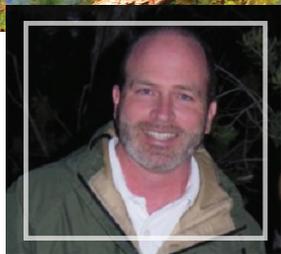




AMERICA'S LONGLEAF RESTORATION INITIATIVE 2016 RANGE-WIDE ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT



Message from Troy Ettel, The Nature Conservancy 2016 Chair of the Longleaf Partnership Council



As Chair of the 33-member Longleaf Partnership Council, I am pleased to present the *2016 Range-wide Accomplishment Report* that summarizes the continued progress over the past year toward the goals

of the *Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine*. This fourth annual report maintains our four-year-trend of increased year over year reporting of longleaf restoration.

A record 2,023,214 acres of restoration activities were reported in 2016 with specific increases in prescribed fire on private lands (88,000 more acres reported than 2015). These numbers represent greater strides in our mechanism to count and thus report restoration activities as well as documented increases in some restoration and management activities.

The accomplishments of the diverse partnership that contributes to the America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative (ALRI) are something that we should continue to report with pride. Often ALRI is held up nationally as a model of landscape scale collaboration around a common conservation goal. To remain a standard bearer, we must always be prepared to build upon our progress to date, and that means being prepared for what comes next. Over the past year, the ALRI has openly discussed and debated that issue through open forums at each semiannual Longleaf Partnership Council meeting. The perspective was that we have accomplished much; however we must do more if we are to reach our eight-million acre goal by 2025.

There was unanimous agreement amongst Council members that the goal (eight million acres) and the timeframe (2025) should remain our focal points. Thus, these discussions concentrated on identifying and agreeing upon the next steps. The outcome was the development of seven "Game Changers," defined as specific, action-oriented strategies that will significantly accelerate the pace of restoration. So many large initiatives start out with goals that are unobtainable. It is the belief of the Council that if we can collectively focus

on these seven needs, discussed in more detail later in this document, that our range-wide goal of eight million acres of longleaf pine is within reach.

I want to say thank you to those working on the ground that are most responsible for the gains that we continue to experience. It has been my pleasure to serve as Chair of the Longleaf Partnership Council over the past year. I am grateful to Kevin McIntyre, who rotated off the leadership team after three years of service at the end of 2016, as well as our colleagues who have served on the leadership team with us: Clay Ware, with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Kyle Jones, with the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USDA-FS).

2,023,214 acres of restoration
activities reported in 2016

**Our range-wide goal of
8 million acres of longleaf
pine is within reach.**

I also want to thank those who have given valuable contributions of time and knowledge to serve on the Council over the past year and those whose time went into the development of this report. Clay, in particular, was the individual most responsible for putting this document together. We are also grateful to those individuals in the states who reported the data that populates these accomplishments. I also want to say thank you to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for providing the funding that sustains so much of this work as well as the federal and state agencies, NGOs, and private landowners who facilitate the work getting done. I look forward to sustained success as we continue down this impressive journey to eight-million managed acres of longleaf pine and am privileged to continue working with you all on this noble endeavor.

2016 Range-wide Accomplishment Report Findings

This report documents accomplishments associated with the America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative (ALRI) in fiscal year 2016 (October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2016), as compiled by State Coordination Teams across the longleaf range from southern Virginia to eastern Texas. The primary purpose of this report is to assess and summarize the following: 1) the scale of various on-the-ground work performed within the longleaf range, 2) the degree to which the priorities identified in ALRI's strategic plan are being accomplished, and 3) the challenges and required actions related to reaching the eight-million acre longleaf restoration goal identified in the *Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine* (Range-wide Plan).

The Longleaf Partnership Council (Council) consists of 33 members representing State and Federal agencies, organizations, forest industry, forestry consultants, academia, and private landowners. This group collectively epitomizes the collaboration needed for the restoration of longleaf pine through ALRI. This report will highlight the success that the 17 Local Implementation Teams (LITs), working within the 18 Significant Geographic Areas (SGAs) (Figure 1) identified in the Range-wide Plan, have had in getting "boots on the ground" to implement restoration activities, which the State Coordination Teams have both facilitated and tracked at the state level. The longleaf pine Federal Coordinating Committee's (FCC) commitment to ALRI and the Council

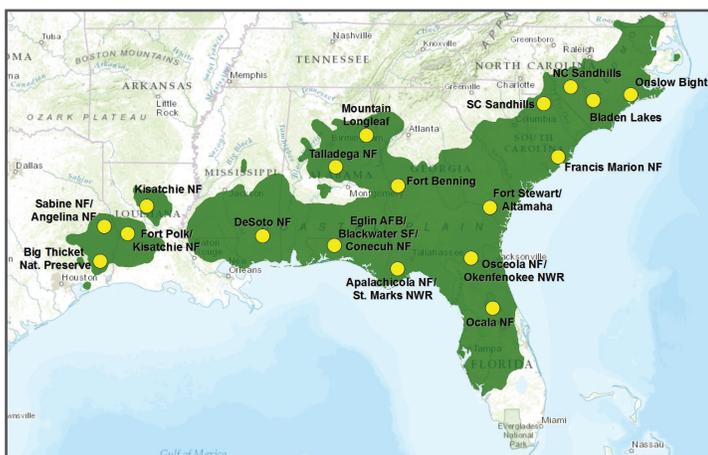


Figure 1. The 18 Significant Geographic Areas (SGAs).

continued in 2016 through critical contributions of resources from federal programs. As a result, 2016 was another record-breaking year with various on-the-ground restoration activities reported on over two-million acres to restore or improve longleaf pine forests across the range.

