust disease incidence were culled, as were families with excessive forking.

As the project moves forward, we will continue to engage and collaborate with stakeholders to ensure that the selected genotypes meet the reforestation needs for longleaf pine restoration. The success of this genetic resource improvement effort relies on strong partnerships across state, federal, and industry sectors. The progress so far highlights the community's excitement and shared commitment to this important work!

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A longleaf pine seed orchard that will be of cone-bearing age in a few years. [Steve McKeand]

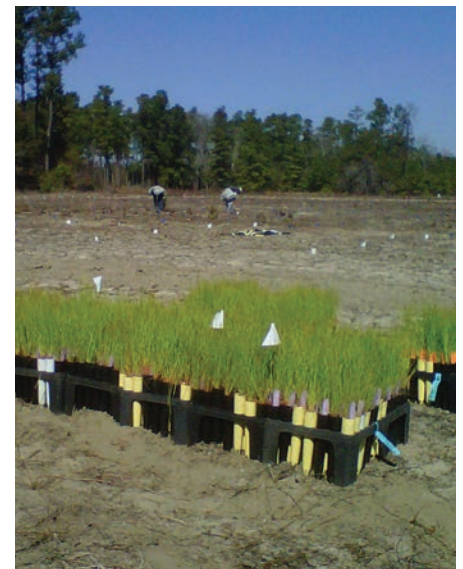


A “plus-tree” with excellent height growth and stem form selected from a naturally-seeded stand as part of early longleaf pine tree improvement efforts. Scion from this tree and other similar would have been grafted into first-generation seed orchards. [Photo adapted from Dorman 1976]

An outstanding phenotypic selection from a family with good growth, straightness, and disease resistance – in February 2025, Cooperative Tree Improvement Program staff visited a longleaf pine progeny test planted by Milliken Advisors to make selections.



Healthy longleaf grafts by Langdale Company using 2025 selections from a progeny test established by Milliken Advisors.



A progeny test being planted, with seedlings from each parent tree arranged in an experimental design to determine their genetic merit. [Josh Steiger]



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Restoration and Fire

Landmark Achievements for America's Longleaf

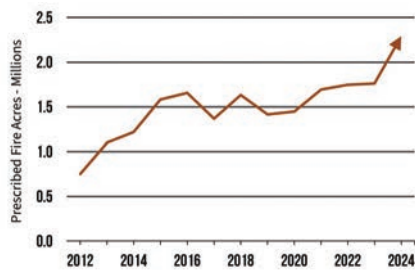
America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative and the Longleaf Partnership Council are thrilled to celebrate two major milestones achieved in 2024: the restoration of two million acres of longleaf pine through planting and silvicultural practices and the implementation of prescribed fire across 20+ million acres of longleaf habitat since 2010. These achievements reflect 15 years of dedicated collaboration and set the stage for continued success over the next 15 years.

Annual accomplishment reporting plays a vital role in measuring the scale and impact of on-the-ground efforts. The 2024 data underscore the strength of our public-private partnerships and the tangible progress being made toward

longleaf ecosystem restoration. Together, we're delivering lasting environmental, economic, and community benefits across the Southeast.

In 2024 alone, America's Longleaf partners recorded 2.7 million acres of longleaf management activities, including:

- Planted 100,260 acres of new longleaf pine
- Protected 49,337 acres through acquisitions and easements
- Applied prescribed fire to over 2.2 million acres
- Performed maintenance activities on 272,358 acres
- Applied silvicultural activities to 5,308 acres to convert existing forestland to longleaf-dominant forests

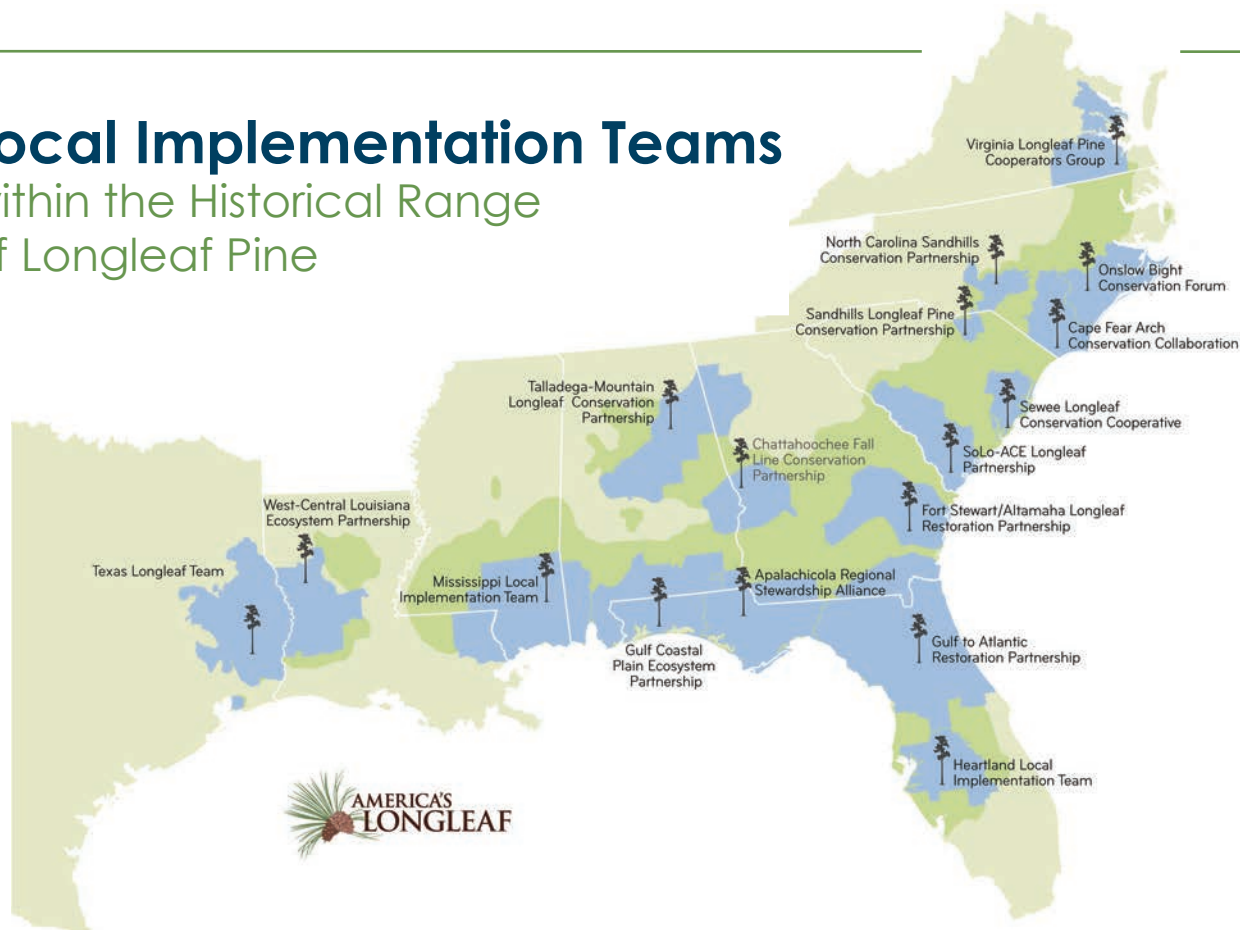


Record Prescribed Fire for 4th Year in a Row

In 2024, longleaf partners burned over 2 million acres for the first time since annual reporting began. This was a half million increase compared to 2023. Most of the reported burn acreage occurred on public lands, but about 30% of the increase comes from private lands.

