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

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

Carol Denhof

EMBRACING CHANGE



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Spring is always a season of transformation—subtle at first, then suddenly undeniable. In the longleaf world, we see it in the flush of wiregrass, the return of fire to the landscape, and the renewed energy that comes with longer days. This year, that theme of *change* resonates especially deeply within The Longleaf Alliance as we mark a meaningful transition in our organization's own story.

After decades of unwavering leadership, dedication, and impact, **Ad Platt** officially retired at the end of March. For so many of us, it's hard to imagine The Alliance without Ad's steady presence, his broad knowledge of longleaf pine, and his gift for bringing partners together toward shared purpose. Since 2011, Ad has helped guide our organization into a widely respected force for conservation, restoration, and collaboration. His vision has shaped landscapes, programs, and people, and his legacy will continue to support longleaf ecosystems for generations to come. While we will miss his day-to-day guidance, we celebrate his extraordinary contributions and the well-earned opportunity for him to enjoy a new season of life.

With Ad's retirement also comes an opportunity to elevate voices that will lead us forward, and **Lisa Lord** is the perfect person to step into the Vice President for Operations role. Lisa assumed this position in January, and her leadership embodies

both continuity and innovation – allowing us to honor our roots while imagining new possibilities for how we serve landowners, partners, and the broader longleaf community.

Times of transition also give us space to reflect on who we are and who we are becoming. As our programs grow and our mission reaches more people and more acres, we have new opportunities to bring additional staff onto The Longleaf Alliance team. We are excited to be adding Longleaf Foresters to our outreach staff in the Florida Panhandle and, for the first time, in Virginia. This infusion of talent will deepen our technical expertise, expand on-the-ground support, and build the organizational capacity needed to meet today's challenges head-on.

Change, even when positive, can feel daunting. But spring reminds us that change is also hopeful, energizing, and necessary for growth. The longleaf ecosystem itself depends on cycles of renewal. In that same spirit, The Longleaf Alliance moves into this new chapter grounded in gratitude for where we've been and inspired by where we're headed.

As always, thank you for being part of this community and for your steadfast commitment to longleaf. Together, we embrace this season of change—and the opportunity it offers to strengthen our mission and expand our impact.



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MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST | SPRING

EVALUATE YOUNG LONGLEAF STANDS

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

PLAN FOR YOUR NEXT LONGLEAF PLANTING

- Order your seedlings early for 2026-2027 planting projects. Nurseries usually sell out of preferred seed sources by early summer.
- Explore our partner nurseries at longleafalliance.org > What We Do > Nurseries

ASSESS LONGLEAF RECRUITMENT

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

SPRING RELEASE OR EARLY SITE PREPARATION TREATMENTS

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

PRIORITIZE BURNING

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

PREPARE THE SEED BED

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

IF YOU MOW

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

PLANT NATIVE WARM-SEASON GRASSES

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

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



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Q&A

Q. Dear Longleaf Alliance,

My forester suggested I buffer my tract when I spray herbicide. But I don't want to lose productive acres. Thoughts?

Wondering About Buffering

A. Dear Wondering,

There are many considerations here that we explore in more depth in our Herbicide 201 Academy, and we highly encourage you to consider attending in the future. In the meantime, let's begin with the purpose of a buffer, which is a frequently used practice to reduce the potential for herbicide drift or offsite movement. Herbicide drift potential is influenced by many factors including the herbicide chosen and its formulation, spray equipment, spray pressure, droplet size, weather factors (including wind), and more.

It is wise to plan for a sufficient buffer, particularly around sensitive sites adjacent to a treatment area that could be damaged by the applied chemicals. There may be less need when the tract is adjacent to a forest road or transmission line. A garden, a stream or wetland, or a boundary line with your neighbor could be quite different.

Buffer zones help prevent offsite spray drift from both liquid herbicides and dry formulations. When properly designed, they can also protect water quality by capturing soil active chemicals that might otherwise wash away during heavy rainfall. For wind borne drift, it's important to consider prevailing wind directions, buffer width, and vegetation composition. Buffers should be densely

vegetated with tall native grasses, trees, or shrubs, and the foliage should be twice the height of the sprayer's release point. The buffer vegetation should remain permeable (something you can see through) because solid barriers tend to push drifting particles up and over, reducing their effectiveness. Plants with thin, needlelike leaves; rough or hairy leaf surfaces; and dense, branching canopies are especially effective at reducing wind speed and intercepting fine particles on the move.

Be aware that the buffer acreage can add up quickly and make future management more difficult if left to grow into a jungle. But devoting this strip of land to use as a temporary buffer does not mean it needs to remain unmanaged; it just needs to be managed differently. In addition to using prescribed fire in buffers, alternative chemical treatment approaches could reduce drift concerns while also targeting undesirable vegetation. For example, directed herbicide applications (backpack treatment, hack-and-squirt, gridline, pelletized, basal bark, etc.) may be much more appropriate than broadcast applications around sensitive areas.

With drones, drift retardants, and improved booms and nozzles in aerial applications, drift potential can be considerably reduced during application. But as the neighborhood gets more crowded, it is still wise to plan and consider your operations to avoid unintended damage to your own property or to others'. Not unlike preparing your prescribed burn plans and prescription, where the "smoke is yours wherever it goes," similarly, "any drift is your drift when it drifts."

Sincerely,
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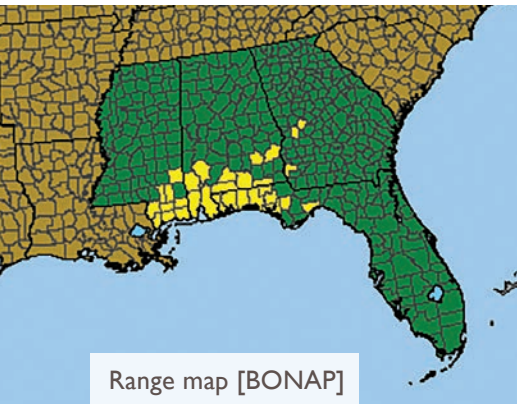
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PLANT SPOTLIGHT

By Michael Hubbard, The Longleaf Alliance

SOUTHERN BUTTERWORT

Pinguicula primuliflora C.E. Wood & Godfrey | Bladderwort Family – Lentibulariaceae



Bay swamp at Blackwater River State Forest [Michael Hubbard]



Growing adjacent to a clear stream [Lilly Byrd]

Description

A small, perennial carnivorous plant, Southern butterwort (*Pinguicula primuliflora*) gets its common name from its sticky, butter-like leaves that appear to glisten in the sunlight. Unlike many carnivorous plants with obvious pitchers or snap traps, butterworts use a passive adhesive strategy to capture prey. Glandular hairs secrete a mucilaginous substance on basal rosette leaves. After this sticky secretion traps tiny insects (such as gnats and fruit flies), the leaf surface secretes digestive enzymes that break down the prey and absorb nutrients, which are often limited in the nutrient-poor soils where this plant grows.

Southern butterwort produces delicate, funnel-shaped flowers on slender stalks that rise above the leaf rosette. Flower color ranges from pale lavender to violet with a white ring in the center, and blooms typically occur in late spring through summer. Each flower lasts only a short time, but a plant may produce several over the growing season.

Distribution & Habitat

Southern butterwort occurs from Georgia and Florida west to Mississippi in acidic, wet, open habitats, including stream sides, bogs, wet savannas, seepage slopes, roadside ditches, and wet pine flatwoods. These environments are typically low in essential nutrients, particularly nitrogen, which has driven the evolution of carnivory in this and related species.

Pinguicula primuliflora is often found growing in or near running water, thus its other common name – clearwater butterwort. The plant prefers full sun to partial shade and consistently moist soil. In drier periods, the leaves may become less active, or the plant may enter a semi-dormant state until moisture levels return.

Wildlife Value

The flowers of Southern butterworts provide nectar for pollinators, including bees and butterflies, which typically avoid capture due to the spatial separation of flowers and sticky feeding leaves. The plant's carnivory helps reduce populations of small, soft-bodied arthropods such as fungus gnats and other minute flies in their immediate vicinity.

This species also provides microhabitat structure for tiny organisms living on wetland surfaces and contributes to overall plant community complexity in boggy ecosystems.

Related Species

Southern butterwort is one of several *Pinguicula* species in the Southeast. All share the genus's characteristic sticky leaves but differ in flower morphology, size, and habitat preference.

Yellow butterwort – *Pinguicula lutea* – yellow flowers

Blue butterwort – *Pinguicula caerulea* – blue or violet-blue flowers with distinct veination

Chapman's butterwort – *Pinguicula planifolia* – reddish colored basal rosettes

Panhandle butterwort – *Pinguicula ionantha* – pale violet to almost white flowers; endemic to the Florida Panhandle

Small butterwort – *Pinguicula pumila* – smallest rosettes and flowers

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WINDOW *into* WILDLIFE

The Secret Lives of Nightjars Family: Caprimulgidae

By Heather Levy, Hitchcock Woods Foundation

Chuck-will's-widow
[Mirko Schoenitz]

During the day, a healthy pineywoods system echoes with the sounds of species like the Brown-headed Nuthatch, Bachman's Sparrow, and Red-cockaded Woodpecker. But during dusk and dawn, an elusive group of birds takes to the sky. These birds are the nightjars, also known as "goatsuckers," a name that comes with an interesting story.

Dating back to ancient Greece and Rome, a myth persisted that nightjars would fly into livestock pens at night and suck milk from goats. In reality, they were drawn to the swarms of insects that gathered around the animals. Although nightjars have tiny bills, their mouths open extraordinarily wide when they eat, giving them a mythical appearance. No goats have been milked by a nightjar to date, but the folklore stuck, and their scientific family name reflects this: *Caprimulgidae* from *capra* (goat) and *mulgere* (to milk).

Three species of nightjars co-occur during the breeding season and overlap with the longleaf pine range: the **Eastern Whip-poor-will** (*Antrastomus vociferus*), **Chuck-will's-widow** (*Antrastomus carolinensis*), and **Common Nighthawk** (*Chordeiles minor*). All three species favor open, dry pine woodlands, especially longleaf pine communities. Nightjars lay their eggs directly on the ground, and frequent, low-intensity fires help maintain the open understory and sparse ground cover necessary for nesting and foraging. Nightjars are insectivorous and feed on the wing, making them incredibly agile fliers. They have long, stiff feathers around their mouths called rictal bristles, which help funnel insects into their gaping mouths. The low tree densities enable nightjars to successfully navigate the sky and hunt with few obstructions.

Eastern Whip-poor-will [Andy Reago
& Chrissy McClarren, CC-BY-2.0]



Common Nighthawk
[Kathlin Simpkins]



Nightjars are secretive and among the most understudied groups of birds. They are crepuscular, meaning they forage most actively at dawn and dusk. This is also when they vocalize most frequently. Chuck-will's-widows and Eastern Whip-poor-wills call their names, while nighthawks give a distinct, nasal "peent." These twilight hours are the best time to observe nightjars as they dance through the sky, calling back and forth across the landscape. During the day, they roost on the ground or in trees, remaining quiet and motionless unless disturbed.

Unfortunately, nightjars are of increasing conservation concern. Many species have experienced significant population declines, driven by widespread insect loss, habitat fragmentation, and the disappearance of open pine habitat from fire suppression and development. Artificial lighting may also disrupt their foraging behavior, while vehicle collisions pose an additional threat as birds hunt insects along roads at night.

While researchers continue to unravel the secret lives of nightjars, there are steps that both landowners and the general public can take to help them. Maintaining healthy pineywoods through prescribed fire, conserving large tracts of connected habitat, minimizing pesticide use, keeping dogs on leashes to prevent disturbance to nesting birds, and reducing night lighting can support nightjar populations.

If you're interested in contributing to important population data, consider volunteering with the Nightjar Survey Network, a nationwide community science effort that helps document nightjar presence and trends across their range. Additionally, data submitted to Cornell Lab's eBird helps researchers paint a better picture of their distribution and migratory patterns.