Discussion in the three previous annual Accomplishment Reports were formatted to address priority activities as described in America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative, Strategic Priorities and Actions 2013-2015. In 2015, that document was updated to the current strategic plan, America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative, Strategic Priorities and Actions 2016-2018 (SPA 2016-2018). This 2016 Accomplishment Report follows the format of the current, updated plan and will address short-term activities needed to reach our long-term goals. Five focal areas have been identified:

1) Advance Key Outcomes

- Significantly increase acres of longleaf pine ecosystems through establishing new forests as well as comprehensively identifying and converting existing mixed stands with a longleaf component to longleaf-dominant stands.
- Improve and maintain existing acreage of longleaf pine ecosystems, with an emphasis on increasing the acreage of prescribed fire accomplished annually.

2) Understand the Baseline

- Complete range-wide longleaf pine mapping to guide planning efforts.

3) Public Lands Strategy

- Continue to expand opportunities to advance longleaf restoration on public lands.

4) Private Lands Strategy

- Continue to expand opportunities to advance longleaf restoration on private lands.

5) Strengthen the Partnership

- Look for opportunities to strengthen the Partnership through greater engagement of existing members and expanding the effort to bring in new partners and stakeholders that are supportive of the goals established in the *Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine*.

Key Overall Findings

Broadly speaking, ALRI considers anything done to establish, maintain, or improve longleaf pine stands as restoration activities. These include tree planting, use of natural regeneration, prescribed burning, mid-story treatments, invasive species control, native understory plant establishment, overstory treatments, and land acquisition/easements. These activities were reported on a record 2,023,214 acres of public and private lands, representing a slight increase over the previous high water mark established in 2015. Consistent with previous years, roughly 2/3 (68%) of the total accomplishments occurred within SGAs.

ALRI estimates that roughly 139,500 acres of longleaf pine were planted in 2016, an 8% decrease from 2015. Compared to 2015, planted acreage decreased on private lands by about 14%, but there was a 30% increase in planting on public lands — with the USDA-FS more than doubling its establishment from last year and the Department of Defense (DoD) increasing its planting by 46%. Approximately 70% of the overall accomplishments were conducted on public lands (1,423,504 acres), with the National Forest System (NFS), military installations, and state-owned lands being the primary contributors. Prescribed burning accounted for approximately 86% of the accomplishments reported on public land.

Across the nine states where longleaf is found, Florida reported the greatest acreage of longleaf habitat work in 2016 (as it did in 2015), with 36% occurring in the state. More than half (55%) of the longleaf restoration work occurred in two states, Florida and Alabama. Kudos are extended to all of the states in the longleaf range for continuing to prioritize longleaf pine restoration in their natural resource management activities.

Restoration activities were reported on 563,105 acres of private land in 2016, a slight decrease from 2015. Longleaf pine planting accounted for just under 20% of these accomplishments. Remarkably, more than 433,000 acres of prescribed burning was reported on private land in 2016, an increase of 88,000 acres over the record total reported in 2015 (Figure 2). This increase can be directly attributed to improved reporting by the State of Georgia, who began its first full year of a revised prescribed fire permitting process that specifically asked whether the planned operation would take place in longleaf pine stands. The Council continues to encourage other states to make similar changes to their permitting systems. This would help us continue to improve our ability to accurately report the extent of prescribed fire application across the longleaf range.

As in 2015, 70% of total accomplishments by area were reported on public lands, which comprise only 39% of the

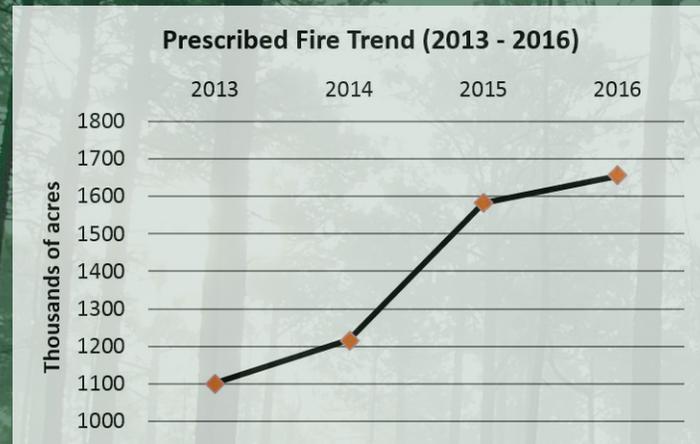


Figure 2. The 4-year upward trend in total prescribed fire acreage in longleaf ecosystems is illustrated



Prescribed fire in longleaf pine savanna conducted by Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership on the Perdido River Water Management Area in Florida.

area of existing longleaf pine. This can almost entirely be attributed to prescribed burning, which made up nearly 86% of the work done on public lands. Conversely, private lands account for 61% of the area of longleaf pine but supported only 30% of reported accomplishments in 2016. This illustrates a continued need to increase prescribed fire application, or more accurate reporting of it, on private lands. We suspect that reporting accomplishments such as prescribed fire are more accurate on public lands than on private lands. If we could improve reporting mechanisms for restoration activities taking place on private lands, the disparity between figures for public and private lands related to fire and other activities will lessen to some degree. Due to resource availability, size of holdings, technical expertise, and a more conservation-based management scheme, it is expected that public lands will continue to set the pace for longleaf pine ecosystem restoration and maintenance in the foreseeable future.

The need for a wider application of prescribed fire on private lands is reinforced by the difference in establishment of new longleaf pine plantations between private and public lands, with nearly 80% of new longleaf acreage planted on private

ALRI in 2016



More than
433,000
acres of
prescribed burning
reported on private land



Prescribed burning
increased by
88,000 acres
compared to 2015



Restoration activities
reported on a record
2,023,214 acres



68% of the
total accomplishments
occurred within SGAs

Accomplishments



139,500 acres
of longleaf pine planted



79% of new
longleaf acreage
planted on private lands



30%
increase in planting
on public lands

lands. The Council is very pleased with this private/public planting ratio, as it indicates that more landowners and land managers are embracing longleaf pine forest restoration and the improved wildlife habitat, risk aversion, and wood quality benefits it provides over other pine types. However, it further illustrates the need to increase prescribed burning on private lands, which only made up 26% of the total acreage burned in FY16.