Local Implementation Teams

within the Historical Range of Longleaf Pine



Looking for Longleaf Pine Cone Harvesting Sites

By Ad Platt, The Longleaf Alliance

Longleaf pine cone production is well documented to be quite variable, with infrequent good crops, unlike some other southern yellow pine species. The process is influenced by many environmental factors over the course of the cones' two-year development, with large differences observed from year to year and from place to place. The USDA Forest Service and collaborators sample longleaf pine cone production at 10 or more locations throughout the Southeast to help longleaf growers and land managers plan for nursery production and upcoming activities to promote natural regeneration, like prescribed burning or selective harvesting.

The 2025 Longleaf Pine Cone Prospects Report projects that 6 of the 10 cooperating locations have a FAILED crop this year estimated around 4 cones/tree. Three sites are projecting a FAIR crop, estimated at 27 cones per tree, and one projects a poor crop, estimated at 18 cones per tree.

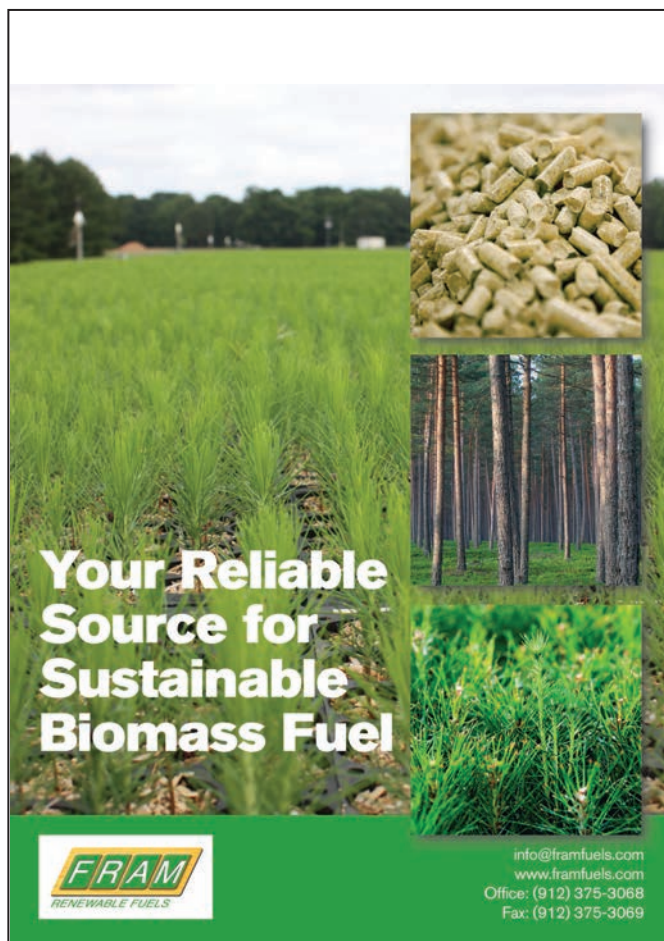
By comparison, the last GOOD crops (around 50 -99 cones per tree) recorded in some of the report locations occurred in 2022. While strong efforts successfully collected all we could process that year, those seed supplies have been nearly exhausted. Following last year's failed longleaf pine cone crop, longleaf seed sources are needed more than ever.

On a positive note: a very good conelet crop is developing for 2026. This is not surprising since cone production is strongly correlated to follow two years after hurricanes, and the 2024 hurricane season was very active. While there is hope on the horizon, many factors over the next 16 months can reduce the potential for next year's crop. More importantly, the immediate need is for this year's cone collection, where it can be found.

We need your help to identify areas of high longleaf pine cone production for potential harvest locations this fall. Even in a bad year, there is usually a decent cone crop somewhere. If you are lucky enough to have mature longleaf, please assess what kind of cone production you may have this summer. TLA can help connect good sites with those specialists seeking places to harvest. We're asking anyone interested in longleaf restoration to share their observations in an easy online survey.



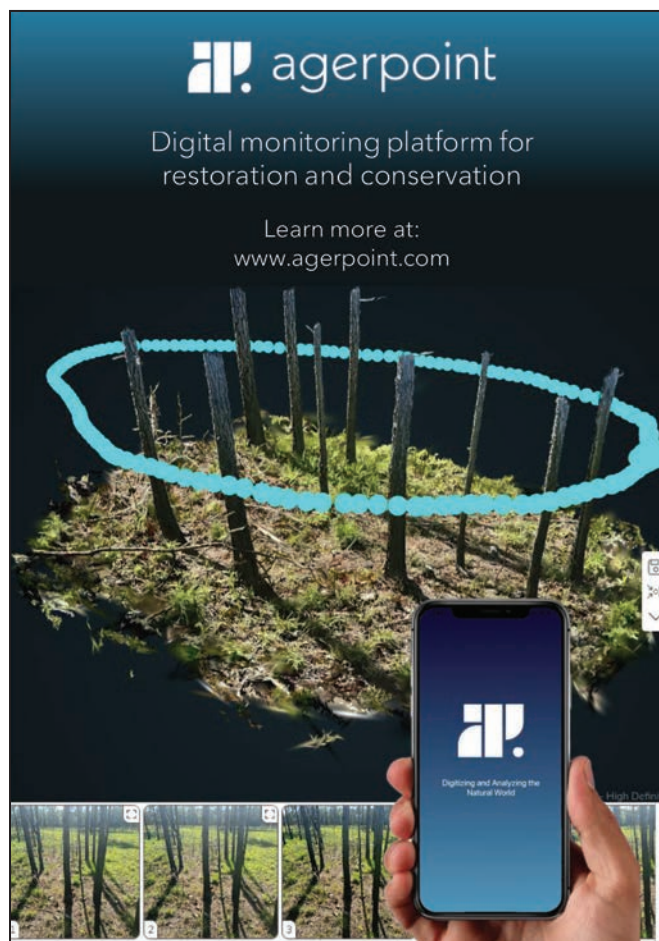
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Bolting longleaf pine underplanted beneath a thinned loblolly overstory at Raccoon Creek Pinelands [Kyle LaFerriere]

Longleaf Cooperators of Virginia

Celebrate the Completion of the Longleaf Pine Pavilion at Raccoon Creek Pinelands

The Longleaf Pine Pavilion at Raccoon Creek Pineland Preserve is officially complete! Dr. William Owen established this pavilion on his 1,800-acre property in southeast Virginia as a space to gather, inspire, and educate people about the longleaf pine ecosystem.

Owen wanted the pavilion to be a tribute to this amazing and resilient tree, so he insisted it be built out of longleaf pine. Using longleaf sustainably harvested in Georgia, all of the lumber was sourced from Red Hills Lumber Company with help from Kevin Hiers. Nestled among a restored pine savanna, the structure was designed and constructed by Dale Trowbridge, Head of Construction at Colonial Williamsburg, with Quentin Trowbridge, Elbert Fleming, and the Trowbridge and Associates team.