Let's keep these wonderfully mysterious birds dancing and singing in the twilight skies.



By Alan Patterson, The Longleaf Alliance

LONGLEAF ECOSYSTEM

eats

MOREL MUSHROOMS

There are at least 19 distinct species in the *Morchella* genus, all of which are highly desirable, choice edible mushrooms. This article focuses on the three most common species found in the Southeast, although additional species may also occur in this region. Within the longleaf pine range, foragers are most likely to encounter the American yellow morel (*Morchella americana*), the tulip morel (*Morchella diminutiva*), and the black morel (*Morchella angusticeps*).

Morel mushrooms have a somewhat short foraging window compared to many other wild edible mushrooms, generally beginning in early March and ending in mid to late May while soil temperatures are in the 50-70°F range. Morels are also variable in size, ranging from an inch tall to over 12 inches, though they average in the 3-6 inch range.

Morels are most often found in locations with moist soil and in disturbed areas, such as recently burned or logged tracts. They typically grow in association with elm, ash, and poplar trees.

A key identifying feature that distinguishes morels from the false morel (*Gyromitra* spp.) is its hollow interior and fully connected stem and cap. This can be clearly seen in the American yellow morel photo.

As always, ensure a positive ID with experts before ingesting any wild mushrooms! Morels are also available commercially.



American yellow morel, *Morchella americana* [Pinonbistro, CC BY-NC]



Tulip morel, *Morchella diminutiva* [Jacob Malcom, CC BY-NA]

MOREL RECIPES TO TRY AT HOME



[Beyond the Chicken Coop]



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J.R.R. Tolkien

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Sensitive Pea (Chamaecrista nictitans)

A legume that can help increase the nitrogen availability in some soils, attracts parasitoid wasps that control plant-eating insects, and provides food for quail, doves, and turkey.



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By Mark McClellan, The Longleaf Alliance

ANATOMY OF A GROWING-SEASON BURN FIRST-TIME SUCCESS ON A SMALL-ACREAGE TRACT



Longleaf stand before, after, and six months post growing-season burn



Transitioning from winter burning to burning in late spring or summer can be daunting, but with careful planning, a small farm in southeast Georgia is seeing the results of its first growing-season burn.

The Burn Site

As a recognized Centennial Farm in Georgia, the property has a long history of active land management with agricultural fields, pastures, ponds, cypress drains, planted pine stands, and a special 10-acre stand of mature longleaf pine. The understory is typical of southern rough, consisting of a moderate shrub and grass layer of gallberry, saw palmetto, wiregrass, broomsedge, and other small forbs conducive to wildlife.

The longleaf stand has been burned on a three-year rotation since 2000, but always in the winter. After years of apprehension, it was finally decided to conduct a growing

season burn. The goals for this burn were solely to improve wildlife habitat and enhance wiregrass.

Fire Weather

Favorable weather conditions for burning this stand include: a steady 5-10 mph west wind, humidity between 50%-75%, temperature below 90 degrees, and a smoke dispersion index above 40.

There were still concerns about crown scorch and lingering smoke, but knowing that a transport wind of 10-15 mph would take care of those issues, the concerns were quickly lifted.

Fortunately, a much-needed three-inch rain fell a few days prior, assuring adequate ground moisture.

With favorable conditions finally matching the burn plan in mid-May, a burn permit was obtained.



TEST FIRE



BACKING FIRE



FLANKING FIRE

Firing Techniques

TEST FIRE: A small **test fire** was ignited around 11:00am. The green vegetation quickly began to burn and spread as expected.

BACKING FIRE: After a few minutes of observation, a **backing fire** (or downwind fire) was used to blacken approximately 20 feet off the east fire break.

IGNITIONS: Initially, attempts to use strip-heading fire and point source fires on a grid pattern of every 10 feet caused the fire intensity to be greater than desired.

Due to the steady west winds, burning techniques were adjusted to use **flanking fire**. Stringing 40-foot strips straight

into the wind, roughly 50 feet apart, kept flame lengths minimal and helped move the fire across the landscape more quickly.

This pattern continued throughout the burn, which lasted roughly three hours. There were a few hot spots around some of the felled trees from Hurricane Helene, but all in all, it was a successful burn.

Fall Results

Following the first-ever growing-season burn, wiregrass responded with a flush of fall flowering and robust seed production—an ecological cue tightly linked to fire timing. Wiregrass produces viable seed when burned during its growing season, and research shows that such burns reliably stimulate both flowering and seed set.

Farm History & Noteworthy Management

- **1907** – Leased from Henderson Still for turpentine rights.
- **1913** – Purchased by the family; primarily used for turpentine, cattle, and agriculture.
- Until the **1970s**, the property was fenced, grazed, and regularly managed with prescribed fire.
- **1986** – High grading of timber (removal of the best and largest trees); all catface (turpentine) trees and stumps were removed.
- **1988** – Tract interplanted with loblolly pine.
- **1998** – Remaining timber harvested except for the 10 acres of longleaf pine which was left to serve as a reminder of how the property once appeared.
- **2000** – Implemented three-year burn rotation for the longleaf.
- **2021** – Last remaining loblolly pines were removed.
- **2025** – Conducted first growing-season burn.

Not Just a Longleaf Story – Grass Stage Around the World

By Ian Warr, University of Georgia

The Grass Stage as We Know It

Anyone who works with longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) knows the grass stage. It is the juvenile phase that defines the species, when seedlings remain low to the ground for years, investing heavily in roots and needles while showing little to no height growth. This early life stage is central to how longleaf establishes and persists in fire-maintained landscapes.

During the grass stage, longleaf pine seedlings keep the terminal bud close to the ground, where it is protected by a dense tuft of needles. Those needles shield the most sensitive tissues from heat during surface fires, allowing young trees to survive burns that would kill most other seedlings. This growth form helps explain how longleaf succeeds where many other tree species fail to establish. It is commonly believed that this prolonged juvenile phase also allows seedlings to accumulate belowground carbon reserves that later support rapid height growth, often referred to as bolting. While intuitive and widely repeated, this explanation has received surprisingly little direct study, and much of what is assumed about the grass stage is based on observation rather than detailed physiological evidence.

Because the grass stage is so closely associated with longleaf, it is easy to assume that this strategy is unique. In fact, it is not, but it is uncommon. Most pine species, including many well adapted to fire such as slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) and loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*), begin height growth early and never pass through a prolonged, ground-hugging juvenile phase. Only a small number of other pine species worldwide exhibit grass-stage or grass-stage-like juvenile forms, and these species help place longleaf's familiar strategy into a broader ecological and conservation context.

Where the Grass Stage Appears Close to Home

Before turning to more distant settings, it helps to begin with systems that most closely resemble those longleaf practitioners already know. In a handful of pine-dominated landscapes shaped by frequent fire and lightning-driven ignitions, juvenile growth forms resembling a grass stage appear again, even though many other pine species in similar environments do not display this pattern.



Apache pine (*Pinus engelmannii*) "grass stage" seedling [C.J. Earle] and mature stand [alltownguy22]

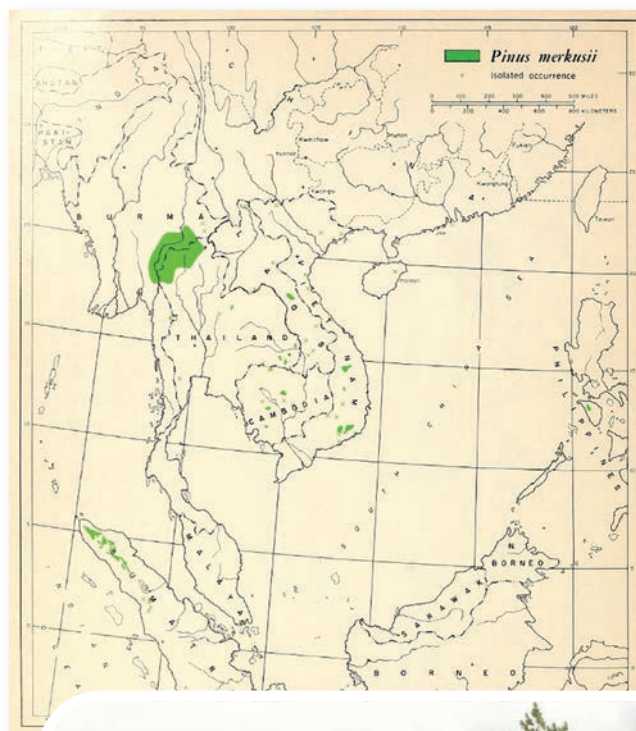
One of the clearest examples is tropical pine (*Pinus tropicalis*), restricted to western Cuba. Like longleaf, tropical pine occurs in open pine savannas with grass-dominated understories and a long history of surface fire. Its seedlings pass through a prolonged juvenile phase marked by suppressed stem growth and dense needles that protect the terminal bud during low-intensity burns. These systems closely parallel longleaf landscapes in structure and disturbance regime, even though they occur outside the southeastern United States. Tropical pine is currently listed as vulnerable, reflecting the sensitivity of these fire-dependent systems to land-use change.

A similar, though not identical, pattern can be seen in South Florida slash pine (*Pinus elliottii* var. *densa*). In parts of southern Florida, slash pine growing in frequently burned, lightning-prone landscapes may exhibit a grass-stage-like juvenile form. Unlike longleaf, this expression does not appear to be genetically fixed. South Florida slash pine is listed as near threatened, underscoring that partial reliance on this strategy may coincide with elevated conservation concern. Together, these examples highlight an important point: frequent fire alone does not guarantee the development or persistence of a grass stage.

Beyond the Longleaf Range

Grass-stage or grass-stage-like juvenile forms also appear in several pine species of the southwestern United States and Central America. These species occur in open pine and pine-oak forests where surface fire has historically been common, even though the climate and seasonality are typically more arid than in the southeastern United States.

Michoacán pine (*Pinus devoniana*), Montezuma pine (*Pinus montezumae*), and Apache pine (*Pinus engelmannii*) are all described as producing seedlings that remain low to the ground during early establishment, with height growth temporarily suppressed while dense clusters of needles protect the terminal bud. In these species, the grass stage is typically discussed alongside other fire-associated traits such as thick bark and branch shedding. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) currently lists these species as of least concern, whereas longleaf pine, South Florida slash pine, and tropical pine, face higher levels of conservation concern.



Sumatran pine (*Pinus merkusii*) is found in Southeast Asia and is the only pine species naturally occurring south of the equator. [Photo by Oleg Kosterin; Map from William B. Critchfield & Elbert L. Little, Jr., 1966]

South Florida slash pine (*Pinus elliottii* var. *densa*) over an understory of cabbage palm and saw palmetto [C.J. Earle]



Asian Examples

Beyond the Americas, very few pine species are consistently discussed in connection with grass-stage or grass-stage-like juvenile growth. One example is Sumatran pine (*Pinus merkusii*), which ranges across parts of Southeast Asia. In portions of its range where fire is frequent, seedlings have been reported to develop a grass stage before transitioning to height growth. Sumatran pine is currently listed as vulnerable by the IUCN. Whether this reflects sensitivity related to its regeneration strategy, broader land-use pressures, or other regional factors remains unclear. Notably, it is also the only pine species with natural populations extending south of the equator, underscoring just how unusual this species is within the genus.

Yunnan pine (*Pinus yunnanensis*) occupies a very different ecological space from longleaf, despite sharing an association with fire. It is the most widely distributed native tree in the Yunnan Province, forming extensive stands across dry sites from mid to high elevations, and in some areas reaching the alpine timberline. The species is well adapted to cold, drought, and infertile soils, and tolerates a wide range of climatic conditions.

Grass-stage or grass-stage-like juvenile growth has been reported in Yunnan pine, but unlike longleaf it does not define the species' regeneration strategy. Instead, Yunnan pine typically regenerates in large numbers following disturbance, forming dense, even-aged stands. It is listed as a species of least concern, reflecting its broad range and strong regenerative capacity. The contrast highlights that where longleaf depends on protecting individual seedlings during early establishment, other fire-adapted pines rely more on abundance and turnover, even when similar juvenile traits are present.