Restoration activities on public lands—NFs, NWRs, military installations, and others—are funded almost entirely through Congressional appropriations, so it's logical to say they are supported nearly 100% by public funds. On private lands, however, public cost-share dollars represented 49% of the total overall longleaf planting cost incurred by all private landowners (including those who did not receive cost-share). Many private landowners actively manage longleaf pine stands on their own, without cost-share or other public funds in support of their management. This suggests that our accounting of the ratio of public funding on private lands is almost certainly overstated because it's difficult to track activities done on private lands by landowners who are not receiving cost-share and where the activities are not reported to a State or Federal funding agency. We're glad for every acre on private lands that landowners decide to restore on their own; we just have difficulty quantifying that acreage.

Strategic Priority 1. Advance Key Outcomes.

A) In 2015, the Council set a target in SPA 2016-2018 of increasing annual longleaf establishment acreage to 190,000 acres, with 150,000 acres established on private lands and the remaining 40,000 on public lands.

We estimate that approximately 139,500 acres of longleaf pine were planted range-wide in 2016. The estimate is based on known restoration acreage combined with tree nursery survey findings from Auburn University showing that 98.5 million longleaf seedlings were produced for the fiscal year 2016 planting season. This is 8.8% fewer than the 108 million seedlings produced in 2015, resulting in a similar decline in planted acreage. An estimated 30,000 acres (21%) were established on public lands and nearly 110,000 acres (79%) of longleaf pine were established on private lands. Sixty-five percent of the planted acreage on private land received some sort of cost-share assistance. USDA Farm Bill programs administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) continued to drive this effort, accounting for 83% of the cost-share acreage, with the remaining portion attributable to the Longleaf Stewardship Fund, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, and various State forestry and wildlife agency programs.

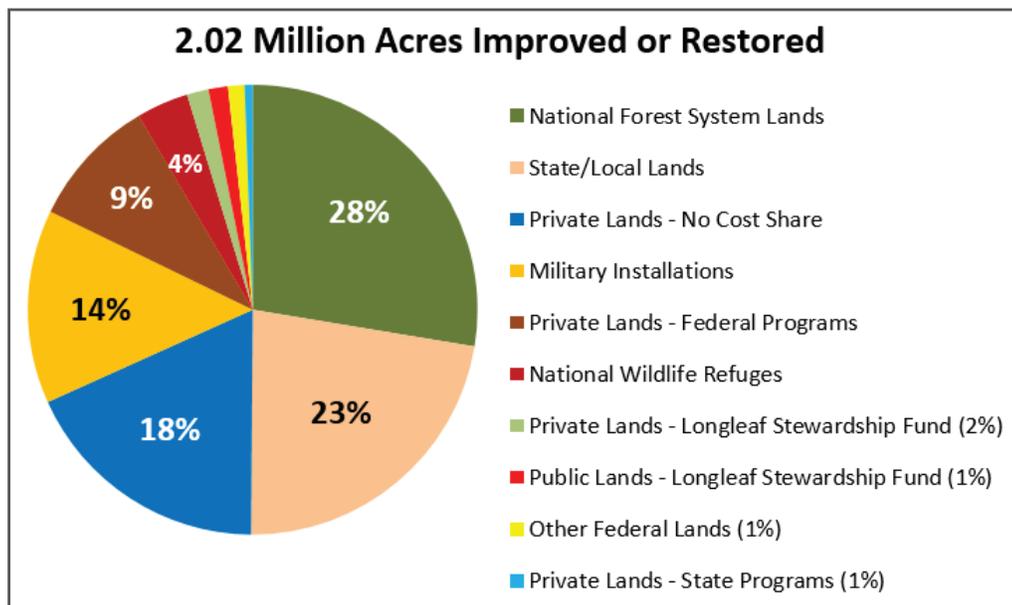


Figure 3. Distribution of longleaf accomplishment acreage across various land ownerships and support programs.

Thirty-five percent of the new acres planted on private lands were apparently established independently of cost-share programs, suggesting that many landowners have recognized the conservation and resiliency benefits of restoring longleaf forests on their property and are willing to pay a little extra in establishment costs to obtain these benefits.

B) SPA 2016-2018 also set a goal of increasing prescribed fire to 1.4 million acres by 2018 (300,000 on private land and 1.1 million on public land).

We are very pleased to report that we have already met and surpassed this goal with a reported 1.66 million acres burned in 2016 (Figure 2)! This includes applying prescribed fire on 1.2 million acres of public land and easily surpassing our private land target by burning 433,000 acres. Many factors contribute to the ability to apply prescribed fire, primarily availability of burn crews and suitable weather conditions, so annual acreage totals tend to fluctuate greatly. It is very encouraging to be able to surpass the targeted three-year increase in prescribed fire acres in the very first year.

Strategic Priority 2. Understand the Baseline: Complete range-wide longleaf pine mapping to guide planning efforts.

SPA 2016-2018 called for completing a pilot project mapping 4-5 SGAs in 2016 and expanding the effort to encompass the remaining SGAs by 2018. It also suggested that we explore opportunities to more effectively work with USDA-FS Forest Inventory and Analysis Program (FIA) to utilize its data for assessment, monitoring, and reporting.

In 2015, The Longleaf Alliance (LLA) was awarded a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant of about \$100,000 to support a USDA-FS-led team’s development of cost-effective techniques for longleaf mapping. Using state-of-the-art computing techniques and high-resolution aerial imagery, the team was able to develop tools to identify stands of longleaf using new software to train computers to analyze and compare patterns in massive, high-resolution aerial imagery files. To develop these new tools, the team focused on test areas in Florida, Alabama, and Georgia with existing fly-over images from the National Agriculture Imagery Program. They zeroed in on extremely detailed, “leaf-on” spectral images of forested areas that already had been studied by foresters on the ground. These study areas served as benchmarks that researchers used to “train” their software systems to predict which pixels represented different cover classes — asphalt, shrubs, grasses, longleaf pine and others — and then linked the imagery to plot data provided by the FIA through novel statistical models. Within the analyzed geographic area, this new set of tools was successful in predicting with 80% confidence that, for example, a given section of forest contains longleaf pine trees with a diameter greater than 20 inches. While the transferability and usefulness of this effort across the longleaf range has yet to be determined, it offers great potential for assessing current stand conditions and identifying priority restoration sites.