The vision was to create a meeting spot for workshops, events, and tours where visitors could gaze upon longleaf pine while coming together to advance longleaf pine conservation. "I see Raccoon Creek Pinelands and this pavilion as a connector to the significant Virginia longleaf sites. This place is for our partners – not one landowner or one organization," remarked Owen.

Conservation collaborators were honored with tables crafted from a 300-year-old longleaf pine tree salvaged from the Big Woods at Greenwood Plantation in Georgia. Each table bore a plaque with a partner name – Old Dominion University, Partnerscapes, The Longleaf Alliance, The Nature Conservancy, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Virginia Department of Forestry, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and Virginia Cooperative Extension Service.

Longleaf Cooperators of Virginia signed a joint commitment to continue their longstanding collaboration and expand longleaf conservation work in Virginia during the dedication. Brian Van Eerden, Director of TNC's Virginia Pinelands Program, was also recognized for his decades of tireless dedication to restoring longleaf pine. As Bettina Ring, State Director of TNC Virginia, eloquently said, "This moment is about the ecosystem and the environment but also the people and the communities."



A.



B.



C.



D.



E.

A. The pavilion at Raccoon Creek Pinelands was constructed using 90 to 250-year-old longleaf pine lumber. [Kyle LaFerriere] B. Conservation collaborators were honored with tables dedicated in their names. [Sarah Crate] C. Handmade bricks from the Colonial Williamsburg brickyard were used for the pavilion flooring and pathway. [Sarah Crate] D. Longleaf Cooperators of Virginia signed a joint commitment at the pavilion dedication. [Kyle LaFerriere] E. The Pavilion at Raccoon Creek Pavilion. [Sarah Crate]



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Red-cockaded Woodpeckers Return to Tuskegee National Forest

By LuAnn Craighton, Chattahoochee Fall Line Conservation Partnership Coordinator

ALABAMA



RCW incubating eggs on Tuskegee National Forest. [USDA Forest Service]

In October 2024, Tuskegee National Forest welcomed five pairs of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (RCWs) translocated to their new home from Apalachicola National Forest. RCWs have been functionally extirpated from Tuskegee National Forest since the late 1970s. The Forest's *Land and Resource Management Plan* (2004) and the *Environmental Assessment for Tuskegee Upland Pine Restoration* (2014) address managing native forest ecosystems and supporting the recovery of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers to their former homes as important outcomes.

Over several decades, U.S. Forest Service staff have executed active forest management practices, including thinning, hardwood mid-story removal, planting longleaf pine, and prescribed burning to improve the habitat sufficiently to reintroduce the birds to the Forest. Prior to translocating the birds, biologists installed 40 artificial cavity inserts in ten clusters across the landscape in carefully selected locations. Monitoring of the clusters in 2025 revealed movement between clusters and activity in five clusters. To date, four pairs have initiated nesting, and two of the pairs have hatched chicks. Ongoing monitoring will continue to track the birds' activities and document the development of a new generation of juvenile RCWs as they mature. This conservation success story is certainly a milestone worthy of

celebration and the result of consistent efforts by a dedicated Forest Service team over many years!

Forty-two Eastern Indigo Snakes Released at North Florida Preserve

By Carson Peña, The Nature Conservancy

FLORIDA



FWC Assistant Reptile and Amphibian Conservation Coordinator Peyton Niebanck releases an indigo snake into a gopher tortoise burrow. [Faith Flawn, FWC]

For nearly a decade, The Nature Conservancy's Center for Conservation Initiatives has released eastern indigo snakes at Apalachicola Bluffs and Ravines Preserve. The federally threatened species serves a critical function in balancing the wildlife community, and they often rely on gopher tortoise burrows for shelter. The collaborative effort aims to return the native, non-venomous apex predator to the region by releasing two-year old snakes to restored sandhill habitats.

In total, the program has reintroduced 209 eastern indigo snakes to this North Florida preserve. This year's batch was the largest that TNC and partners have released at one time. The 42 snakes—22 females and 20 males—were bred and hatched by the Central Florida Zoo & Botanical Gardens' Orianne Center for Indigo Conservation where they are raised for their first year of life before spending an additional year at Welaka National Fish Hatchery. Other project partners include the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

"In our longleaf pine-wiregrass savannas, we want the complete suite of species here, including birds, mammals, insects, and an apex predator: the eastern indigo snake," says Preserve Manager Catherine Ricketts. "These snakes are a key component of restoring north Florida's longleaf pine forests."

TNC's Apalachicola Bluffs and Ravines Preserve is the only site in Florida currently designated for eastern indigo snake reintroduction. Chosen for its ideal habitat, this preserve has undergone extensive longleaf pine and sandhill restoration. Eastern indigo snakes were historically found in southern Georgia, Alabama, eastern Mississippi, and throughout Florida but have been largely eliminated from northern Florida due to habitat loss and fragmentation.

Protection Efforts Lead to New State Park in the Gulf Coastal Plain

By Rebecca Bullis, Trust for Public Land, and Vernon Compton, The Longleaf Alliance

FLORIDA



Shoal River [Melissa Hill]

Trust for Public Land led a transformative effort to protect 2,491 acres of critical riverfront and woodlands along the Upper Shoal River and Gum Creek in Walton County, Florida. This acquisition, funded through the Florida Forever program, Atira Conservation, EJK Foundation, and the Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation, ensures long-term conservation of the Shoal River's headwaters while creating new opportunities for public recreation and community connection with nature.

The Florida Park Service has agreed to manage the property as a new state park. This will provide Walton County residents and visitors with additional land for diverse resource-based outdoor activities including camping, paddling, hiking, fishing, and photography.

The Shoal River not only originates on the property but also runs for nearly four miles through the site, contributing considerably to aquifer recharge, ecological greenways, surface water protection, and strategic habitat conservation areas. Quality habitat supports the gopher tortoise, the Florida black bear, white-tailed deer, Wild Turkey, and many other wildlife species. Located approximately two miles north of Eglin Air Force Base, the new state park will also ensure military mission readiness.

"Protecting the headwaters of the Shoal River means safeguarding a vital lifeline for local communities and wildlife alike," said Melissa Hill, Florida Project Manager at Trust for Public Land. "Thanks to Florida Forever and funding partners, this park will not only preserve the river's ecological integrity but also create a public space where people can immerse themselves in the beauty of Florida's wild landscapes."

Since its inception, Florida Forever has been instrumental in protecting the state's most precious natural resources, ensuring that future generations can experience Florida's unparalleled landscapes. This program's support underscores the importance of the Upper Shoal River Project as a cornerstone for regional conservation and public access to nature.

Having a healthy and resilient longleaf ecosystem and natural Florida moving forward is dependent upon such leadership, collaboration, and wise investments as evidenced by the preservation of a portion of the Upper Shoal River.

Coastal Marsh Strengthens Habitat Connectivity and Safeguards Water Quality

By Conservation Florida, and Vernon Compton, The Longleaf Alliance

FLORIDA



Innerarity Point [Michael Riffle]

Conservation Florida, in partnership with the Innerarity Island Preservation Foundation, is proud to announce the successful conservation of 101 acres on Innerarity Island, a vital coastal habitat nestled within the Pensacola and Perdido Bays.