What We Can Learn from a Wider View

Viewed globally, the grass stage is neither unique to longleaf pine nor a common feature of fire-adapted pines. Pines under frequent fire have evolved many survival strategies, including thick bark, rapid early height growth, or prolific regeneration after disturbance. The grass stage represents a different path, emphasizing protection of the terminal bud during early establishment rather than escape from fire through rapid growth, and it has been taken only rarely.

From a conservation perspective, it is notable that the species most similar to longleaf in structure and regeneration strategy, longleaf pine itself, South Florida slash pine, and tropical pine, are also those facing the greatest conservation challenges. This pattern does not imply cause and effect, but it does suggest that regeneration strategies tied to narrow sets of conditions may be especially sensitive to changes in climate, fire regimes, and land use.

For those of us working with longleaf pine, this broader view adds context to something we often take for granted. Seeing the grass stage appear, sometimes clearly and sometimes imperfectly, in a small number of other pine species sharpens the questions we ask about longleaf itself. Longleaf remains our home base, but viewing it alongside its few global counterparts reminds us that understanding the grass stage is part of understanding how longleaf may be challenged in the future.



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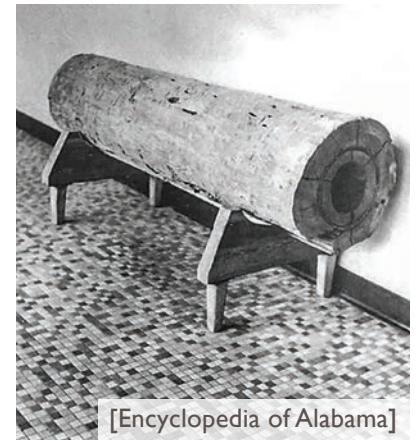
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WOODEN PIPES

Early American Waterworks and the Longleaf Pine *By Drew Arnold, The Longleaf Alliance*



[Encyclopedia of Alabama]

It can be easy to take something as simple as turning on a faucet for granted when the flick of the wrist brings forth clean potable water. It makes one ponder times gone by and how our forebears dealt with water delivery.

Many folks' initial impression is that the first water pipes in America were cast iron, since they are commonly observed in historic buildings and old homes. One might also assume that prior to the adoption of cast iron pipes, water "delivery" systems were limited to wells or manually gathering water from nearby bodies of water (streams, lakes, rivers) and the occasional spring. So, it might surprise some to learn that many cities across the United States and even abroad utilized wooden pipes early in their water systems.

For a little context, by 1800, there were 17 public and private waterworks in various cities across America. Most of these early systems functioned primarily for fire suppression and street/gutter cleaning, and secondarily for domestic (cooking, washing, etc.) and industrial purposes. Wooden pipes were widely used before cast iron piping became more readily available in the early 1800s, first through imports from England and later through limited production in the more industrialized regions of the American Northeast. Even then, cast iron remained more costly than the plentiful timber found throughout American forests, making wooden pipes the more economical choice for many communities.

A notable example of wooden pipe usage in a municipal water supply in the Southeast is the unearthing of bored longleaf pine logs during routine roadwork in Mobile, Alabama,

in the 1970s. These hollowed-out longleaf pine logs were remnants of some of the city's earliest waterworks, originating sometime during the 1840s.

Delving further into the story of these longleaf pipes reveals the significant influence of one particular engineer of midwestern and southeastern water resources – Albert Stein was a Prussian-born hydraulic engineer who immigrated to the

U.S. in the early 1800s. After establishing his career in Europe, Stein designed Cincinnati's first municipal water system, which used wooden pipes made from white oak and "yellow pine." He later applied his expertise in Virginia, contributing to water systems in Lynchburg and Richmond, before moving on to Nashville, where wooden pipes of oak and cedar carried water from the Cumberland River. Stein's work continued across multiple states, including Louisiana, where he was hired to improve New Orleans's existing waterworks designed by British-born engineer Benjamin Latrobe. That system relied on wooden pipes – primarily cypress and possibly yellow pine – as well as cast iron pipes, drawing water from the Mississippi River. Interestingly, Latrobe placed an advertisement in the



The City of Mobile installed "yellow pine" wooden pipes beginning in the early 1830s, serving as its public waterworks system until 1886. This wooden pipe specimen was later recovered during construction in 1994. [Ad Platt]

Louisiana Gazette in 1819 requesting cypress or pine logs 16 feet long and 12 – 14 inches in diameter. Those pine logs sought in the advertisement may have been for longleaf pine, possibly procured from nearby stands in Mississippi or the Florida Parishes of Louisiana.

Upon resigning from his position in New Orleans, Mr. Stein relocated to Mobile and entered a contract with the city in 1840 to further develop the city's waterworks. Mr. Stein

apparently took a liking to Mobile and decided to stay, leasing the public waterworks from the city and maintaining and managing the waterworks until his death in 1874. Drawing upon his experience using local timber to develop piping, the longleaf log pipes were likely installed during this time, although they could have predated Mr. Stein. According to ordinance records from the 1830s, there were already 16,000 feet of 3-inch and 6,000 feet of 6-inch wooden and iron pipe and logs carrying water from Spring Hill to the city. Mr. Stein was tasked with expanding Mobile's waterworks, utilizing a reservoir and pump system drawing from nearby Three Mile Creek.

It can be easy to imagine that wooden pipes would have been laborious to produce, considering the logs had to be felled, then transported to skilled craftsmen who bored these logs to specifications. However, wooden pipes could be efficiently produced with the help of tools like Benjamin Latrobe's steam-powered boring machine. Craftsmen also hand-bored logs using large augers before connecting them by tapering one end and enlarging the other, much like modern PVC pipe fittings. Wooden couplings (often reinforced with iron bands) or cast iron inserts took advantage of the wood's

natural swelling in water to create tight, functional seals. These pipes were primarily used for low pressure, gravity fed water systems, such as the early New Orleans waterworks, which operated at only about 8.66 PSI, far lower than today's residential standards of 45-80 PSI.

No doubt our forebearers had a thorough knowledge of which tree species worked best at resisting rot from constant water exposure and underground use. In the southeastern U.S., cypress, "yellow pine" (longleaf, loblolly, shortleaf), and eastern red cedar were commonly used, as were some hardwoods like white oak. It makes sense that the early waterworks in Mobile would have used longleaf as a suitable pipe material, especially old-growth longleaf of suitable size, considering much of the uplands around the city were dominated by longleaf pine.

There are countless questions worth asking about these early water systems – primitive technologies by today's standard, but remarkable luxuries at the time. These questions will likely remain unanswered as this once-common technology has long since become obsolete. Even so, these windows into the past elicit a sense of wonder at the creativity and fortitude of our predecessors.

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Growing Healthy Forests and a Thriving Conservation Community

By Jennie Haskell, The Longleaf Alliance



Barry Clark's commitment to learning, land stewardship, and community leadership was recognized when he was named the South Carolina Tree Farmer of the Year in 2025. The SC Tree Farm program supports sustainable management of family-owned forest lands for wood, water, wildlife, and recreation. Each year, the organization recognizes a landowner for their notable natural resource stewardship. Barry was very honored and grateful to receive the award. To him, it was the affirmation of what has become his passion for the past 12 years.

In 2014, Barry Clark purchased 96 acres in Aiken County, South Carolina, for family recreation and as an investment. The property had a 15-acre stand of longleaf pine that was planted in 1998 as well as 70 acres of mixed pines and hardwoods and a 2-acre pond. As the owner of an industrial wholesale distribution business, Barry had no knowledge of forestry. Little did he realize that this purchase would lead to a fervor for conservation, managing longleaf, and prescribed burning.

After closing on the property, Barry set out to learn about conservation and forest management, only to discover many excellent resources to assist his efforts. Support from the

Clemson Cooperative Extension, participation in a Longleaf 101 Academy, and guidance from Robert Abernethy with The Longleaf Alliance provided a foundation of information. Consulting forester, Gary Burger, recommended thinning the longleaf pine stand and converting a 32-acre loblolly pine stand to longleaf. He also informed Barry about the financial incentives available through USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which assisted with site preparation and planting costs.



Barry Clark, longleaf landowner and prescribed fire mentor



Passing the torch – Barry's son, William, on the fireline



Desired stand conditions – open longleaf overstory with robust native groundcover

Barry's primary management objective is to maximize wood fiber production while sustaining a healthy forest. The second priority is to provide wildlife habitat and an aesthetic forest. These objectives have guided activities through a written forest management plan and Tree Farm certification. Some areas are managed for wildlife and diversity and some for pine straw production.

In 2018, Barry acquired an adjoining 267-acre tract, expanding his stewardship to larger stands of longleaf pine, mixed hardwood, hardwood bottoms, and three ponds. After completing a Longleaf 201 Academy and becoming a Certified Prescribed Fire Manager, he began applying prescribed fire as a management tool in 2019. At first, Barry burned with Gary's assistance and advice. He continuously asked questions, studied the weather, understood the burn plans, and examined the fire

effects. Barry saw firsthand the importance of prescribed fire and the benefits it provides, as he gained confidence in implementing the burns. Each year, additional blocks of the property were burned during the dormant season. Before long, the habitat visibly improved, turkey and deer thrived, and quail returned to the young longleaf stands. He then started burning during the growing season, witnessing grasses and forbs increasing in abundance.

Barry's enthusiasm for stewardship was contagious. His children and grandchildren wanted to assist in his management of the farm. Barry's adult children, William and Megan, and son-in-law Richie, completed the Clemson Extension Master Tree Farmer course, and William also earned his Certified Prescribed Fire Manager certification. Barry's grandchildren, Harris and Hattie, and his wife, Judy, also help. Their

involvement allows for more frequent burning and an enriched family connection to the land. Others noticed Barry's commitment, and he was awarded the 2023 Private Landowner Prescribed Burner of the Year by the South Carolina Prescribed Fire Council.

In 2024, within the northern portion of the SoLo-ACE Longleaf Partnership, efforts began to organize a burn cooperative in Aiken County. Barry volunteered to serve on the steering committee along with fellow landowners and forestry and wildlife professionals. The result was the Aiken Prescribed Fire Cooperative (APFC), a group of landowners and practitioners, often mentored by natural resource professionals who share expertise, time, resources, and equipment to support one another in conducting prescribed burns. The APFC's purpose is to promote safe and effective prescribed burning, to enhance natural resources, reduce wildfire risk, and support land management goals within Aiken and surrounding counties. Barry serves on the board as its President.



Burning with friends and family

In 2025, the APFC burned 587 acres, conducted twelve burns with more than 65 members participating, and hosted three workshops. Already in 2026, the APFC has hosted a local CPFM class and a Learn & Burn Field Day. Barry has represented the APFC at local, state, and regional meetings to emphasize the importance of creating a community to implement prescribed burns for longleaf ecosystem restoration and habitat improvement. Barry's desire is to continue educating and promoting the benefits of prescribed fire and to help more landowners implement the management practice on their property. Now, Barry is providing advice to friends and "neighbors" on land management practices.

Barry's commitment to learning, stewardship, and community is impacting many more acres than just his South Carolina farm. "What started out as an investment in some recreational property has now become my lifelong passion for conservation, managing longleaf, and prescribed burning," reflects Clark.



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Introducing Longleaf Partnership Council Chair, Ricky Lackey



Ricky with his wife,
Rachael, and son, Ricky III.



Earlier this year, the America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative (ALRI) welcomed Ricky Lackey as the 2026 Chair of the Longleaf Partnership Council. Ricky is the District Biologist for the National Wild Turkey Federation.

What is the greatest challenge (or opportunity) facing longleaf pine forests in the Southeast?