Strategic Priority 3. Public Lands Strategy: Continue and expand opportunities to advance longleaf restoration on public lands.

SPA 2016–2018 identified five emphasis areas/actions to promote and accelerate longleaf restoration on public lands. Great progress has been made in all five areas, including coordination and collaboration between LITs and National Forests (NFs) in land management planning (Action 3.1). An example of this is the unprecedented coordination between USDA-FS staff and the Sewee Longleaf Conservation Cooperative (SLCC) during the Francis Marion NF (FMNF) plan revision. Colette Degarady, former SLCC Coordinator, was at the helm of this process and her efforts/effectiveness serve as a model for public/private collaboration. As a result, the SLCC remained engaged from the creation of the planning team by USDA-FS staff to the roll out of the plan. According to Colette, “It was perfect timing. We used the SLCC steering committee meetings and future SLCC member meetings/workshops as a platform for discussing partner and public input for the plan. Partners and landowners really appreciated the new planning rule’s collaborative approach, not only in encouraging input for the planning, but also considering land management on adjacent properties to the FMNF.”

Action 3.2 of SPA 2016-2018 encouraged greater use of stewardship contracting as a restoration tool on NFs. Stewardship contracting utilizes contracts or agreements that allow exchanges of goods (primarily timber on Federal lands) for privately-provided services to achieve land-management goals. Strongly supported by USDA-FS Regional Forester Tony Tooke, use of stewardship contracting in the Southern Region continues to grow. Examples include the Priority Four Stewardship Project on the Osceola NF, which included conversion of slash pine stands to longleaf on approximately 1,065 acres, promoting longleaf natural regeneration on 200 acres, and releasing longleaf pine from competing vegetation on 500 acres. The Groveton Phase II Stewardship Proposal on the Davy Crockett NF in Texas is another successful project, with plans to thin 450 acres of longleaf and apply prescribed fire to 5,000 acres of red-cockaded woodpeckers (RCW) habitat. The FMNF capitalized on stewardship contracting to commercially thin and release over 9,000 acres of residual longleaf pine and to regenerate longleaf on another 350 acres.

Action 3.4 of SPA 2016-2018 encouraged greater engagement in partnerships to increase prescribed fire in SGAs and expand training opportunities, and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) provided a great example of this action. With support from numerous partners, the Student Conservation Association launched the Gulf Coast Fire Mentoring Program in



Tyrell Downie in action on a prescribed fire on the Osceola National Forest.

Tyrell Downie is a 2016 graduate of TNC’s collaboration with Job Corps to support prescribed fire operations on the ground while creating opportunities to train and introduce economically disadvantaged young people to green careers. Tyrell has returned to be part of a TNC-led fire crew for his second season. After spending much of 2016 working on the Osceola NF in northeast Florida, he is working with the TNC’s Apalachicola Bluffs and Ravines Preserve in the Florida panhandle in 2017 and assisting on controlled burns with local partners such as the Apalachicola NF and St. Marks NWR. Tyrell’s time with TNC has been a unique experience for him:

“Before Job Corps, I hadn’t even heard of longleaf pine forests. So, this was like a whole new world for me. I learned how controlled burns maintain this habitat for red-cockaded woodpeckers, gopher tortoises, indigo snakes and other species. It was so different to see fire on the ground and see how our crew could manipulate fire. That first burn made it real, with the smoke in my face and holding a fire line, and seeing how they used a helicopter. I’ve learned a lot about nature. I’ve gotten to travel and learn about new places in Florida and Georgia. I became more of an adult, and I became more concerned about nature. I feel like I’m making a difference, like I can give back for generations to come.”

Support for this project has come from a number of sources including the NFWF, US Endowment for Forestry and Communities, USDA-FS, USFWS, Dobbs Foundation, and Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

2016. The program goals were both ecological and social — to increase prescribed fire capacity while also engaging underserved communities in natural resource management. Built off of a small pilot project on the Osceola NF in 2015, the project trained 20 young adults from economically disadvantaged backgrounds as entry-level prescribed fire technicians. They were then deployed to work alongside veteran TNC fire crews at six locations across the Gulf States. In these landscapes, the crews engaged in prescribed fire on TNC preserves and worked closely with State and Federal partners on fire and other stewardship activities. They participated on over 100,000 acres of prescribed fire during their 21-week mentorship.

Land protection activities to conserve longleaf pine forests through numerous programs were called for in Action 3.5 of SPA 2016-2018. A successful example includes final conveyance of a 9,800-acre project to USDA-FS in 2016 from The Conservation Fund (TCF). Using a Land and Water Conservation Fund award, TCF and USDA-FS worked together to protect this area to ultimately be restored to longleaf. Great strides for longleaf pine are also being made in the Forest Legacy program. By providing grants to states to permanently protect private forests, Forest Legacy helps maintain private forests that are by conversion. Since 2001, states in the Southern Region have placed over 280,000 acres into this program.

Strategic Priority 4. Private Lands Strategy: Continue to expand opportunities to advance longleaf restoration on private lands.