"We are incredibly proud to conserve a part of Florida's coastline," said Conservation Florida CEO Traci Deen. "Innerarity Island is a haven for native species that rely on coastal habitats to thrive. We're grateful to conserve this land and deeply appreciate those who worked to see this conservation project through. It's a great way to celebrate the recent designation of Pensacola and Perdido Bays as an Estuary of National Significance."

Situated in Pensacola, less than a mile from the Florida-Alabama border, Innerarity Island is home to a variety of threatened and endangered species,

such as the Gulf sturgeon, white-topped pitcher plant, alligator snapping turtle, and Saltmarsh topminnow. The protection of Innerarity Island is a critical milestone in the broader effort to safeguard Florida's coastal ecosystems.

"As a Pensacola resident, I've spent my life enjoying the incredible natural beauty of our coastal waters—fishing, paddling, and exploring places like Perdido Bay," said Conservation Florida Board Treasurer Justin Beck. "Permanently protecting Innerarity Island is a huge win for our community, wildlife, and way of life. This is exactly why I'm proud to serve on the board of Conservation Florida—we're committed to continuing this momentum to ensure future generations can experience the same wild and scenic Northwest Florida that we know and love."

New Flatwoods Savanna Adds Rare Public Access to Longleaf in SW Louisiana

By Dan Weber, *The Nature Conservancy*

LOUISIANA



High-quality groundcover on Flatwoods Savanna Wildlife Management Area [LDWF]

flatwoods, with approximately 150 acres remaining to be replanted. Louisiana flatwood ponds and associated savannas contain a wide diversity of vegetation, providing critical habitat and breeding grounds for many amphibians and birds, including species of greatest conservation need such as the crawfish frog and Chuck-will's-widow.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) has added a significant longleaf pine tract to its protection portfolio. The 426-acre addition in Allen Parish will be called the Flatwoods Savanna Wildlife Management Area. There is limited public access to longleaf pine savannas public land in this portion of the state; this acquisition will provide public recreation opportunities and opportunities to establish a protected space for an experimental population of the federally endangered American chaffseed (*Schwalbea americana*). LDWF anticipates that this site will be open this summer; visitors will be able to enjoy hunting, hiking, wildlife/botanical viewing and photography, and many outdoor education opportunities.

In addition to its high plant species richness and diversity, the tract harbors mature to old-growth longleaf pine savanna as well as seven flatwood ponds in pristine to near-pristine condition. It contains 250 acres of mature longleaf

Moving the Needle in West-Central Louisiana – Longleaf Partners Report a Busy Season

By Bill Bartush, *Partnership Coordinator, Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture*

LOUISIANA



Longleaf Silvopasture Field Tour participants learn about soils from Kana Furukawa during a stop at Daigle Farms. [Austin Klais]

pine ecosystems, prescribed fire, and grazing on ecosystem health, tree productivity, wildlife, and forage quality. A workshop in May shared the project results with 50 participants and included a tour of study sites at the LEAF Center (Hodges Gardens) and Daigle Farms.

Longleaf Pine Restoration Workshops were conducted on June 26th for landowners and June 27th for conservation professionals. Both training workshops were held at Marsh Bayou Wildlife Management Area, with indoor training in Oakdale, LA.

The 2025 Western Range RCW Translocation Cooperative meeting is planned for Tuesday, August 12th in Alexandria, LA. The meeting will discuss the status of the RCW in the West-Gulf Coastal Plain. Opportunities for private lands incentive funding will be presented as well as 2025-26 RCW management actions and priorities.

In 2025, West-Central Louisiana Ecosystem Partnership is accelerating efforts to increase prescribed fire and provide incentives for private landowners to aid in the recovery of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker (RCW). Outreach events, cost-share incentives, and creating a prescribed fire coordinator position are new endeavors in Louisiana.

Louisiana RCW Safe Harbor Cooperators met at the Southern Forest Heritage Museum in Longleaf, Louisiana, for the 20th annual RCW Safe Harbor Program in March. Michael Crowell from Crowell Forest Resources was the landowner host for the meeting. The program included presentations on a variety of private land opportunities for incentive funding and RCW news, followed by a tour of the Crowell Forest Resources RCW conservation area.

Louisiana Tech University and the Louisiana State University AgCenter collaborated on silvopasture research, documenting the benefits of longleaf

From Frogs to Forests: A Spring Snapshot of Longleaf Progress in the Western Gulf Plain

By Cody Pope, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Becky Stowe, The Nature Conservancy

MISSISSIPPI



Tour of Westervelt Gopher Tortoise Mitigation Bank [Becky Stowe]

In April, the Mississippi-Alabama-Louisiana Longleaf Local Implementation Team hosted a spring meeting in Sand Hill, Mississippi. Partners were updated on various accomplishments and plans, including an overview of longleaf pine restoration within the Chickasawhay Ranger District of DeSoto National Forest by Jay McClain. Dr. Mike Davis from the University of Southern Mississippi gave an update on the current recovery efforts taking place to protect and reintroduce the endangered dusky gopher frog. Tamara Campbell from Natural Resources Conservation Service provided a thought-provoking presentation on what the latest research says about managing for multiple species and unique ways to approach projects and challenges. Partners were also treated to an overview of the Westervelt Gopher Tortoise Mitigation Bank. The tour featured restoration techniques geared to create habitat suitable for the tortoises. We observed an area successfully restored with high plant diversity and a colony of tortoises.

Looking ahead, the Longleaf Partnership Council Fall Meeting will be in Biloxi, Mississippi, on October 29th and 30th, in conjunction with the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA) Annual Conference. We hope to see many longleaf partners there!

No Longleaf Stand is too Small – or too Young

By Sarah Crate, The Longleaf Alliance

NORTH CAROLINA



Louise Belk is the first Longleaf Honor Roll recipient in Wayne County, North Carolina. [Jessie Jordan]

Less than two months following a spring burn, Louise Belk welcomed family, friends, and natural resource professionals to explore her 24-acre longleaf pine stand at Britt Farm in Wayne County, North Carolina. Young grass stage and bolting longleaf were recovering from the prescribed fire – white candles with emerging green needles were nestled among the brown, scorched needles. The native grasses and common milkweed popping up were a welcome sight, though the visitors also spied a few spots of sprouting invasives — a small glimpse into the “weed war” that embroiled the site.

After planting the longleaf pine seedlings and native groundcover plugs in 2020, Louise battled serious competition problems. An early attempt to burn the site did not have enough fuel to carry the fire effectively, and dog fennel took over the stand completely. Eventually, Louise enlisted the help of consulting forester James West, who drafted a plan of action with input from fellow foresters and herbicide experts — this labor-intensive prescription called for marking planting rows, mowing, chemical release, and prescribed fire.

Converting the former family cropland to a longleaf pine/savanna mix has been a huge undertaking met with many challenges, but Louise persevered and stayed focused. “Given the situation, most people would have given up or started over. Mrs. Belk is not that person. She surrounded herself with a cadre of natural resource professionals and enthusiasts who encouraged her and helped her to find quality assistance. She never lost sight of her goal and began a complete devotion of time and resources to making the project a success,” said West.

Through it all, Louise kept her primary goal of “building habitat” in mind. Her passion for native plants and the ecological significance of longleaf is evident as she shares her land management journey on social media (Instagram: @treeswithweeze). In April 2025, Louise was honored with the North Carolina Longleaf Honor Roll for her steadfast work toward restoring the longleaf pine habitat on Britt Farm. The NC Longleaf Coalition created the Longleaf Honor Roll to recognize landowners working to improve stands and balance all the values of a longleaf forest. To date, 26 landowners in 14 counties have been recognized.