A more recent challenge, and perhaps an opportunity, is timber markets. There have been widespread pulpwood mill closures across the South with direct impacts to local economies and land management strategies. Strong, stable markets for longleaf pine products are essential to keeping longleaf a financially viable option for landowners. When markets incentivize longleaf management, restoration becomes not only an ecological priority but also an economically sustainable choice.

What do you see as the Council's most important priorities right now?

Longleaf restoration and education. Continuing to expand and improve longleaf pine acreage through restoration efforts while educating landowners, policymakers, and the public

about the ecological and economic benefits of longleaf pine is critical to long-term success. These priorities are more important than ever, given the diversity of land use options across the Southeast.

What are some of your favorite ways to explore or experience the longleaf pine ecosystem?

Hunting and applying prescribed fire both offer meaningful, hands-on connections to the land. Hunting not only deepens appreciation for the longleaf ecosystem but also directly supports conservation efforts through license fees and excise taxes under the Pittman–Robertson Act, which provides essential funding for habitat management and restoration. Prescribed fire plays a vital role in maintaining the health, structure, and biodiversity of longleaf forests, and being part of that process is incredibly rewarding.

What is your personal connection to longleaf?

I grew up in the Red Hills of South Georgia, where longleaf pine landscapes are part of the region's identity and culture. That upbringing shaped my appreciation for the land and the importance of active stewardship. Beyond that, my entire professional career as a wildlife biologist in the Southeast has been intertwined with longleaf management in some form or fashion.

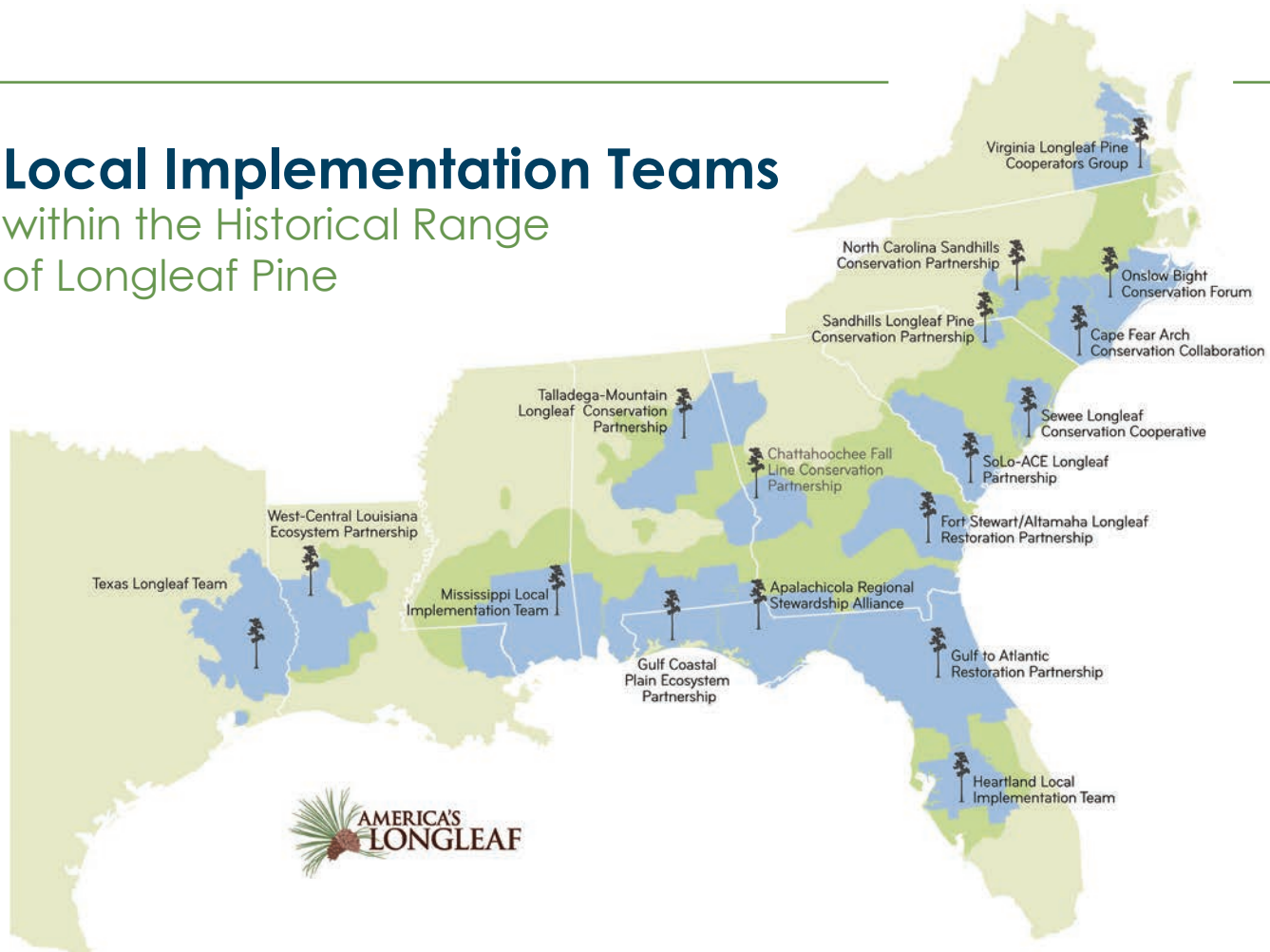
Do you have a favorite longleaf site or species associated with the ecosystem?

I would have to say our family farm is my favorite longleaf site. We have some scattered mature longleaf in our forest as well as some younger planted stands. It's one place where I've experienced firsthand the rewards of active management and stewardship.

Probably not a surprise considering my position with the National Wild Turkey Federation, but the Wild Turkey is especially meaningful to me. Seeing and hearing wild turkeys in a well-managed longleaf stand – particularly on my favorite longleaf site – captures everything I value about the ecosystem.

America's Longleaf Partnership Council is comprised of 36 members representing non-governmental organizations, state and federal agencies, implementation teams and other collaborative efforts, private industry, universities/research/extension, and private landowners. The Longleaf Partnership Council provides a forum where partners can bring different objectives, missions, responsibilities, and contributions required to make longleaf pine conservation efforts successful.

Local Implementation Teams within the Historical Range of Longleaf Pine



GCPEP IGNITES NEW PARTNERSHIP

INAUGURAL FESTIVAL CELEBRATES FIRE, NATURE, & COMMUNITY



Left: Chasidy Hobbs, UWF Director of Conservation, and Julianne Jones, Festival Coordinator with The Longleaf Alliance, led ignitions at one of three burn demonstrations. [Jeff Talbert] Right: Vernon Compton, GCPEP Director, shares important information about prescribed fire. [Heather Chapin]

On March 7, 2026, the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP) hosted the first-ever West Florida Fire & Nature Festival in Pensacola on the University of West Florida (UWF) campus. Organized by The Longleaf Alliance, UWF Department of Earth & Environmental Sciences, and the Florida Forest Service, this inaugural event was overwhelmingly successful, with over 2,300 people in attendance on a beautiful spring day to celebrate and learn about prescribed fire and our surrounding natural ecosystems.

Live Demonstrations and Interactive Activities

One of the most anticipated features of the event was a series of live prescribed burn demonstrations, giving attendees a firsthand look at how prescribed fires are conducted and why they are essential. Accessible via shuttles and a one-mile hiking trail, these demos were conducted in natural areas on UWF's campus by wildland firefighters from the Florida Forest Service, The Longleaf Alliance, and The Nature Conservancy. Joe Zwierzchowski (Florida Forest Service), Josie Bosworth-

Canner (UWF student), Vernon Compton (GCPEP Director, The Longleaf Alliance) served as emcees, providing invaluable information about the burn process to spectators. Dr. Carissa Wonkka (University of Florida, West Florida Research and Education Center) demonstrated thermal imaging tools.

Beyond the burns, the day was filled with fun educational activities, including a scavenger hunt, PPE (personal protective equipment) try-on station, fire equipment displays, trivia, photo ops with wildlife-themed cutout boards, live animals, guided hikes, and local conservation organization exhibits, as well as festive offerings like nature-themed face painting, raffles, food trucks, music, and native plant vendors.

Thank you to UWF, Florida Forest Service, and everyone who sponsored, attended, exhibited, and volunteered. None of this would have been possible without you all. With everyone's love and support for this event, we are planning its return for next year! *Here's to igniting new partnerships!*

Longleaf Alliance GCPEP staff organized and coordinated the Festival [Tamon Simonds]



Longleaf ecosystem trivia [Tamon Simonds]



[Margaret Platt]



▲ Meet-and-greet with Burner Bob®. [Jeff Talbert]

▲ Nonie Celeste with Nonie's Animal Encounters shares her ambassador eastern indigo snake, Archie, with festivalgoers. [Emma McKee]



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Artwork by Ren Wright

Three burn demonstrations were conducted in natural areas on UWF's campus, a short hike (or drive) from the Festival exhibits. [Charlie Abeles]

Shoal River Headwaters Opens as the 176th State Park in Florida

From FDEP Press Release and GCPEP Director Vernon Compton

FLORIDA



Grand Opening celebration attended by representatives of key partners involved in the protection effort. [Joy Brown]

On January 23, 2026, the Florida Department of Protection hosted the opening of the newest state park, Shoal River Headwaters. This 2,480-acre property is now open for visitation with recreation opportunities ranging from hiking to wildlife viewing. The Park has a diversity of natural communities spanning sandhills, mesic flatwoods, floodplain forests, and wetlands that include tributaries of the Shoal River, and steephead ravines. Endemic to northwest Florida, steephead ravines are springs or seepages which emerge from the ground and constantly erode the gullies headward. These unique areas provide habitat for a number of rare and specially adapted plants and animals.

The grand opening celebration included a guided tour displaying the beauty of this portion of the Shoal River watershed forested landscape. The new state park adds to the larger landscape of protected natural areas included in the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP) landscape and the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape.

Recognizing the significance of the opening of the 176th state park, Florida Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Alexis A. Lambert stated, "Shoal River Headwaters State Park highlights our commitment to protecting Florida's natural treasures while providing new ways for visitors to explore, experience, and enjoy the outdoors. Florida's Park Service is a national leader, and with each new addition we continue to raise the standard for conservation and resource-based recreation."

Key to the success of this project were the many partners who worked together to make it happen. Melissa Hill, Senior Project Manager for Trust for Public Land, commented at the opening on the significance of both the protection effort and the collaboration of the partners. "Today marks an exciting milestone for Florida's newest state park and the communities who will now have a place to gather, explore, and connect with nature. Thanks to the extraordinary collaboration with Florida Forever, Atira Conservation, EJK Foundation, and the Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation, this remarkable landscape is protected forever — safeguarding water quality, wildlife habitat, and abundant outdoor experiences for generations to come."

For more information on the Shoal River Headwaters State Park, visit www.FloridaStateParks.org.

First NFWF-funded Longleaf Planted in Heartland LIT

By Diane Alix, The Nature Conservancy

FLORIDA



Longleaf on Tiger Creek Preserve in Central Florida [Cheryl Millet]

Partners in the Heartland LIT planted their first acres of longleaf pine during two weeks in December, funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. 280,000 trees were planted across 770 acres owned by five organizations: Lake Wales Ridge State Forest, Crooked Lake Wildlife and Environmental Area, Hilochee Wildlife Management Area, Manatee County's Duette Preserve, and Tiger Creek Preserve. Properties owned by Polk County (SUMICA, Circle B Bar Reserve, and Marshall Hampton Reserve) were all included in this round.

Another 1,000 acres are planned for summer planting as part of this project. Land managers in this region are experimenting with different seasons in an attempt to target seasonal rainfall patterns.

Winter Groundcover Restoration in the Eastern Florida Panhandle

By Diane Alix, *The Nature Conservancy*

FLORIDA



Planting wiregrass seed [Cathy Ricketts]

Longleaf pine and wiregrass restoration projects are underway in the Florida Panhandle. The Nature Conservancy's Ecosystem Restoration Team based at Apalachicola Bluffs and Ravines Preserve collected 3,500 pounds of wiregrass seed from Torreya State Park in November 2025. The seed collection process requires careful planning to maximize restoration potential. Harvest sites must be burned during the growing season to produce viable seed, and collection sites are given time to rest between harvest years.