SPA 2016-2018 identified seven specific activities regarding private land that were either annual targets or three-year goals to be phased in over the document's designated time frame. ALRI partners addressed five of these during FY16. First, longleaf pine field days were hosted by most of the LITs during the year, as well as by the LLA, Southern Company, Jones Ecological Research Center, and other groups. There were 28 identified field days, which exceeded the 25 called for in SPA 2016-2018. However, many such field days go unreported, so the actual total is higher. Second, SPA 2016-2018 also called for providing 15 or more comprehensive longleaf pine-focused educational opportunities. The LLA provided 10 Longleaf Academies, the Jones Ecological Research Center conducted 10 longleaf-related workshops and short courses, and NRCS staff in Alabama hosted a field trip to address gopher tortoise habitat management needs, marking 21 known events. Third, another priority action involved improving or initiating engagement with non-industrial private forest landowners and private forestry consultants on longleaf pine by improving coordination with representative organizations. Great advances were made in

this area, with improved interaction with the American Forest Foundation's American Tree Farm System and successful outreach to tree farmers in an effort to initiate and document activities beneficial to listed or at-risk species on their properties. Similar advances were made with the Forest Landowner's Association (FLA), including adding an FLA representative to the Council membership. Fourth, an identified action involving increased engagement on larger acreages managed by timber investment management organizations (TIMOs) and real estate investment trusts (REITs) was included as one of the "Game Changers" needed to put ALRI on course to meeting its eight-million acre goal (discussed further on page 15). As an example of this, another \$5 million from the NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program () was applied to the ongoing Coastal Headwaters initiative, which seeks to restore and maintain 200,000 mostly contiguous acres in Alabama and Florida as permanent working longleaf pine forests, including regular prescribed fire application. And fifth, the SPA 2016-2018 prescribed fire priority action calling for improving reporting mechanisms was partially met, as the State of Georgia recently improved its reporting process for identifying prescribe burning on private lands, resulting in the 88,000-acre gain in reported acreage discussed previously.

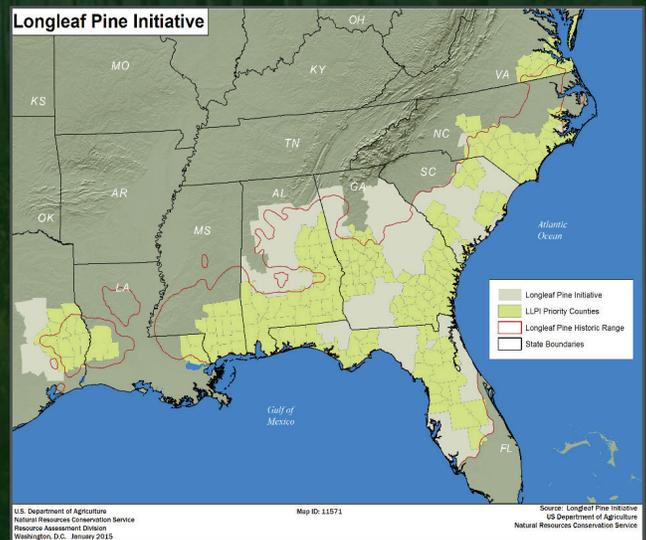
A key contributor to efforts to encourage longleaf pine ecosystem restoration and maintenance on private lands is the NFWF Longleaf Stewardship Fund, a public-private partnership that receives Federal support from the USDA-FS, NRCS, DoD, USFWS, and private funding from Southern Company, International Paper's Forestland Stewards Initiative, and the Altria Group. In FY16, NFWF awarded \$4.3 million in grants for 21 projects across the historic longleaf pine range to support the restoration of the longleaf ecosystem and advance the objectives of the Range-wide Plan. These projects ultimately will restore more than 14,800 acres and enhance more than 230,000 additional acres of longleaf pine habitat, while leveraging more than \$5.3 million in additional funds from grant partners. Additionally, the funding is expected to provide over 1,800 private landowners with educational and technical assistance related to longleaf



University of Georgia forestry professor, Dr. David Dickens, discusses longleaf pine management on a field trip at Big Survey Plantation, near Yemassee, SC.

NRCS Continues to Focus Efforts in Priority Counties

NRCS' Longleaf Pine Initiative (LLPI) continues to focus restoration efforts with 84% of conservation occurring in priority counties. Of the 107,000 acres conserved during fiscal year 2016, more than 90,000 acres were in priority counties. This focus on priority counties is part of the agency's targeted support of ALRI. NRCS invested \$12.8 million to support restoration efforts in fiscal year 2016. The LLPI includes the nine states in the longleaf range, and it plays a crucial role in stitching together public and private lands. Overall, more than half of the forests conserved are located near military installations, NFs, national wildlife refuges, state forests or heritage reserves. From 2010 to 2016, NRCS has invested \$65 million to help producers restore nearly 400,000 acres on private lands.



restoration and available cost-share programs, with an anticipated 200 landowners entering into stewardship programs on private lands.

According to Jeff Trandahl, executive director and CEO at NFWF, "The grants will support a range of critical conservation actions, including longleaf plantings, invasive species control, and the use of prescribed fire for longleaf restoration. These projects will benefit a wide array of wildlife, including rare species such as the RCW, gopher tortoise, indigo snake and dusky gopher frog." Since 2012, the Fund has invested more than \$18.6 million in projects to restore more than 62,500 acres, improve more than 776,000 additional acres of existing longleaf forest, and benefit the native species of flora and fauna that rely on the mature, frequently-burned longleaf pine ecosystems that are so underrepresented on the landscape. The grants awarded by the Longleaf Stewardship Fund in 2016 continue to build on the success of this public-private partnership, further expanding the longleaf pine ecosystem through collaborative and results-oriented actions. (See Figure 3 for a distribution of longleaf accomplishment acreage across various land ownerships and support programs.)

Strategic Priority 5. Strengthen the Partnership: Look for opportunities to strengthen the Partnership and expand the effort to bring in new partners and stakeholders that are supportive of the goals established in the *Range-wide Plan*.

At the November 2015 Council meeting, it became clear that ALRI partners were going to have to step up longleaf restoration activities in order to meet the eight-million acre goal.

Due to the strong and urgent emphasis placed by the Council Leadership Team on developing and documenting actions needed to get the Initiative on track to meeting the goal, there was less effort placed on this Strategic Priority than hoped for. As a result, progress was made on only two of the six actions in SPA 2016-2018. 1) Efforts continued by numerous partners to position themselves favorably for funding through one or more of the funding sources authorized under the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act (RESTORE Act). The Council has also identified obtaining funding through this Act as a means of having a major impact on ALRI's efforts and easily justifiable due to the longleaf pine ecosystem's relative water efficiency, longevity, and stream water quality protection capabilities. 2) With the addition of an LIT Consul position, not only has overall coordination of LITs improved, but range-wide LIT meetings are occurring with greater frequency. Such meetings have become commonplace events in conjunction with Council meetings, but standalone meetings are now being arranged, with the next one scheduled for early August 2017.