Sewee Fire Fest Promotes Prescribed Burning

By Jennie Haskell, *The Longleaf Alliance*

SOUTH CAROLINA



Burner Bob® and Smokey Bear shared their messages about using prescribed fire to improve habitat, reduce fuels, and prevent wildfires at the 2025 Sewee Fire Fest. [Jennie Haskell]

The Sewee Fire Festival was held on a beautiful March Saturday at Laurel Hill County Park in Mount Pleasant, SC. Many exhibitors explained the value of prescribed burning to support habitat improvement and maintenance. Charleston County Parks and Recreation Commission invited Smokey Bear and Burner Bob® the Bobwhite Quail to make special appearances, sharing their messages about preventing wildfires and using prescribed burning to improve ecosystem health. Sabine and Waters conducted a demonstration burn while The Nature Conservancy interpreted for the audience.

Understanding that prescribed burns are conducted with detailed planning and monitoring of the weather and fuel conditions is critical. Burning is the most efficient and effective tool for reducing wildfire risk and improving wildlife habitat conditions. Numerous partners within the Sewee Longleaf Conservation Cooperative participated in this event. If you would like more information about future festivals, contact seweefirefest@gmail.com.

South Carolina Sandhills Have Successful Prescribed Fire Season Despite Burn Bans

By Charles Babb, *Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership Coordinator*

SOUTH CAROLINA



Eleven-year-old Kolin Campbell spent the day with the Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership learning about the use and benefits of prescribed fire. [Charles Babb]

Despite two extended burn bans during the 2025 prescribed fire season, the Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership assisted 15 landowners in applying prescribed fire to 515 acres. Burns were conducted to improve wildlife habitat, manage disease, control overstory, and reduce fuels. Another key benefit was helping four SC Forestry Commission's Certified Prescribed Fire Manager (CPFM) classroom graduates complete their certification burns.

Charles Babb, Partnership Coordinator, said, "It is critical for new burners to gain confidence implementing prescribed burns safely. We have found that many classroom graduates are reluctant to do those first burns. Our goal in assisting is to allow them to be in charge while we provide guidance, pointers, considerations, and a safety net."

Babb explained that the Partnership team demonstrates various firing techniques, while pointing out safety considerations and fire behavior. During a burn on their property, new burners see site-specific things to consider and learn how to handle situations such as ladder fuels, snags, and spot overs. "The more people that are comfortable burning on their own, the more prescribed fire we can get on the ground."

One of the year's highlights was having aspiring fireman 11-year-old Kolin Campbell join the team as they burned his grandmother's property. Not only did he get to walk alongside us and ask questions, but he also used his new knowledge to light the tract's final line.

Campbell finished the day with a new-found passion for prescribed fire and understands how it is a useful tool to manage the 60-acre tract he hunts with his family. Whether he becomes a **firefighter** or a **firelighter** is yet to be determined, but we've planted the seed for him to manage this same longleaf with future fire.



Burner Bob® Meets S.A.F.E. at UF

[Pedro Cintron Baerga]

Join Burner Bob® as he meets the University of Florida chapter of the Student Association for Fire Ecology! This student organization in the UF School of Forests, Fisheries, and Geomatic Science is on the front lines of fire management in North Florida, and plays a crucial role in fire education and prescribed burns in the community.

About the School

The School of Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences (SFFGS) is part of University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences and the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. It offers three main program areas: Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences, Forest Resources and Conservation, and Geomatics. SFFGS prepares students for careers in biology, forestry, ecology, and conservation, while fostering a supportive, close-knit community within the school. Student organizations—like the Florida Forestry Club, Marine Biology Club, Geomatics Student Association, and S.A.F.E. — provide hands-on experience, networking, leadership, and field opportunities to student members.

What is S.A.F.E?

S.A.F.E. was founded in 2000 by graduate students at University of California, Davis as the student section of the Association for Fire Ecology (AFE). It has since grown into a network of campus chapters, including one at the University of Florida.

The UF Chapter promotes awareness of prescribed fire, helps students earn fire certifications, and assists with local burns. Its mission is to provide students from diverse backgrounds with an open forum to share research, build networks, and access funding and resources. Once a small group, the UF chapter has grown significantly this year, becoming one of the better known student organizations in SFFGS and the broader community.

Meet The Presidents

S.A.F.E.'s presidents, Natalia Madrid and Noah Hart, ensure that club operations run smoothly and provide a welcoming environment for students of all majors, as well as being prominent figures in the Gainesville fire community.

- Natalia Madrid is a rising senior studying biology, minoring in entomology and nematology, and wildlife ecology and conservation. She is particularly interested in the effects of fire on soil ecosystems.
- Noah Hart is a senior studying wildlife ecology and conservation, and is interested in fire-dependent species and the importance of fire on the landscape. He has been involved on several burns this past semester!



Natalia Madrid



Noah Hart

The Member Experience

The officers of S.A.F.E. at UF are committed to supplying their members with as many opportunities as possible. The Chapter gathers biweekly for general body meetings where they network with speakers who use fire in their careers, and to learn about any relevant internships. S.A.F.E. also works with local organizations to provide members with opportunities to assist on real burns happening locally, as well as providing occasional funding to students pursuing burn certifications to offset costs. Additionally, the Club holds field trips and social events throughout the semester, often with other clubs. This gives members a chance to get to know one another and meet people with diverse interests.

Community Engagement

S.A.F.E. has been working hard to broaden its impact on the Gainesville and North Florida communities. Officers and members alike can be spotted at North Florida Prescribed Burn Association meetings, exhibiting at local events, or out on burns with the Alachua Conservation Trust and private landowners.

The club prioritizes education on fire ecology, and aims to destigmatize prescribed fire. Staffing exhibit tables is a great way to do this, and allows members to interact face to face with individuals in the area and connect with them in meaningful ways.

The North Florida Prescribed Burn Association has been instrumental in the growth and momentum that S.A.F.E. has gained this past year. The organization has provided S.A.F.E. members with countless opportunities to get hands-on experience in the field. Many members have helped several landowners burn their land both within and outside of Alachua County. This dedication to land management has earned the Club a lot of attention and respect from the fire community. Of course, the Alachua Conservation Trust has also played a huge role in S.A.F.E.'s success, also providing the club with burn opportunities through the Prescribed Burn Association.

S.A.F.E. is planning for another big year beginning this fall, and is always looking for new ways to engage with local organizations and Gainesville residents. Keep them in mind for your education and land management projects!

Burner Bob® at the 2025 Flatwoods Fire Festival at UF's Austin Cary Forest Campus



[Pedro Cintron Baerga]

Fire Fest!

Every two years, SFFGS holds the Flatwoods Fire Festival in Gainesville, Florida. This event is one of the biggest fire education and networking events of the year, drawing in hundreds of people from all over Alachua County and beyond. With live prescribed fire demonstrations, dozens of local organizations, food trucks, and more, the 2025 Fire Fest was no exception. S.A.F.E. was in attendance, educating, learning, and hanging out with Burner Bob® the Bobwhite Quail!