The Team then sowed the wiregrass seed on a 134-acre site at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge that was replanted with longleaf pine following wildfire damage as well as a 154-acre site within the Bluffs of St. Teresa at Bald Point State Park. Partners from the Florida Forest Service at Tate's Hell State Forest and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at Telogia Creek Wildlife Management Area will also be

sowing some of the 2025 seed harvest to restore native groundcover.

The Nature Conservancy and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection have been coordinating these activities between Torreya State Park and its neighboring Apalachicola Bluffs and Ravines Preserve for over 20 years and are excited to expand the footprint of this successful technique across the region.

The Chattahoochee Fall Line Wildlife Management Area Hosts Outdoors Beyond Barriers Program

By Matt Skinner, *Georgia Department of Natural Resources*, and LuAnn Craighton, *The Nature Conservancy*

GEORGIA



Well-managed habitat contributes to the success of an OBB hunt on the Chattahoochee Fall Line WMA. [Calvin Cole]

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR) hosted Outdoors Beyond Barriers (OBB) deer hunts in both 2024 and 2025 on the Chattahoochee Fall Line Wildlife Management Area. This new OBB initiative emphasizes removing obstacles to help people of all abilities connect with nature, explore the outdoors, and take part in activities like hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreational opportunities that may have been previously unavailable to them.

OBB regional adaptive hunts are staffed by individuals dedicated to making the events fully accessible to participants. Adaptive equipment, blinds, and staff assistance are part of the services that are available during the events. Prospective hunters apply online for the program and must have a hunter safety certificate and hunting license as required by law.

Over the past two seasons, 19 hunters harvested 11 deer during OBB programs on the Chattahoochee Fall Line WMA. Adaptive equipment provided by GA DNR included all terrain wheelchairs for some participants

enabling hunters to get into the woods with greater freedom and autonomy. Many of the hunters expressed gratitude for these programs which enabled them to fully experience the outdoors and hunt again. It is exciting when the iconic longleaf landscape can offer both ecological benefits and outstanding public recreation opportunities. Additional OBB programs are planned for 2026. For more information visit: <https://gadnr.org/OBB>

The Chattahoochee Fall Line WMA is located in West Georgia and encompasses over 28,500 acres. Situated in the heart of the Chattahoochee Fall Line Conservation Partnership's Significant Geographic Area and within the Georgia Sentinel Landscape this WMA offers diverse outdoor recreation opportunities in a landscape that is managed by GA DNR and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to restore and maintain the longleaf pine ecosystem.

A New Era for Mississippi Forestry: Wolf River Coastal Forest Research and Education Center Officially Established

By Drew Arnold, The Longleaf Alliance

MISSISSIPPI



A boon for forestry research and management here in Mississippi was made when Mississippi State University, with the assistance of the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Mississippi Forestry Commission, Weyerhaeuser, U.S. Forest Service, and The Nature Conservancy, acquired 14,071 +/- acres of coastal timberland in Hancock County. The ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate this culmination of tremendous effort took place on September 23, 2025, and was well attended by many conservation and natural resource organizations. This tract of timberland along the Wolf River forms the Wolf River Coastal Forest Research and Education Center. This property will preserve important forest resources along the Mississippi Gulf Coast and comprises roughly 7,000 +/- acres of bottomland hardwoods along the 10 miles of Wolf River frontage and 7,000 +/- acres of upland timberland slated for conversion back to longleaf pine.

The Wolf River Coastal Forest Research and Education Center will serve as a crucial training and research forest for Mississippi State University's College of Forest Resources, educating and informing the next generation of natural resource professionals and conservationists. Randy Browning, retired U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wildlife biologist and Mississippi Longleaf Local Implementation Team (LIT) member, was selected as the property manager. Randy's extensive knowledge and involvement in longleaf pine restoration efforts will be of great benefit to the property's management.

The MS LIT saw a change in leadership as Jimmy Mordica, Chair for the past two years, welcomed Cody Pope, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist, as the incoming Chair. Drew Arnold, Technical Assistance Specialist with The Longleaf Alliance, was confirmed as the Chair-elect at the December 2025 meeting. The MS LIT expresses its deepest gratitude for Jimmy's leadership and dedication to furthering the stewardship and conservation of longleaf pine ecosystems.

A number of local meetings and field days were postponed in the fall of 2025/winter 2026 due to funding freezes or staff availability issues resulting from the federal shutdown. Landowners and natural resource professionals should be on the lookout for an uptick in longleaf-related meetings and field events this spring and summer to make up for these postponements.

The Longleaf Alliance hosted the first Longleaf Academy in our state since 2018, with the assistance of the Mississippi Forestry Association and other partners. The Academy, Longleaf 101, took place March 24th – 26th, 2026, at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center.



Wolf River Coastal Forest Research and Education Center Ribbon Cutting [Drew Arnold]

492 Acres Protected in NC Sandhills: a Longleaf Restoration Opportunity

By Jeff Marcus, *The Nature Conservancy*

NORTH CAROLINA



Wetlands within powerline right-of way support rare species [Jeff Marcus]

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) recently acquired 492 acres next to Sandhills Game Land in the North Carolina Sandhills. The property was purchased through an online auction, a nerve-wracking way to buy land when competing against potential developers. This property connects outlying blocks of Sandhills Game Land and helps to anchor one end of the “Uwharrie Corridor,” an ambitious effort to restore fire-managed pine habitats in the Uwharries region on public and private lands while linking those areas to the Sandhills.

The uplands of the property were managed for loblolly plantations, and the landowner sold the mature timber before the land sale, providing the opportunity to quickly restore ~360 acres to longleaf pine. TNC negotiated to retain some longleaf canopy on 14 acres of existing longleaf stands.

A powerline right-of-way crosses several streamhead wetlands, and the mowing used to keep the right-of-way open has created conditions suitable to support the Pine Barrens tree frog, Sandhills lily, and other rare species associated with open canopy, boggy areas.

The property will be transferred to the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission to become part of the Game Land, along with a nearby 123-acre tract. Funding was provided by the U.S. Army at Fort Bragg REPI program, the North Carolina Land and Water Fund, and private donors.

Nemours Wildlife Foundation Works with Multiple SoLo-ACE Partners on Longleaf Pine Restoration

by Heather Kraus, *Nemours Wildlife Foundation*

SOUTH CAROLINA



Nemours 2026 longleaf pine planting crew [Heather Kraus]

Nemours Wildlife Foundation welcomed back The Longleaf Alliance and the Sustainability Institute for another year of underplanting longleaf pine seedlings in their restored pine savanna. For the last three years, Nemours has partnered with the Sustainability Institute's Environmental Conservation Corps (ECC), an AmeriCorps program focused on habitat restoration projects, to provide the people-power necessary to handplant hundreds of young pine seedlings. This January, the ECC crew learned all about longleaf pine and heard from Jennie Haskell, Coastal Partnership Coordinator working in the South Lowcountry and ACE Basin (SoLo-ACE), about The Alliance's ongoing efforts to reestablish longleaf across the Southeast. Afterwards, the Environmental Conservation Corps crew put some of their new knowledge into practice by planting approximately 900 longleaf pine seedlings across 40 acres of pine savanna. Another SoLo-ACE partner, Quail Forever, also

participated in planting and providing information about quail management.

By working with partners, Nemours Wildlife Foundation is able to maintain the ecological function and aesthetics of a pine savanna, while also transitioning from a loblolly to longleaf-dominated pine savanna – a goal 15 years in the making. The short version goes a little like this – savanna restoration began with selective thinning within a loblolly stand. Soon, native grasses emerged. Management staff reintroduced fire onto the land. Canopy gaps emerged as lightning strikes and tropical storms damaged some remaining mature pine trees. Few young trees existed to fill the new canopy gaps. THE END, if not for collaborative partnerships.

Together, the Sustainability Institute, The Longleaf Alliance, and Nemours Wildlife Foundation are creating a future longleaf forest and the next generation of environmental leaders.

Ten Years of Land Protection and Longleaf Restoration at Rocky Point Community Park

By Patrick Ma, Sewee Longleaf Conservation Cooperative

SOUTH CAROLINA



Blackline operation surrounding a remnant log deck
[Patrick Ma]

The South Carolina Chapter of The Nature Conservancy recently completed fire operations at Rocky Point Community Park in Georgetown, South Carolina. While a fraction of 87 acres burned in 2026 lies in planted longleaf, TNC's reintroduction of fire to this park is best understood within the long arc of the site's land use history and its relationship to fire. For much of the twentieth century, Rocky Point was owned by International Paper and functioned as both a working forest and a public riverfront park managed by Georgetown County. During this period, the surrounding uplands and river corridors were shaped by routine disturbance—timber management and frequent low intensity burning—that maintained open forest conditions and sustained public use along the Black River.

Following the sale of the property in 2006 and the subsequent closure of public access, active forest management was largely removed from the system. As management lapsed, fuels accumulated with loblolly pine and sweetgum regeneration, shifting stand structure away from open conditions. Concern over development pressure and ecological degradation ultimately led to a collaborative conservation effort. In 2015, Winyah Rivers Alliance, Georgetown County, The Nature Conservancy, and the Open Space Institute secured and permanently protected the core parcels, reestablishing public access and creating South Carolina's first coastal public use community forest. From that point on, the Sewee Longleaf Conservation Cooperative has supplemented longleaf pine restoration within the Park by funding longleaf plantings and reintroducing fire.

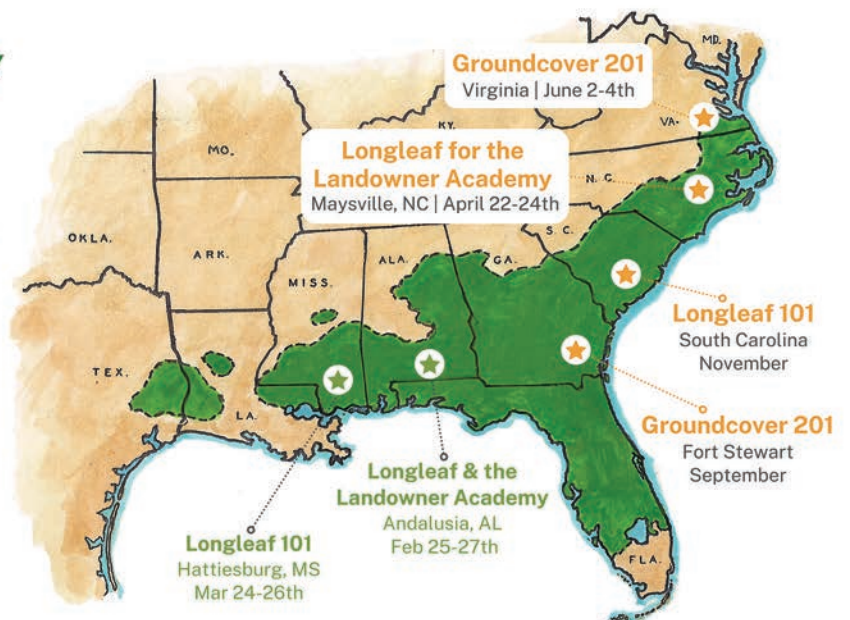
In the absence of a pulpwood market, prescribed fire is central to fulfilling the restoration vision established through that partnership. The forests at Rocky Point—including pine uplands, hardwood bluffs, and associated wetlands—are part of a broader Black River landscape historically maintained by frequent fire, whether ignited by Indigenous land stewards or later by rural land managers. Reintroducing fire reconnects present day management with those legacy processes while addressing contemporary objectives for fuel reduction, habitat improvement, and long term resilience.