In addition to these SPA 2016-2018-identified activities to strengthen the partnership, a longleaf pine landowner-focused forum was held in Pensacola, FL in March 2016 to identify landowner issues and concerns related to ecologically-based forest management. Organized by Partners for Conservation (PFC) and the USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife program, the 2016 Southeastern Forest Private Lands Partnership Forum included 33 private landowners from across the longleaf range, as well as representatives from the USFWS, USDA-FS, NRCS, DoD, private industry, NGOs, and various State natural resource programs. The landowners developed a set of recommendations for improving cooperative conservation on private lands. Strong support emerged for moving forward with this public-private partnership, as the group

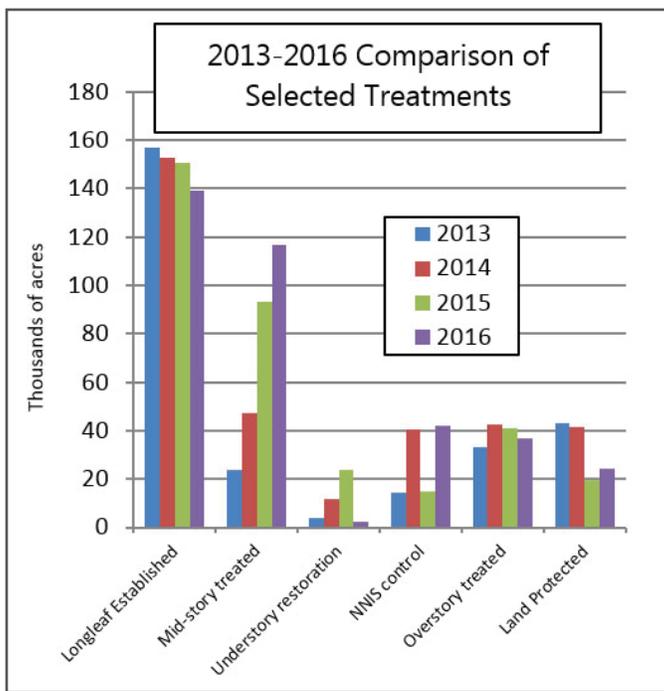


Figure 4. Past four-year summary of selected longleaf pine accomplishment activities.

voted to continue the dialogue and to work toward implementation of their recommendations. The forum was also seen as an effective place for addressing new and emerging issues. A follow-up meeting is being planned for 2017.

Summary and Discussion

Since ALRI started reporting accomplishments in 2013, we've seen declines each year in longleaf establishment. Although the annual declines in 2014 and 2015 were fairly small (2.4 and 1.5%, respectively), 2016 saw a decline of nearly 8% from the 2015 acreage. Since 2013, the acreage of new longleaf pine being planted is down over 11% (Figure 4). While establishment of nearly 140,000 acres of longleaf pine is still impressive, the downward trend is a certainly a concern, especially when larger-than-expected losses in existing longleaf acreage are being reported by the USDA-FS FIA program. Since timber harvesting operations do not utilize any of our programs, we have no reporting mechanism in place to quantify these losses, making it difficult to estimate overall longleaf pine acreage. We are working with the USDA-FS FIA program to obtain more up-to-date acreage estimates, but for this report we are holding to our 2015 estimate of 4.7 million total acres of longleaf pine forest across the range. To counter the higher than expected losses and the downward trend in longleaf establishment, the Council has worked closely with the FCC to explore ways to invigorate and expand our efforts to restore and improve longleaf pine forests. The result was a list of seven "Game Changer" activities that we hope can be implemented to some

degree in the near future. See page 15 for more details on these identified needs designed to put ALRI back on track to meeting our eight-million acre goal.

Despite the declining acreage of new longleaf establishment, ALRI is excited about the acreage of reported improvements to existing longleaf stands through various treatments such as mid-story or overstory thinning operations, prescribed fire implementation, and treatments to control invasive species. The amount of longleaf acreage reported as being protected in perpetuity through fee title acquisition or easement showed a slight rebound in 2016 also, and over the past four years of data collection, stands at an impressive average of over 32,000 acres annually. Restoration of understory dropped substantially in 2016. Observed interest in this restoration activity remains high, but so does the cost. Efforts are being made to bring down the cost as well as to improve the success rate, and ALRI is optimistic that native ground-cover restoration will begin to rebound in future years. In the meantime, understory resurgence is being encouraged through the increase in activities that enable more light to reach the forest floor. Activities such as thinning mid-story and over-story trees or removing competing shrubs and saplings, combined with the application of prescribed fire, both stimulate seed production in existing groundcover and remove the litter layer to promote germination of newly dispersed seeds, as well as residual seeds in the seed bank.

In addition to improving the wildlife quality, plant diversity, and overall health of the forest, many of the activities listed above can also serve to restore longleaf forest types in stands with a minor longleaf component. For example, due to fire suppression or inadequate site preparation, many stands have an excessive component of hardwood or other off-site pine types. Removing these through harvest, implementation of a regular prescribed fire regime, or some other practice, effectively increases the relative amount of longleaf and results in a longleaf-dominated stand. Acreage restored in this manner has not been reported to date, but ALRI is exploring ways to quantify such conversions in future reports. The USDA-FS anticipates such targeted improvements will restore substantial acreage on NFS lands over the next few years. Other Federal and State agencies are being encouraged to follow the USDA-FS lead on their lands. This is one of the "Game Changer" activities already being acted upon by ALRI partners. Although ALRI partners are making great progress in restoring both the quantity and quality of longleaf pine forests across the native range, we are confident that, by implementing these recommended "Game Changers," we will be able to increase the rate of restoration and continue to move the needle closer and closer to our eight-million acre target.