By Natalia Madrid, University of Florida



[Pedro Cintron Baerga]

S.A.F.E. members assist with prescribed burns and also engage with the community.

Author: Peggy Sias Lantz

Published: Seaside Publishing, 2014

Reviewed by: Michael Hubbard, The Longleaf Alliance

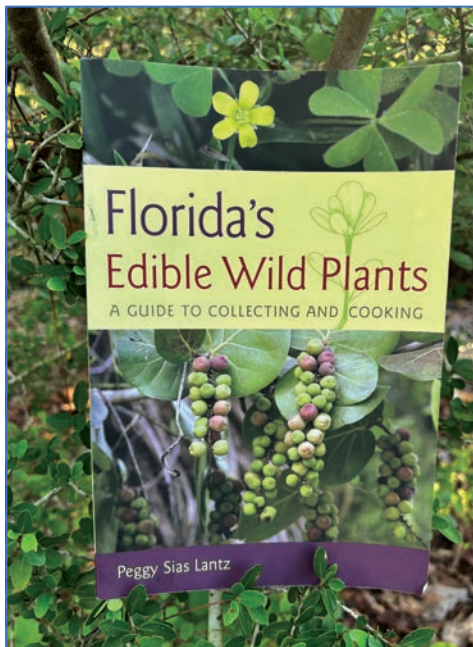
Discovering Nature's Bounty

Florida's Edible Wild Plants: A Guide to Collecting and Cooking

If you've ever wandered a Florida trail and thought about which leafy greens, berries, or flowers could end up on your dinner plate, Peggy Sias Lantz has written just the book for you. *Florida's Edible Wild Plants* is an inviting, practical guide that brings the Sunshine State's natural pantry to life for curious foragers, gardeners, and outdoor enthusiasts alike.

What sets this book apart is its clear, friendly approach to plant identification. Lantz doesn't just list edible species; she gives readers the tools to recognize them confidently in the wild or their gardens, complete with detailed descriptions, habitat notes, and seasonal availability. Whether you're new to foraging or have some experience under your belt, her guidance feels like that of a knowledgeable friend.

One of the book's most enjoyable aspects is the inclusion of recipes. Lantz shows readers how to turn their wild harvests into delicious, down-to-earth meals—from smilax tips sautéed in butter to refreshing beautyberry jelly (highly recommend). These recipes



A copy of *Florida's Edible Wild Plants* nestled in yaupon holly – one of the many species featured with a recipe in the book.

are not just a fun bonus; they help bridge the gap between wild plants and the kitchen table, making the idea of foraging feel more accessible and rewarding.

Equally important, Lantz doesn't shy away from the safety side of wild eating. She clearly points out which plants to avoid and why, reinforcing the importance of proper identification and responsible foraging. That practical, no-nonsense advice is exactly what you want in a field guide, especially in Florida's diverse and sometimes deceptive ecosystems. Always double-check your findings, and if you are not collecting from your own property, check the rules or get permission.

The layout is clean and straightforward, with plenty of helpful photographs and user-friendly organization that makes flipping through a breeze. You'll find yourself reaching for this book again and again—not just when you're in the field

but also when planning a hike, gardening with native plants, or simply dreaming about the next season's edible treasures.

***Florida's Edible Wild Plants: A Guide to Collecting and Cooking* is more than a field guide; it's an invitation to slow down, pay attention, and rediscover the natural world right outside your door. Whether you're foraging in earnest or just curious about what's growing in your backyard, this book belongs on your shelf.**

SouthernWood Paddle Company



Paddle crafted from recovered old-growth heart pine – beautiful but heavy. Most paddles are created using the lighter weight salvaged sinker cypress.



Sinker heart pine charcuterie board, featuring a live edge, finished with food-contact-safe hemp oil and vegan-friendly wood wax. While exceptionally durable, sinker pine is still considered a softwood so avoid using a sharp knife on this board.

SouthernWood Paddle Company specializes in hand-carved paddles as well as hand-crafted boat hooks, skateboards, and surfboards (coming soon). Based out of Charlotte, North Carolina, craftsman Larry McIntyre melded a love of Southern history with a passion for woodworking and spending time outdoors, particularly on the water.

SouthernWood Paddle Company is committed to the use of salvaged and repurposed wood for all their items. Most of their pieces are made from old-growth, sinker cypress recovered from the lowcountry region of South Carolina. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, many harvested logs were floated to mills, but some became waterlogged and sank. Today, these long-submerged "sinker" logs are recovered and repurposed for building and artistic projects. Occasionally, Larry obtains lumber from other recovered old-growth logs like heart pine.

Larry also uses locally sourced hardwoods when urban trees are harvested for safety reasons, storm damage, or development. By connecting with local professionals, Larry can utilize wood otherwise destined for the landfill.

Offering paddles of all shapes, sizes, and uses, Larry begins each piece with a milled plank, cuts the basic paddle form on a band saw, shapes the wood with a drawknife, and then hand planes and sands the piece. Each paddle is finished with hemp oil. Some are tipped with epoxy for extra durability in shallow waters.

Meet the Craftsman

Larry McIntyre spent a lot of time outdoors growing up, especially enjoying Scouting, smallmouth bass fishing in Maine, and hunting in West Virginia with family. After moving to Charlotte, North Carolina, he found a passion for woodworking. Larry is an avid paddler, and hand-carving canoe paddles became a creative outlet that deepened his connection to the South.

"Among my many goals with SouthernWood Paddle is to help connect other people to the South, its natural resources, and its history. Along the way maybe I can help a few folks find happiness, create new memories, and inspire someone else to take the risk to do what they love."



The color of the recovered sinker wood largely depends on where the logs came to rest in the rivers and swamps. Muddy bottoms often produce darker boards with various shades of brown, gray, and even green and blue compared to sandy riverbeds resulting in a lighter or blond color, with red and orange highlights.

Connect at southernwoodpaddle.com or on Instagram @southernwoodpaddle.

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*<https://www.abatable.com/reports/voluntary-carbon-market-developer-overview-2023> (p. 11)

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Longleaf Destinations

By Jennie Haskell, The Longleaf Alliance

AIKEN GOPHER TORTOISE HERITAGE PRESERVE

A rural area of eastern Aiken County, South Carolina, is home to the northernmost population of the gopher tortoise. This is so important that it influenced naming a 1,700-acre South Carolina Department of Natural Resources property. The Aiken Gopher Tortoise Heritage Preserve is a beautiful example of the longleaf pine-wiregrass ecosystem, with an abundance of grasses, forbs, and trees that provide habitat for a variety of wildlife.

Gopher tortoises are found in the coastal plain east of the Mississippi River. Relatively common throughout most of Florida and southern Georgia and Alabama, they live in just a few counties in South Carolina. As a keystone species, gopher tortoises provide shelter for 350+ species of animals in their 30-foot-long underground burrows, which are about 10 to 15 feet deep. The deep sandy soils in Aiken County are perfect for them. While the Aiken Gopher Tortoise Heritage Preserve (AGTHP) is home to more than 300 gopher tortoises, they can be hard to find. However, their burrows are easy to spot, especially after a prescribed burn, because of the sandy mound, called an apron, at the entrance.