This recent burn reduced surface fuel loads, curtailed early hardwood encroachment, and reestablished light and nutrient conditions necessary for native understory communities. It supports the Park's goals of conservation, education, and sustainable management, showing that well-planned fire can be compatible with public lands. At Rocky Point, prescribed fire continues the site's working-land tradition and reinforces fire's role in maintaining ecological function and community connection.

LONGLEAF ACADEMY PROGRAM

The Longleaf Alliance hosted two Longleaf Academies already in 2026 with four more programs on the calendar.

Visit longleafalliance.org/events for details and registration.





By Sarah Crate, The Longleaf Alliance

Scouting America's Test Lab: Wildland Fire Management

In 2025, Scouting America introduced the Wildland Fire Management Test Lab, a pilot merit badge program designed to teach Scouts the science, strategy, and safety practices essential to understanding and responding to wildland fires. Scouts learn not only **how** wildland fires occur, but also **why** they are a critical part of land management.

This test merit badge program blends environmental education, emergency preparedness, and hands-on learning with requirements that guide Scouts through the history of wildland fire in the United States, its ecological impacts, suppression and prevention strategies, and career opportunities.

Wildland Fire Management Test Lab events have occurred across the United States: California, Georgia, Indiana, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Virginia. Many Scouting Councils or Troops partnered with wildland fire and natural resource professionals to give Scouts an up-close look at tools, equipment, and real-world fire management practices.

In North Carolina, Thomas Crate, Fire Management Officer with North Carolina State Parks, organized a Wildland Fire Management Test Merit Badge program at Medoc Mountain

State Park. While the weather didn't cooperate for the planned prescribed fire demonstration, Scouts from Boys Troop 321 and Girls Troop 321 were full of questions for the foresters, biologists, rangers, and pilots from the Natural Resources Program with North Carolina State Parks & Recreation, North Carolina Forest Service, Halifax and Nash Counties, North Carolina Forest Service Aviation, and The Longleaf Alliance.

The day lit a spark in these future leaders.

Highlights included:

- Matchstick "forest" demonstrations to explore fire environment factors
- Laying water hoses
- Dozers and fire engines
- Drone demo with aerial ignition
- Helicopter take-off

Experiences like these reinforce Scouting America's focus on safety and environmental stewardship while preparing young people to make informed decisions in their communities and on outdoor adventures.

The Wildland Fire Management test lab merit badge is available until June 30, 2026. Youth and adult leaders have the opportunity to provide feedback on the experience and requirements. If well-received, Wildland Fire may be offered as an official merit badge in the future.

To learn more about Scouting America's Test Lab, visit <https://www.scouting.org/skills/merit-badges/test-lab>



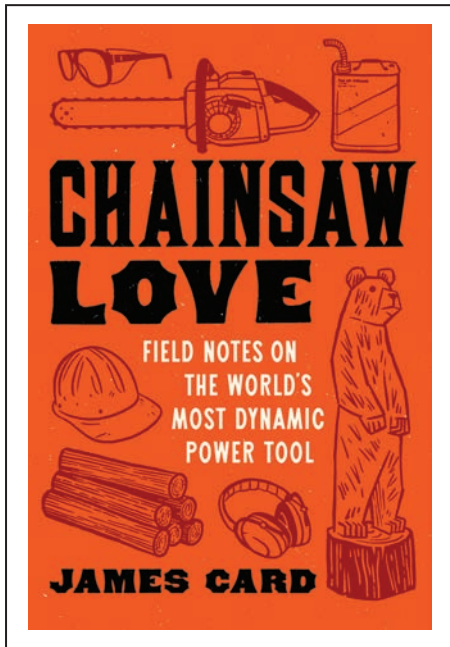
Learning about the Incident Command System (ICS) [Sarah Crate]



Equipment education is a key feature of the test lab; participants identified wildland fire tools and personal protective equipment. [Sarah Crate]



The test merit badge included the "fire triangle" and how fire behavior is influenced by fuel, weather, and terrain. Scout parent Sarah Crate with The Longleaf Alliance led the Scouts in a matchstick forest demonstration to explore these concepts. [Thomas Crate]



Chainsaw Love:

Field Notes on the World's Most Dynamic Power Tool

Author: James Card

Publisher: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2025

Reviewed by Kelley McCarter

The press release from publisher, Wisconsin Historical Society Press, calls the new book, *Chainsaw Love: Field Notes on the World's Most Dynamic Power Tool*, "A literary ode to the mighty chainsaw and its influence, its history, and its people." The publisher goes on to say the book is part homage, part social history, and part field guide.

Considered the most powerful of all hand tools, the chainsaw has been vital to contemporary life in ways large, small, and sometimes surprising since it first came on the market in the 1940s. In his engrossing new book, author James Card celebrates this formidable implement, sharing stories and reflections about the world of chainsaws and the people who use and appreciate them, all the while respecting the tool's potential for productive and/or dangerous use.

I found the book both entertaining and instructive, and the author's unflinching and engaging writing style kept the book a page-turner. Card introduces readers to lumberjack competitors, hot-saw builders, and the sculpture carvers who take sawing to new heights. He asserts the key role chainsaws play in clearing the right-of-way for powerlines to keep the electrical grid humming; in forestry and conservation

efforts to maintain desirable ecosystems; and in the sciences, where ecologists use chainsaws to age trees for scientific research.

Readers of *Chainsaw Love* will discover the lore and terminology of forests and wood cutting, insights into chainsaw variations and parts, guidelines for saw care and maintenance, safety recommendations, and other hard-won tips and tricks. Card also considers the chainsaw's place in pop culture, from movies to rock songs to presidential photo ops. Dozens of photos from the field, as well as helpful diagrams, add to readers' understanding of the saw's evolution and modern use. The final section on proper maintenance is a definite bonus.

About the Author

James Card is the only journalist in history to have stories about ice fishing and deer hunting on the front page of *The New York Times*. He once worked as a line-clearance tree feller while a magazine editor and journalist. He is the author of *The Dawn Patrol*, recounting his experiences as South

Korea's only fly-fishing guide. He lives in central Wisconsin and cuts firewood with a chainsaw throughout the year.



This article originally appeared in *National Woodlands* magazine, Winter 2026.



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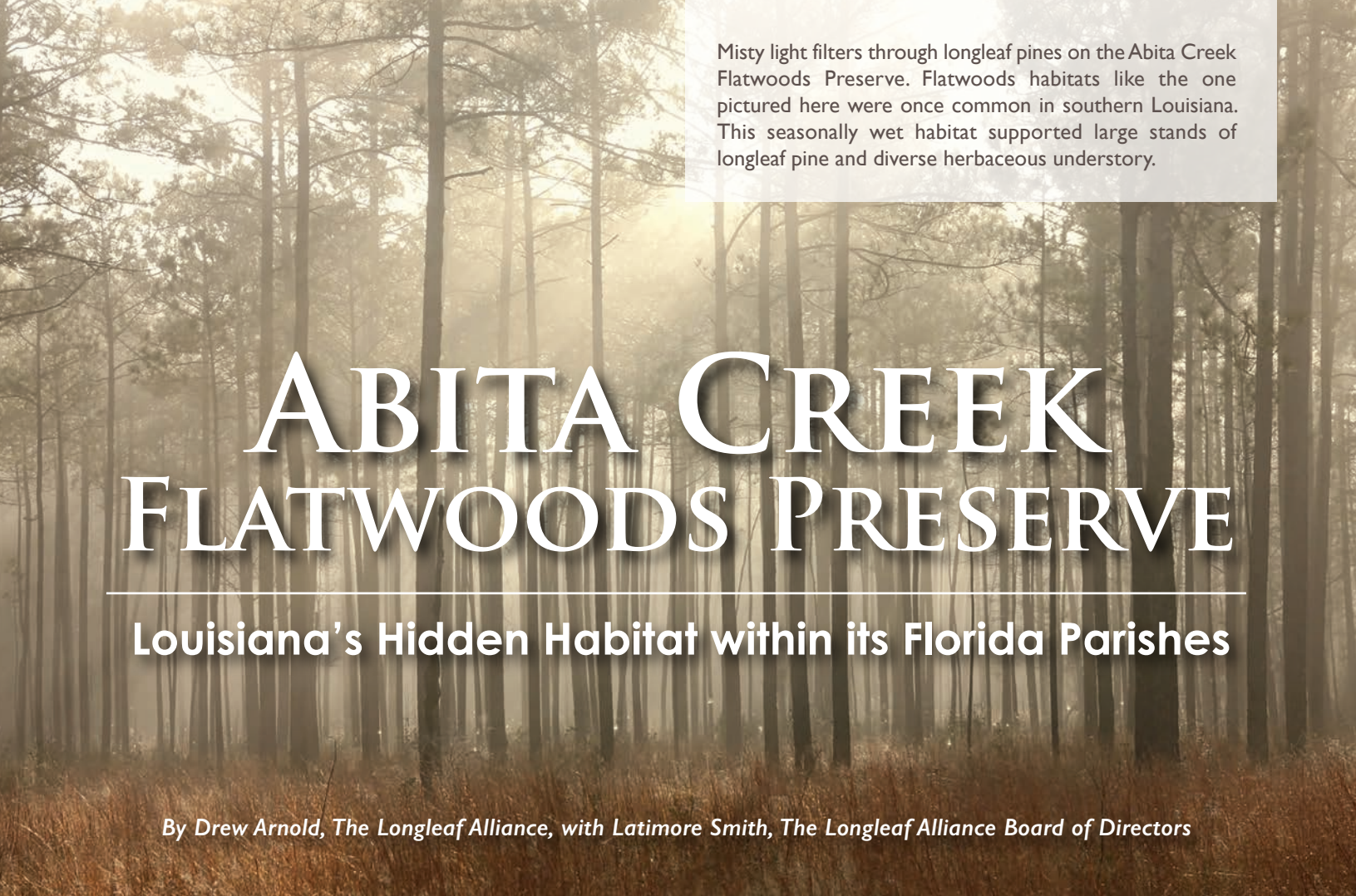
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Misty light filters through longleaf pines on the Abita Creek Flatwoods Preserve. Flatwoods habitats like the one pictured here were once common in southern Louisiana. This seasonally wet habitat supported large stands of longleaf pine and diverse herbaceous understory.

ABITA CREEK FLATWOODS PRESERVE

Louisiana's Hidden Habitat within its Florida Parishes

By Drew Arnold, *The Longleaf Alliance*, with Latimore Smith, *The Longleaf Alliance Board of Directors*

If you ask most folks what natural resources come to mind in Louisiana, their response is likely to mention swamps, marshes, shellfish, fish, waterfowl, alligators, cypress, and bottomland hardwoods. Longleaf pine likely wouldn't make the top of the list if you aren't familiar with the natural history of this region.

Once home to some of the most productive and wild forests, longleaf pine-dominated habitats covered thousands of acres in southeastern Louisiana, supporting a great diversity of herbaceous groundcover and abundant wildlife. Longleaf, despite its scientific name, *Pinus palustris*, translating to "pine of the marsh," occupies a variety of habitat types across its range. While many of today's remaining longleaf sites are high and dry, longleaf is also found in flatwoods and savannas with seasonally wet, poorly drained soils, often closer to the coast than other drier habitat types. Only an estimated 1%-5% of the original longleaf flatwoods and savanna acreage remains due to a multitude of land use changes, including conversion to agriculture, high-density off-site pine plantations (loblolly/slash), and residential development.

Nowhere is this more evident than along the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain, locally called the "North Shore" or the "Florida Parishes," an area comprised of eight Louisiana parishes east of the Mississippi River. This landscape once contained excellent examples of longleaf flatwoods and savannas with high

densities of longleaf pine and diverse groundcover. Unfortunately for the longleaf, the abundant timber and cheap land drew lumber companies from the timber-exhausted northeastern and midwestern states, resulting in much of the original longleaf in this area being cut out by the 1930s. In addition to the removal of the original timber resources, the area's proximity to the New Orleans metro area has yielded extensive growth and development in the surrounding areas.