2016 Accomplishment Report Summary by Ownership

Category Data Source- (Team Member)	Performance Measures															
	Longleaf Establishment		Prescribed Burning		Mid-story Treatments		Native Understory Plant Establishment		NNIS Treatments		Overstory Treatments		Acquisition/Easements		TOTAL	
	Acres	Acres in SGA	Acres	Acres in SGA	Acres	Acres in SGA	Acres	Acres in SGA	Acres	Acres in SGA	Acres	Acres in SGA	Acres	Acres in SGA	Acres	Acres in SGA
Public Lands																
National Forest System (USDA Forest Service)	15,215	14,160	514,662	415,293	10,112	9,258	27	27	2,765	2,492	15,769	11,498	83	83	558,633	452,811
Savannah River Site (USDA Forest Service)	571	571	19,999	19,999	20	20	15	15	200	200	2,646	2,646	0	0	23,451	23,451
National Wildlife Refuges (USFWS)	76	45	74,591	63,388	475	414	10	10	161	135	200	200	0	0	75,513	64,192
Military Installations (DoD)	6,016	4,611	240,416	193,808	12,677	1,616	102	3	770	183	2,760	1,447	19,030	18,817	281,771	220,485
National Parks/Preserves (NPS)	150	150	577	577	173	173	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	900	900
State Forests (State Foresters)	1,110	1,110	199,403	119,918	6,309	6,309	35	35	5,348	2,377	1,302	1,280	40	0	213,547	131,029
WMAs (State WL Directors)	3,463	987	83,259	33,436	13,571	375	657	593	6,220	0	2,739	1,282	3,737	63	113,646	36,736
Other State/Local Lands	2,676	1,267	62,296	11,542	53,488	1,534	53	53	9,223	9,147	394	0	20	20	128,150	23,563
Public lands (through Longleaf Stewardship Fund)	739	739	26,704	26,704	100	100	350	350	0	0	0	0	0	0	27,893	27,893
Total Public Lands	30,016	23,640	1,221,907	884,665	96,925	19,799	1,249	1,086	24,687	14,534	25,810	18,353	22,910	18,983	1,423,504	981,060
Private Lands																
State Forestry Agencies (State Foresters)	5,215	1,946	1,019	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	252	128	685	0	7,171	2,096
State Wildlife Agencies (State Wildlife Directors)	13	0	3,990	2,167	110	0	3	0	241	0	0	0	0	0	4,357	2,167
WHIP (NRCS)	929	593	10,827	5,897	2,749	2,583	100	100	0	0	55	19	0	0	14,660	9,192
EQIP (NRCS)	41,022	35,481	48,968	42,933	10,754	8,983	230	105	15,259	15,166	848	531	3,500	3,500	120,581	106,699
Other (NRCS)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total - NRCS	41,951	36,074	59,795	48,830	13,503	11,566	330	205	15,259	15,166	903	550	3,500	3,500	135,241	115,891
Conservation Reserve Program (Farm Service Agency)	17,422	1,542	17,772	2,858	197	77	77	0	598	57	8,765	614	0	0	44,831	5,148
Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (USFWS)	3,976	2,529	4,698	4,005	389	354	145	102	107	44	0	0	0	0	9,315	7,034
Corporate Lands -private funds only (State Foresters) - Outside cost-share programs	1,338	1,308	18,048	5,044	3,265	3,245	0	0	486	446	15	0	0	0	23,152	10,043
NGO Programs -private funds only (appropriate NGO) - Outside cost-share programs	854	461	24,597	18,566	1,001	905	370	358	12	11	94	7	3,296	3,296	30,224	23,604
Private Landowners - private funds only (State Foresters) - Outside cost-share programs	2,413	1,528	276,829	180,379	280	185	0	0	262	145	582	336	0	0	280,366	182,573
Private Landowners (through Longleaf Stewardship Fund)	2,880	2,880	26,441	26,441	1,104	1,104	18	18	563	497	658	40	40	0	31,704	30,980
Private Landowners - Projected Acres	33,349	21,677	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33,349	21,677
Total Private Lands	109,411	69,945	433,189	288,312	19,849	17,436	943	683	17,528	16,366	11,269	1,675	7,521	6,796	599,710	401,213
Grand Total - All Lands	139,427	93,585	1,655,096	1,172,977	116,774	37,235	2,192	1,769	42,215	30,900	37,079	20,028	30,431	25,779	2,023,214	1,382,273

2016 Accomplishment Report Summary by State

Category	Performance Measures																	
	Longleaf Establishment			Prescribed Burning		Mid-story Treatments		Native Understory Plant Establishment		NNIS Treatments		Overstory Treatments		Acquisition/Easements		TOTAL		
	Reported Acres	Projected Acres	Acres in SGA	Acres	Acres in SGA	Acres	Acres in SGA	Acres	Acres in SGA	Acres	Acres in SGA	Acres	Acres in SGA	Acres	Acres in SGA	Acres	Acres in SGA	
Public Lands																		
Texas	150	0	150	29,233	21,083	214	173	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29,597	21,406
Louisiana	2,048	0	1,229	129,876	95,670	1,769	1,494	0	0	199	24	5,464	3,340	0	0	0	139,356	101,757
Mississippi	1,045	0	809	105,184	45,894	1,314	771	0	0	266	167	6,085	3,938	0	0	0	113,894	51,579
Alabama	2,173	0	2,173	124,361	123,402	455	455	3	3	1,412	1,412	2,192	2,192	83	83	0	130,679	129,720
Florida	18,645	0	16,864	585,834	400,276	74,872	9,651	461	449	21,014	11,712	4,034	2,651	617	478	0	705,477	442,081
Georgia	2,284	0	350	56,011	37,696	1,836	155	99	0	560	0	1,258	0	17,200	17,086	0	79,248	55,287
South Carolina	1,319	0	801	103,895	76,441	15,174	5,815	15	15	1,157	1,152	4,023	3,679	3,674	0	0	129,257	87,903
North Carolina	1,942	0	1,264	87,136	84,203	1,291	1,285	671	619	79	67	2,754	2,553	1,336	1,336	0	95,209	91,327
Virginia	410	0	0	377	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	787	0
Total Public Lands	30,016		23,640	1,221,907	884,665	96,925	19,799	1,249	1,086	24,687	14,534	25,810	18,353	22,910	18,983	0	1,423,504	981,060
Private Lands																		
Texas	1,524		1,181	5,702	5,592	646	431	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,872	7,204
Louisiana	2,599		1,511	20,065	13,335	4,131	3,927	22	10	585	453	1,316	390	80	40	0	28,798	19,666
Mississippi	18,871		18,688	23,979	23,953	5,102	5,102	0	0	14,135	14,135	0	0	3,500	3,500	0	65,587	65,378
Alabama	7,344		7,245	242,374	181,580	2,880	2,880	177	100	335	31	416	212	0	0	0	253,526	192,048
Florida	5,309		2,301	15,901	12,392	884	723	94	56	489	48	325	26	0	0	0	23,002	15,546
Georgia	28,497		9,122	86,886	18,443	3,026	2,040	156	92	285	155	7,828	283	685	0	0	127,363	30,135
South Carolina	5,648		3,074	23,711	20,963	2,112	1,362	81	12	1,202	1,070	139	139	0	0	0	32,893	26,620
North Carolina	6,146		5,146	12,929	12,054	1,068	971	413	413	497	474	1,171	625	0	0	0	22,224	19,683
Virginia	124		0	1,642	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	74	0	0	0	0	1,840	0
Total Private Lands	76,062	33,349	48,268	433,189	288,312	19,849	17,436	943	683	17,528	16,366	11,269	1,675	4,265	3,540	0	563,105	376,280
Grand Total - All Lands	139,427		71,908	1,655,096	1,172,977	116,774	37,235	2,192	1,769	42,215	30,900	37,079	20,028	27,175	22,523	0	2,019,958	1,357,340