In addition to the wild population of gopher tortoises at the Preserve, the University of Georgia's Savannah River Ecology Laboratory has led efforts to translocate and head-start gopher tortoises at the site with partners like The Longleaf Alliance, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Riverbanks Zoo and Garden, and the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources for the last 20 years. Head-starting involves collecting the eggs and allowing the hatchlings to grow in a controlled environment without predation to improve the chances of the tortoises growing to adulthood. After about one year, the juveniles are released. Translocation involves

relocating animals from areas that no longer have any suitable habitat, usually because of human impact, and placing them in areas with adequate habitat to enhance or maintain a viable population. AGTHP is one of the receiver sites because of its quality habitat. The translocation process is complicated and requires time to acclimate the animals to their new home. Large enclosures made of metal fencing are created to contain the tortoises, often introducing them to other tortoises. The enclosures are eventually removed to allow the tortoises to move freely.

Active management, like thinning, burning, and midstory reduction, have created a longleaf pine-wiregrass savanna at AGTHP. With a sparse overstory, sunlight reaches the ground, stimulating grass and forbs. The diverse flora provides food and shelter for many wildlife species. In addition to the terrestrial tortoise, this property supports white-tailed deer, Northern Bob-white Quail, Wild Turkey, fox squirrels, many snakes, and a variety of birds. Bachman's Sparrow, a species of concern, and the federally threatened Red-cockaded Woodpeckers are often heard and seen around the property. Just a few other bird species seen include Eastern Towhee, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Prairie and Pine Warblers, Summer Tanager, and Mississippi Kite, according to iNaturalist.

Botanists come to the AGTHP to witness its botanical diversity. In the understory, passion flowers, gopherweed, butterfly weed, prickly pear, sandhill milkweed, and liatris are found. In the xeric soils, longleaf pine, turkey and blackjack oaks, and loblolly pine grow.

The property also has a bottomland riparian component. The eastern boundary is the South Fork Edisto River. Spring Branch and Pond Branch flow through the Preserve, providing several ponds. Atlantic white cedar is found on the mucky soils, and pond pine can be found in the mesic soils.

Planning Your Visit to the Aiken Gopher Tortoise Heritage Preserve

Visitors enjoy recreational activities like hiking, horse riding, birding, and hunting. There are 16.5 miles of easy-walking dirt trails to witness the longleaf pine-wiregrass and riparian ecosystems.

An information kiosk and parking area are along Oak Ridge Club Trail Road at 33.505386, -81.4125107. Note, hunting is popular between August and January every day except Sunday. **No motorized vehicles or bicycles allowed.**

Other nearby examples of longleaf pine ecosystems available to the public are the Ditch Pond Heritage Preserve, Aiken State Park, and Hitchcock Woods.



Juvenile gopher tortoise release [Lisa Lord]



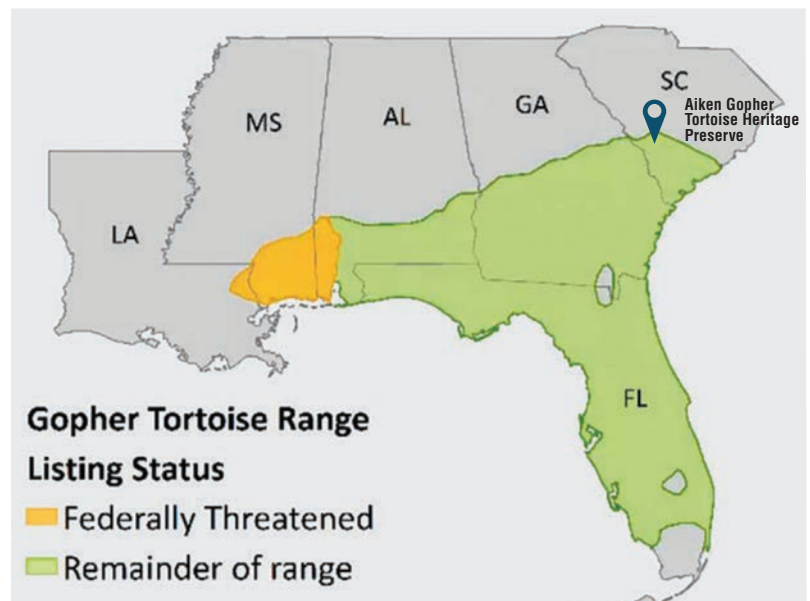
Gopher tortoise burrow with the exposed sandy apron at the entrance [Lisa Lord]



Longleaf pine [Lisa Lord]



Prescribed fire [Jennie Haskell]



Fond FAREWELLS



Wendy Ledbetter retired from The Longleaf Alliance in April 2025 after four years serving as the Fort Stewart/Altamaha Partnership Coordinator and many years prior with the Texas Longleaf Team working with the Texas Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. We are thankful to Wendy for her many contributions to longleaf restoration over a career spanning 50 years from Florida to East Texas to Georgia. TLA staff celebrated Wendy at a farewell luncheon in Savannah, where Wendy currently resides. Congratulations Wendy and best wishes for your retirement!



After five years with The Longleaf Alliance, **Abe Huang** is leaving Florida to return to the West Coast. Abe started with Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership in 2020 as a part-time seasonal restoration crew member. He joined the reticulated flatwoods salamander recovery efforts full-time in 2023 on the *Ambystoma bishopi* (AMBBIS) Restoration Team. During his time with GCPEP, Abe's contributions helped restore 8 wetlands, more than 65 acres of woody encroachment removal, 1,335 salamanders reared, and 41,818 acres of prescribed fire.

Expanding THE LONGLEAF TEAM

Welcome to **Mark McClellan** who joined The Longleaf Alliance in April as the new Restoration Coordinator! Mark brings a wealth of experience and expertise to The Alliance and will coordinate TLA's Planting Fund, working with landowners and nursery partners. Retiring from Georgia Forestry Commission with over 28 years of experience, he has served in many capacities with the Commission, such as FIA Forester, Field Forester, Chief Ranger, Specialist in Community Forestry and Program Manager for Forest Stewardship, Forest Legacy, Tree Farm, and Underserved Landowner Programs. Mark is an avid outdoorsman and conservationist, and his number one focus is to provide and promote education and sound forest management practices throughout our great state. A 1996 graduate from the University of Georgia School of Forest Resources, he is both a registered forester and a certified arborist. He has lived, worked, and raised a family in Southeast Georgia and is based out of Blackshear.



Whitney Johnson joined The Longleaf Alliance as Database Manager in May, bringing over a decade of experience in nonprofit leadership, data systems, and strategic fundraising. A certified Project Management Professional (PMP), Whitney has led initiatives across the conservation, cybersecurity, and aerospace sectors. She supports Big Waters Land Trust (formerly Conservation Foundation of The Gulf Coast), overseeing data analytics and stewardship operations. She previously served as Director of the Space Information Sharing and Analysis Center (Space ISAC), coordinating initiatives with a global impact. Passionate about conservation and community resilience, Whitney is excited to bring her skills to TLA to support restoring and protecting the longleaf pine ecosystem for generations. She enjoys spending time outdoors with her husband, toddler, and their two dogs.