Fortunately, a remarkably intact remnant of Gulf Coastal flatwoods and savanna still stands as a shining example of the landscape that once characterized the Florida Parishes of Louisiana. The Abita Creek Flatwoods Preserve is a 996±-acre site near Abita Springs, owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy as part of TNC's Louisiana Pine Wetland Mitigation Bank. Named for Abita Creek, which flows through the property, the Preserve was acquired by TNC in 1996 and is one of three sites that together protect roughly 4,000 acres within the mitigation bank.

Abita Creek Flatwoods Preserve hosts several habitat types within a relatively small area, including longleaf pine flatwoods/savannas, slash pine/pond cypress woodlands, bayhead swamps, small stream forest, hillside seepage bogs, and mesic upland longleaf pine forests. The Preserve boasts a diverse groundcover plant community specifically suited to



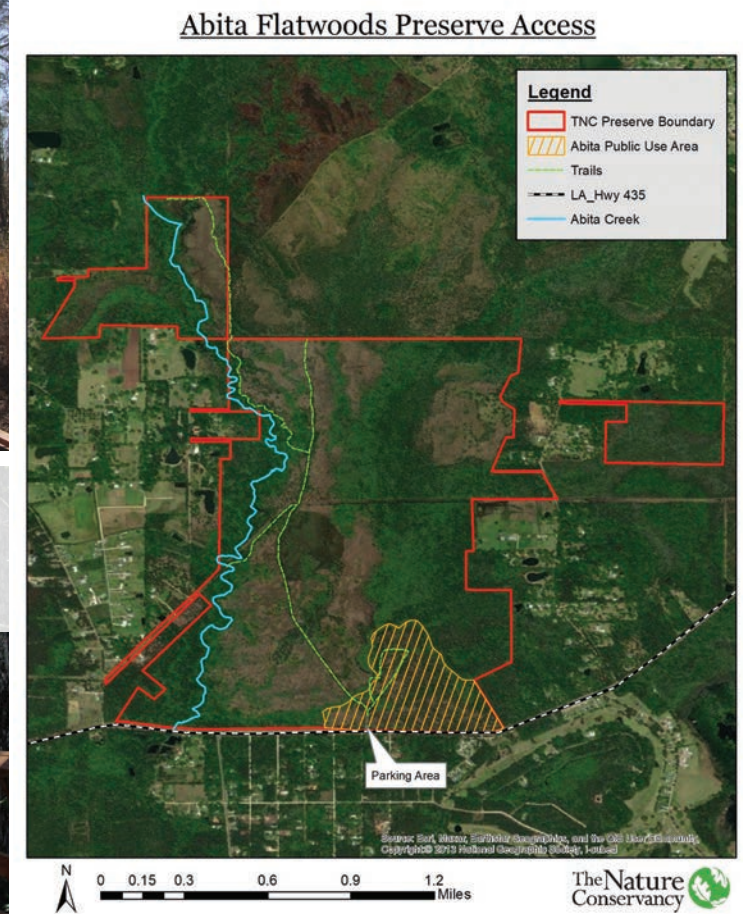
TNC and volunteer groups maintain a publicly accessible boardwalk, trails, and bridges throughout the Preserve, allowing visitors to explore and reduce impacts on the wetland vegetation.

Photos by Lana Gramlich

seasonally wet/boggy conditions, including carnivorous plants (e.g., pitcherplants – *Sarracenia* spp.), grasses, sedges, orchids, and other native herbaceous forbs and legumes. The Preserve itself supports more than 30 rare plant species, including four protected species: Georgia tickseed (*Coreopsis nudata*), Louisiana quillwort (*Isoetes louisianensis*), Spring Hill flax (*Linum macrocarpum*), and little-leaf milkwort (*Polygala brevifolia*). The latter two species are known only from this area of Louisiana.

In addition to rare plants, several noteworthy animal species call Abita Creek Flatwoods home, including the flatwoods digger crawfish (*Fallicambarus oryctes*), gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*), and seasonal visitors, such as the grassland-dependent Bachman's Sparrow (*Peucaea aestivalis*) and Henslow's Sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii*). While the emblematic Red-cockaded Woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*) is not currently present, TNC installed several artificial cavity nest boxes in mature longleaf pines with the hopes that the Preserve can serve as "emergency habitat" for nearby RCW colonies if needed following the Gulf Coast's frequent hurricanes.

The Nature Conservancy's goal for Abita Creek Flatwoods Preserve is the restoration and long-term maintenance of the historic compositional structure of native flora, fauna, and ecological processes endemic to the unique habitats present, with emphasis on the longleaf pine flatwoods/savannas. TNC



Replete with trails for access, it is easy to explore the many available habitat types present.

staff manage the Preserve through a robust prescribed fire program mimicking the natural fire regime of this ecosystem. In addition to deliberately and skillfully placing fire on the landscape, TNC has implemented an invasive species management program targeting aggressive invasive/exotic species threats such as cogongrass, Chinese tallow tree, Japanese climbing fern, and Chinese privet hedge, among others. TNC has also removed off-site timber species and established young longleaf pine where suitable.

TNC maintains a boardwalk and several miles of hiking trails, allowing public access and immersion into these beautiful ecosystems. The Preserve is just a short drive from New Orleans or Baton Rouge and is easily accessible from the I-10 or I-12 corridors. If you're in the area, it is worth the drive to make a day out of exploring Abita Creek Flatwoods Preserve along with other nearby properties, such as TNC's Talisheek Pine Wetlands Preserve and Lake Ramsey Preserve or the federally managed Big Branch National Wildlife Refuge.

Abita Creek is open to the public seven days a week during daylight hours. Visitor parking is located at the front gate off LA Highway 435. No public restrooms are available. For more information and to plan a trip, visit <https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/places-we-protect/abita-creek-flatwoods-preserve/>



With Burner Bob® at the 2018 Longleaf Conference [Randy Tate]



Ms. Vivian's dedication to land stewardship was obvious on her property's signboard. [Ad Platt, 2016]

Celebrating 100 years in 2020 with Rhett Johnson and Ad and Margaret Platt

By Rhett Johnson, President Emeritus, The Longleaf Alliance

A True Longleaf Legacy Passes Away

The passing of Mrs. Vivian Beech, in January at nearly 106 years old, marks the end of a remarkable life well lived. "Ms. Vivian" was a staunch conservation advocate and the owner of a remarkable longleaf pine forest near Chatom in southwest Alabama. She loved her forest and was an accomplished turkey and deer hunter well into her late 90s. Ms. Vivian attended The Alliance's Biennial Longleaf Conference in Alexandria, Louisiana, in 2018 with her nephew, Mike Older, where she spoke of her and her husband's lifelong interest in longleaf pine conservation.

Ms. Vivian was active and upbeat until her death, influencing many others with her enthusiasm and kindness. She once told

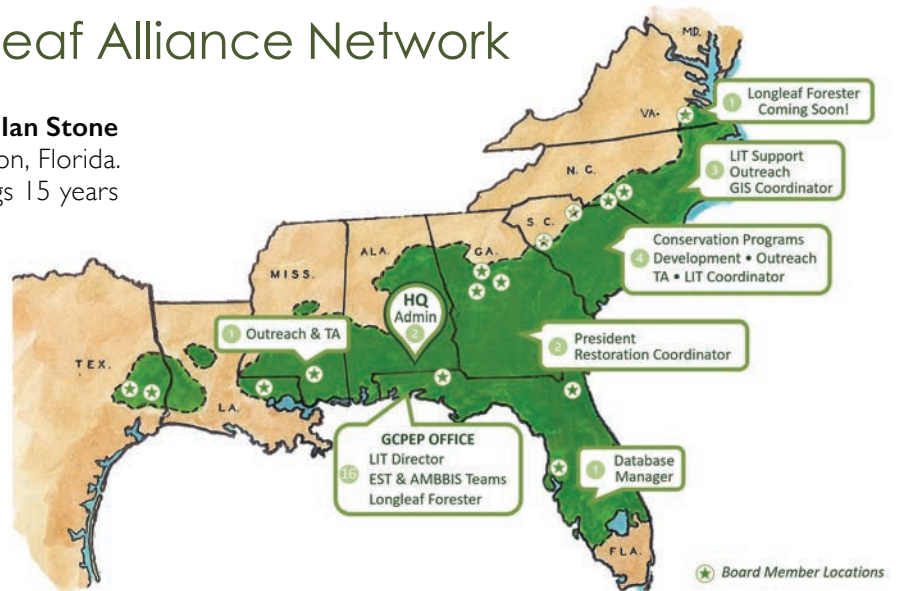
me that, as a teenager, she loved basketball so much that she not only played for her own high school in Fruitdale but for another high school under an assumed name. At her funeral, one of her young nieces read from a list of admonitions and advice she left behind. The list included the virtues of hard work seen to completion, kindness to others, and good manners, but, typical of Ms. Vivian, she also advised that it was okay to have chocolate with breakfast, and that it was perfectly all right to put chocolate syrup on chocolate ice cream!

Vivian Beech had a love for life, her family, her community, and her land. I consider myself blessed to have known her and to be able to call her a friend.

Strengthening The Longleaf Alliance Network

The Longleaf Alliance is excited to announce that **Ian Stone** is our new Longleaf Forester working out of Milton, Florida. Ian hails from Louisiana's Florida Parishes and brings 15 years of professional forestry experience to the position. His family has deep roots on the Gulf Coast, with ties and land that date back centuries. He turned his passion for the family land into a professional forestry career and completed his Bachelor of Science in Forestry at LSU in 2009. Ian received his Master of Science in 2011 at the University of Maine, and went on to teach for a year at Reedley College in California. He returned to the Gulf Coast Piney Woods in 2012, spending the next 10 years with Florida Forest Service-Blackwater District in various positions, including State Lands Forester, Santa Rosa County Forester, and Tree Improvement Manager. For the past three years, Ian has been with UF-IFAS as a forestry extension agent. Ian is an Alabama Registered Forester and has an extensive background in longleaf pine management, reforestation, and genetic resources. A self-described "longleaf nut," Ian is looking forward to bringing his professional expertise and enthusiasm to all things longleaf.

In addition to welcoming Ian to our staff, The Longleaf Alliance is growing its capacity across other parts of the longleaf range. The hiring process is underway for our first staff



The Longleaf Alliance is proud to have staff and board members advancing our mission across all nine longleaf states.

position in Virginia to help grow and strengthen the longleaf community on behalf of the Longleaf Cooperators of Virginia. We are also recruiting a Partnership Coordinator in Georgia, a key role that will strengthen collaboration and accelerate restoration efforts in the Fort Stewart/Altamaha Longleaf Restoration Partnership. These strategic additions reflect The Alliance's commitment to supporting landowners, partners, and longleaf ecosystems.

THE Owen Fellowship OF THE LONGLEAF ALLIANCE

Congratulations

BASANTA SHRESTHA

Ph.D. Student, Department of Forestry and Environmental Conservation
Clemson University, South Carolina

The Longleaf Alliance Announces \$20,000 Owen Fellowship to Advance Longleaf Pine Conservation and Restoration Research

Basanta Shrestha's research examines how soil pyrogenic carbon (PyC), a stable form of carbon produced during fire events in forest ecosystems, accumulates during longleaf pine restoration. Using a chronosequence approach across restored and mature longleaf pine sites, the project will quantify how soil PyC pools vary with stand age, fire history, and soil conditions. By linking below ground carbon storage to longleaf management practices, this research will improve understanding of long-term carbon sequestration and its role in global climate change mitigation in fire-managed ecosystems. It will also offer practical insights for land managers working to restore and sustain longleaf pine forests.

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



YOU'RE A MIGHTY PINE FRIEND

The Longleaf Alliance celebrated its annual **We Love Our Members Week** February 9-14, 2026, which marks a special initiative to thank dedicated and generous conservation partners and members for being a friend to longleaf. TLA staff planned members gifts, social media trivia, giveaways, store discount, member testimonials, shout-outs, and more.

