

DECLARATION STATEMENT
by
THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, AND PARKS

MISSION

The mission of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) is to conserve and enhance Mississippi's natural resources, provide continuing outdoor recreational opportunities, maintain ecological integrity and aesthetic quality of the resources, and to insure socioeconomic and educational opportunities for present and future generations.

INTERESTS

Conservation of fire-maintained longleaf forests within Mississippi is mutually beneficial to the missions of the MDWFP and *America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative*. The MDWFP's interest in participating in *America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative* is to improve collaboration between partners that can assist promoting and enhancing fire-maintained longleaf forests on private and public lands. Longleaf forests are valuable to the State of Mississippi as an economic, cultural, and ecological resource, and Mississippi's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy identified Dry Longleaf Forests among all terrestrial systems as having the second highest importance value to wildlife species of greatest conservation needs. Additionally, the significance of fire-maintained longleaf pine forests as habitat for numerous recreationally valuable wildlife species has been identified in those species' range-wide management or recovery plans. Therefore, ensuring the future of longleaf forests within Mississippi is critical to the mission of the MDWFP, and, for these reasons, the MDWFP is dedicated to furthering the partnership for longleaf conservation by committing the resources and support outlined in the following section.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

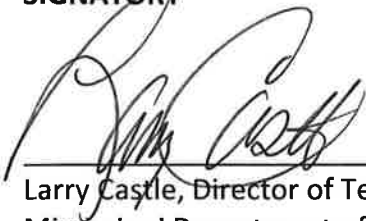
The MDWFP intends to participate in this partnership in the following ways:

- 1. Supporting Longleaf Conservation on Private Lands** - Through its Private Lands Habitat Program, the MDWFP will provide technical guidance, knowledge, and support to private landowners interested in establishment and/or maintenance of longleaf forests.
- 2. Aiding in Outreach and Education** – The success of longleaf conservation will depend upon a public that is well-informed about the value of the longleaf ecosystem and the science behind its management. To that end, the MDWFP can engage the public in longleaf conservation by assisting in development of informational media, collaborating on field days or other educational events, and promoting longleaf establishment on private lands where conducive to meeting landowner objectives.
- 3. Managing Longleaf Forests on State-owned Public Lands within its Historic Range** – Several state-owned Wildlife Management Areas fall within the historic range of longleaf pine, and, where appropriate on these lands, the MDWFP will continue to

advance longleaf conservation by promoting longleaf establishment and managing existing longleaf stands using sound silvicultural practices that retain the forests' ecological integrity. These stands will serve as demonstration areas to educate the public on the value and management of the longleaf ecosystem.

- 4. Provide Support to Mississippi's Longleaf Implementation Team** – Through collaboration on mutually beneficial projects, conservation planning, logistical support for meetings, workshops, and field days, the MDWFP will assist the local longleaf working group in furthering the cause of longleaf conservation.

SIGNATORY



Larry Castle, Director of Technical Programs
Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks

2/15/11

Date