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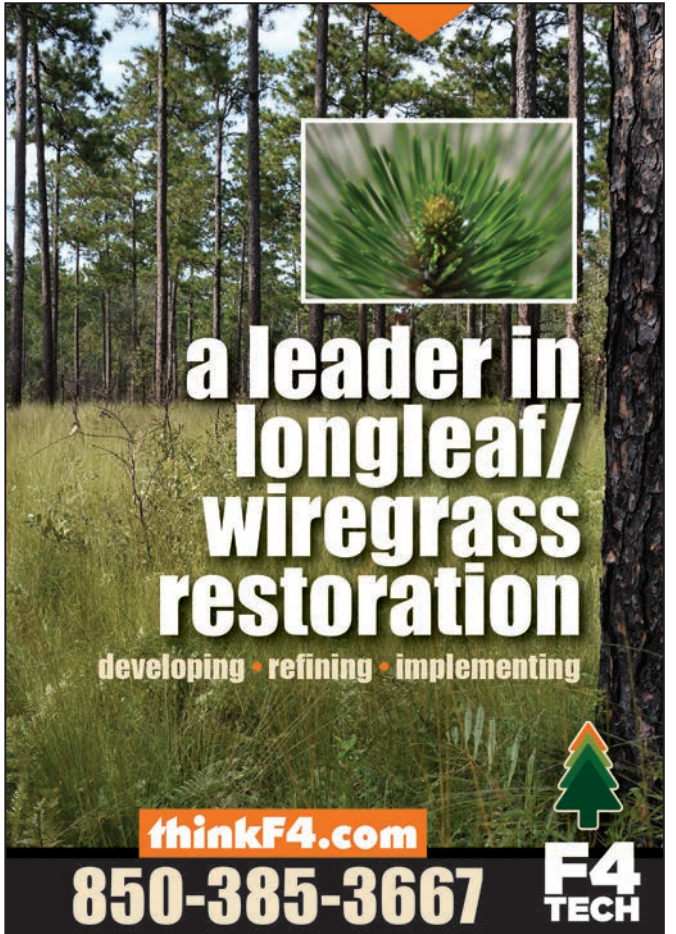


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By Lynnsey Basala, The Longleaf Alliance

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A Donor Advised Fund (DAF) is like a charitable checking account. Donors get a tax break upfront. In a DAF, money is invested, grows tax-free, and has no payout requirements. Money put into a DAF is irrevocable.

Donors have a tax incentive to move money into a DAF, but there is no urgency to move the money out. We recognize individuals keep money sitting in DAFs because of inertia, are busy with life, will “get to it later,” or maybe they are feeling overwhelmed with their charitable decisions. If this sounds like you, we have the opportunity for donations to have an even larger impact through the #HalfMyDAF movement.

With more than \$250 billion sitting in Donor Advised Funds across the country, the goal of #HalfMyDAF is to move that money to 501c3 nonprofits like ours by randomly giving away unrestricted matching grants. **If you are a DAF holder and commit to spending down half of the money that was in your DAF on January 1, 2025 by September 26, 2025, all the grants you make to The Longleaf Alliance and other nonprofits will be eligible for a match from #HalfMyDAF.**

#HalfMyDAF will make dollar-for-dollar matches of up to \$5,000 on September 26, 2025, out of a pool of \$2.25M in unrestricted funding—and four lucky nonprofits will get matches up to \$25K. The more donors who commit to spending down at least half of their DAF with a gift to us, the more likely we are to receive a match.

You might also consider naming The Longleaf Alliance as a remainder beneficiary, an easy amendment to your DAF if you are so inclined.

Please contact Lynnsey@longleafalliance.org for more information about this easy giving vehicle or visit halfmydaf.com.

Why #HalfMyDAF?

Over \$251 billion in charitable funding is available in Donor Advised Funds. Jennifer and David Risher created the #HalfMyDAF matching program to inspire donors to put their money to work now when it can do the most good. By matching DAF funds, the Rishers and their funding partners hope to give donors a nudge to take action now and help their money go further. Since 2020, the #HalfMyDAF community has awarded over \$70 million in grants.



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Heartpine

By Wendy J. Ledbetter

Writing for *The Longleaf Leader* was one of my favorite tasks in my position as the Fort Stewart/Altamaha Partnership Coordinator for The Longleaf Alliance. So, when my friend and colleague Sarah Crate asked if I would write an “after retirement” Heartpine article, I was excited. However, as the submission deadline drew closer, I struggled and even procrastinated due to the emotional weight of this moment — at least for me. My retirement was planned months in advance, but this transition time has been consumed with shifting governmental dynamics and uncertainty of how our efforts to care for and ensure the future protection of our air, water, and lands may be affected. I had to search in my heart— to reconnect with what remains true and enduring.

Point 1: Places matter and will continue to do so! For a time, I worked at the historic home, garden, and citrus grove of Florida author Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. Reflecting on the people, woods, and waters of rural North Florida, Rawlings wrote, “I do not understand how anyone can live without some small place of enchantment to turn to.” During my professional career, we have grown wiser in understanding the need and value of looking and thinking larger – for species, for water, and more. At the same time, we know there is no substitute for the intimate relationship a person can find with a place in nature, however small, rural, or even urban. This understanding is what sustains us. I have countless memories of diverse longleaf forests, woodlands, pitcher plant bogs, wet savannas, and vistas that have improved from restoration and management.

Point 2: People care! There will always be a core group of people who care about our natural world. Rawlings also offered this sentiment, “We cannot live without the Earth or apart from it, and something is shriveled in a man’s heart when he turns away from it and concerns himself only with the affairs of men.” I had the privilege of working with so many talented people devoted to advancing longleaf ecosystem conservation and associated systems. Burning on the Wade Tract with Leon Neel’s guidance, botanizing with Dr. Bob Godfrey and Angus Gholson, and listening to the wise counsel of Rhett Johnson, to name a few. Our collective effort to go beyond science work and engage communities, including youth of all ages, has changed our narrative.

Point 3: Working women! I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge and celebrate the inclusion and advances of women in the longleaf conservation community and in fact, in all the natural resource work of which I have witnessed during my career. One of my old-school “campfire” stories shared with

young female colleagues includes my field hockey team finally getting uniforms and access to the high-school field/gym with the passing of Title IX in 1972. As a teen, other meaningful opportunities like this included the co-ed Explorer group at a local nature center focused on natural resource skill sets and careers and the mentorship of my environmental science high school teacher. It was a time when becoming a nurse, secretary, or teacher was the typical and expected career choice for a young woman. Considering a career path in wildlife biology/natural resources was not the norm, nor encouraged. My initial years of being a park ranger, preserve manager, field technician, and prescribed burner often included being the first, only, or rare female on the crew. Included in those years was navigating the challenge of parenting/motherhood and my career choice. Showing up at daycare, smelling of wood smoke, and in my dirty Nomex® was met with mixed reactions, but hey, it was okay! How fortunate are the young women of today to have opportunities such as the WTREX (Women in Fire Training Exchange) to build leadership skills, confidence, communication, and practical training for the workforce. Serving as a mentor and working with my younger female colleagues as they follow their passions and advance in their careers has been a great joy. I feel energized and hopeful for the future while sharing time with our younger colleagues. I hope everyone will consider mentoring our youth and young professionals (men and women) to continue the conservation legacy.

I believe that by holding onto our shared purpose, we can carry forward what matters most, even through challenging times. I offer my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all I have spent time with and those working on behalf of our longleaf ecosystem resources and treasured places for the future. My heart is full.