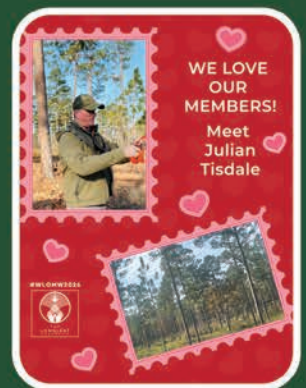
In the spirit of Valentine's Day, when many of us set aside time to express heartfelt gratitude, we would like to take this opportunity to personally thank you for your contributions to The Longleaf Alliance and the longleaf pine ecosystem. The Alliance staff and Board of Directors are deeply grateful that you've chosen to conserve, restore, and care about the natural world. TLA quite literally couldn't operate without its unbe-LEAF-able supporters.

We'd love to have you join us! All \$75+ contributions entitle you to four issues of *The Longleaf Leader* quarterly magazine, invitations to member-exclusive events, discount to the Biennial Longleaf Conference this fall in Williamsburg, Virginia, and annual recognition. Students are eligible for a \$25 membership rate. Visit longleafalliance.org/donate.

Ernst Conservation Seed's Celebrates 20-Year Membership



Ernst's dedicated staff provide native plant materials that are critical for restoration, reclamation, and habitat enhancement. They identify, collect, and propagate new species and ecotypes that meet clients' needs, from eastern Canada to the southeastern United States. They are undoubtedly making a direct impact on the restoration of our beloved longleaf pine ecosystem. It is an honor to work closely with dedicated partners like Ernst.



Looking Back with Gratitude: Ad Platt's Lasting Impact

With Latimore Smith, Board of Directors, The Longleaf Alliance

Ad Platt recently retired after a distinguished career in longleaf restoration and forest management. Since joining The Longleaf Alliance (TLA) in 2011, including over twelve years as Vice President for Operations, Ad has supported landowners, mentored natural resource professionals, and advanced conservation across the Southeast. His career also includes roles as Preserve Manager with The Nature Conservancy, Consulting Forester, and over 20 years with Champion International.

How did you begin your career with The Longleaf Alliance, and how has your role evolved over the years?

I was originally hired by The Alliance as a grant-funded Technical Assistance and Training Specialist in 2011. Early on, I worked closely with Alabama Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), initially out of their office in Brewton. I helped landowners and managers reach their unique longleaf pine objectives by answering their technical questions and providing training and outreach. This role remains a core position within The Alliance and is also a great place to develop as a longleaf forester, as one is steadily exposed to a wide range of longleaf landowners with management questions and challenges. I have always found direct landowner support to be an enjoyable and rewarding privilege, and I appreciate feedback on how our help

made a positive difference. I continue today to respond to these ongoing questions that enable people to reach their objectives in many different ways.

Who would you say were the most influential people for you during your time with TLA?

Many have been highly influential, as well as a great pleasure to work with, and have contributed mightily to my own growth. I am grateful to all who have mentored, guided, and helped me develop in these roles over the years. I believe sharing your constructive guidance with others in a way they can receive is one of the most important talents anyone can have. All of us benefit from that, and it never ends.

What are your three most rewarding projects or endeavors with The Alliance?

- Helping to shape and improve program delivery and outcomes with Alabama NRCS from direct experiences all across the state.
- Expanding the Longleaf Academy curriculum and offerings, reaching all nine longleaf states.
- Concerted attention to the quantity and quality of longleaf seed and seedlings for the future, including restarting the latent tree improvement effort.

In your estimation, what moves the needle for longleaf pine the most?

The best landowners or managers are those who have devoted time and effort to learning about longleaf pine, and these same people often make the best members of TLA as well. Nothing inspires others more than seeing great examples of beautiful, well-managed stands. With a clear goal in mind, if not yet in sight, we all tend to redouble our efforts.

If we follow through and build upon the foundation being laid now, tree improvement efforts will absolutely pay off for longleaf pine and can provide much better-suited selections for future restoration.

What do you see for the future of longleaf pine conservation and TLA?

While the challenges are many, the workers are few, but they are also amazing. There are always more challenges than funding or resources, but I remain optimistic because we have already seen how much can be accomplished by people who care, and we began with even greater challenges. The future will be much richer with more healthy examples of the original inheritance that showcase the range of diversity of nature and life.

What will you miss the most about working with TLA?

Clearly, the great people and great partners that we get to work with in restoration. Landowners who choose longleaf pine tend to be the best kinds of stewards and managers, in that they already know that longleaf is best served by a longer horizon, that it usually costs more to do the right thing, and that this choice may be harder. But it is also more rewarding to manage forests than to simply grow plantations.

What do you want people to remember about you and your time with TLA? In other words, what do you hope to be your lasting legacy?

Humility, service to others, constantly learning, dedication to our mission and vision. What a privilege it is to be good stewards for the short time we are in charge, and to serve as one more link in the chain of stewardship of awesome forest lands.

Any final words?

I'm grateful for the opportunities I've had and for the totality of my career across the Southeast, and for the many roles that prepared me well to contribute within TLA. For the great professionals I've had the pleasure of working with. For getting started as a young forester in the late 1970s and being able to grow and advance in the profession of forestry when the business side was at its peak. It has been the right professional choice for me, and I treasure the relationships that came from it, and the satisfactions of leaving forestlands I've worked on better than I found them. The Longleaf Alliance, our members, and partners matter to me, so I hope any "final words" are a long time in the future!

Tim Albritton, Alabama State Staff Forester, NRCS (Retired)

In my 38+ year career in forestry in Alabama, I met some interesting people to say the least. Ad Platt far exceeds the descriptive term of interesting. Ad is better described as a gentleman's gentleman. Yes, he has always been extremely knowledgeable about longleaf pine and forestry in general, but that doesn't always win over a landowner to the idea of which you are trying to convey. Ad's respectful, friendly personality would always prevail. I never spent time in the field with Ad that I didn't feel good about the day.

Vernon Compton, Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership Director, The Longleaf Alliance

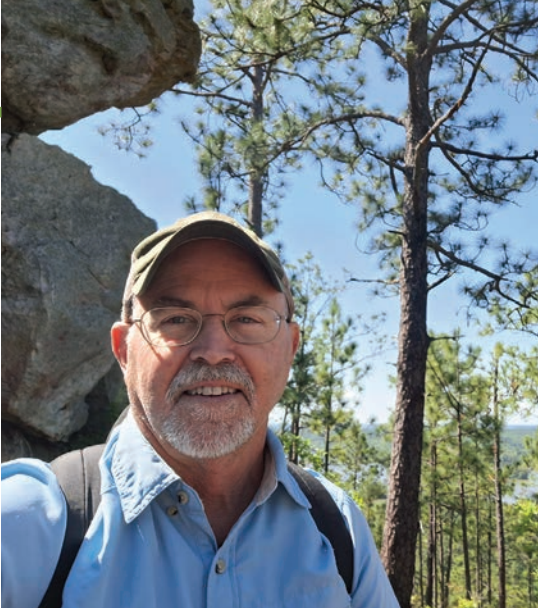
Ad has been a friend and mentor for over 30 years. His ability to work with landowners of all types is a unique skill set, one that has played an important role in advancing longleaf ecosystem recovery. Always one to accept a challenge, if seeing lands that were degraded due to fire exclusion or loss of the native biodiversity, he found a way to encourage a restoration path forward. A point often made by Ad addressed a major challenge of restoration, being patient – "Look at restoration as if peeling off the layers of an onion. Each action you implement can improve the condition of that forest or natural community. Each step is one along a path that may take years." His voice has always been a strong one for the conservation and restoration of the longleaf ecosystem, a longleaf champion and difference maker.

Carol Denhof, President, The Longleaf Alliance

When asked to pay tribute to the way Ad has contributed to longleaf conservation throughout his career, my thoughts went immediately to the programs and projects that would not have happened without him. From his time working with the forest industry to managing forest habitats with The Nature Conservancy to sharing his vast knowledge of longleaf systems with landowners and partners across the Southeast while with TLA, he has had a direct impact on a broad array of forest-related projects. But from a personal perspective, it's his intangible characteristics (patience, integrity, vision, and passion to just name a few) that have made him such an effective role model for countless coworkers and partners, a mentor for me over the years with TLA, and above all, a friend to all who know him.

Amanda Haralson, Past Board Chair, The Longleaf Alliance

Ad Platt is a knowledge bank of all aspects of longleaf pine and the restoration movement, consummate diplomat, ultimate team player, respectful and thoughtful, humble, charmingly candid, a gentle giant of conservation who is ever available to those seeking his counsel. Ad's reputation preceded our meeting at a Longleaf Academy 101. I was wowed by his knowledge and sought his counsel on various aspects of planting and growing longleaf pine and restoring its rich understory. My admiration for Ad expanded exponentially through service on the Board of Directors of TLA, observing the care with which he supports donors, board members, and colleagues as he glides gracefully between leadership and



secondary roles — no challenge is too great, no detail too small for this extraordinary conservationist. Only by retiring to a "witness protection program" will Ad escape landowners and professionals who seek his wisdom and help in growing longleaf pine!

Rhett Johnson, Co-Founder of The Longleaf Alliance

The "stepping down" and retirement of Vice President for Operations Ad Platt are significant losses for The Longleaf Alliance and the landowners he has diligently helped over the years. Ad is a steady presence whose leadership stems not from position but from example and dedication. I can say without reservation that The Alliance and the longleaf effort have benefited immensely from his knowledge and presence. I am proud to consider him both a colleague and a friend. I would add that among Ad's assets is his wonderful wife, Margaret, who has also blessed The Alliance with her talents and time.

William Owen, Current Board Chair, The Longleaf Alliance

I first met Ad many years ago when I contacted The Longleaf Alliance for advice on planting density. He welcomed a longleaf newcomer from the northern range into the fold and began the challenging process of teaching a professional musician about longleaf pine ecosystems. He explained to me that I needed to cease telling my herbicide applicator to make a cutover look like Berlin after the war - and patiently taught me why. Ad has traveled to Virginia to lead an Academy, consult on a seed orchard, advise on underplanting, and - most importantly - to inspire us. His kindness, support, leadership, enthusiasm, and knowledge are all irreplaceable; to say he'll be missed is a gross understatement.

Marc Walley, Forest Investment Associates; Past Board Chair, The Longleaf Alliance

I met Ad Platt at my first Longleaf Alliance Board meeting at the Solon-Dixon Forestry Education Center in 2013. From the beginning, Ad's deep knowledge of and passion for longleaf pine

were unmistakable. What resonated most with me, however, was his quiet confidence, steady leadership, and thoughtful approach to every endeavor. As leader of the Board's annual nomination process, Ad was unwavering in his commitment to identifying exceptional candidates and guiding sound decisions. His integrity, discernment, and dedication have had a lasting, immeasurable impact on The Alliance's success and on all of us who had the privilege of working with him.

Casey White, The Longleaf Alliance

I met Ad in 2014 when I came to work for The Longleaf Alliance. My first impression was that he was a genuinely nice guy and very smart. Over the years, that impression has only grown stronger as I've come to depend on his sage advice. Ad truly is a friend to all. I've always enjoyed watching his smooth conversational skills as he connects with people, effortlessly sharing his knowledge in a way that makes everyone feel welcome and engaged. One of my favorite parts of working with Ad has been the added bonus of occasionally working with his terrific wife, Margaret. While Ad's presence will be deeply missed, his impact will be felt for years to come. I wish Ad the very best in his well-earned retirement.

Brian van Eerden, The Nature Conservancy, Virginia

Ad's career embodies Aldo Leopold's philosophy that "the practice of conservation must spring from a conviction of what is ethically and aesthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient." By blending deep knowledge of forest ecology and management, coupled with a listener's touch to engage with landowners of all backgrounds, along with an unwavering commitment to biodiversity, Ad has informed and inspired longleaf pine recovery across the entire ecosystem. The Longleaf Cooperators of Virginia are particularly grateful for his mentorship and for the many ways he champions restoration efforts of northern range longleaf!

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