Game Changers: Accelerating the Pace of Longleaf Restoration

Since 2013, the Council has annually collected and summarized detailed accomplishments toward the range-wide goal to reach 8 million acres of longleaf pine in 15 years. These reports quantify the pace and scale of restoration and allow a closer look at the contributions at the regional and state level as well as by agency and ownership.

The first three Accomplishment Reports (2013-2015) provided a sense of the rate of progress toward the eight-million acre goal and an ability to forecast where we will be at the 15-year mark in 2025. At a March 2016 FCC meeting, Council leadership presented data showing that, although accomplishments have been both impressive and significant, ALRI is not on track to reach its goal. Despite this reality check, there was unanimous agreement by both the Council and FCC to keep this goal. Recognizing the need to reinvigorate and accelerate the pace and scale of restoration, Council leadership identified seven “Game Changers,” defined as specific, action-oriented strategies that will significantly accelerate the pace of restoration. After vetting through the Council and FCC, the “Game Changers” below were shared and discussed with FCC Principals in February 2017, and progress toward implementing several is already being realized.

1) Increased restoration on public lands

Principals were requested to engage and help facilitate a process to more aggressively identify and act on opportunities to expand the planting and restoration of longleaf pine forests on lands administered by their respective agencies.

2) Increased restoration on private lands

Identify and act on opportunities to greatly expand and accelerate longleaf pine restoration on private lands well beyond current levels.

3) Seek opportunities to engage large corporate landowners in longleaf restoration

Efforts are being explored to bring large corporate landowners into longleaf pine restoration through incentives that improve the economics of longleaf pine management relative to other management alternatives. The Council has identified several potential mechanisms to aid in this effort.

4) Shift in the message of urgency and importance

Highlight the urgency of the impacts the potential listing of longleaf-dependent at-risk species would have on military training operations and the southern forest industry. Take advantage of this as an opportunity to promote longleaf restoration efforts and use at-risk species recovery as a “driver” to further the goals of ALRI and protect the species that rely on this ecosystem.

5) Promote longleaf opportunities and proposals for Gulf Restoration funding

The FCC Principals were requested to continue to support existing efforts and assist in identifying new opportunities for longleaf pine restoration through various funding streams created under the RESTORE Act.

6) Increase support for prescribed burning

Increasing longleaf acreage demands an increase in prescribed burning. There is a need to identify opportunities and methods to accelerate prescribed fire application up to three million acres across all land ownerships.

7) Reinvest/expand support for land protection through fee title and easement acquisitions

Continue to promote longleaf pine ecosystems in land acquisition programs such as the USDA-FS Legacy Program, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and others.



Local Implementation Team Highlights (Figure 5)

Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP) LIT Update

Vernon Compton, GCPEP Project Director, The Longleaf Alliance

Restoration and protection of significant longleaf sites were made possible in the GCPEP landscape in FY16 thanks to support from NRCS, the DoD, and the State of Florida. In Alabama, TCF received support through the NRCS RCPP program for restoration on thousands of acres owned by GCPEP partner Resource Management Service (RMS). TCF will work with RMS and multiple partners to restore longleaf and wildlife habitat. In addition, 626 acres were added to Blackwater River State Forest as part of an acquisition led by The Trust for Public Land and with funding support from Florida Forever and the DoD Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program. These lands will buffer Naval Air Station-Whiting Field, which has more flight operations than any other location in the country, from incompatible development. Sixty percent of Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard pilots are trained at NAS-Whiting

Field. The GCPEP Ecosystem Support Team had a very productive year, providing prescribed fire support on 70,116 acres, invasive species control on 507 acres, and mechanical treatments on 4,794 acres. In addition, the team provided 15 days of RCW monitoring support and 36 days of rare species habitat improvement work, improving habitat for the RCW, gopher tortoise, and reticulated salamander. GCPEP was also very pleased to welcome the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) as a new partner, bringing the total number of partners to 15 and the lands they manage to over 1.25 million acres in Northwest Florida and South Alabama.

Apalachicola Regional Stewardship Authority (ARSA) 2016 Update

Brian Pelc, ARSA Coordinator, The Nature Conservancy

Coordinating longleaf restoration and management on public and private lands in the Apalachicola River region has continued with as much momentum in 2016 as the previous three years, but with some big advances in strategy. With the help of NFWF Longleaf Stewardship Fund funds and

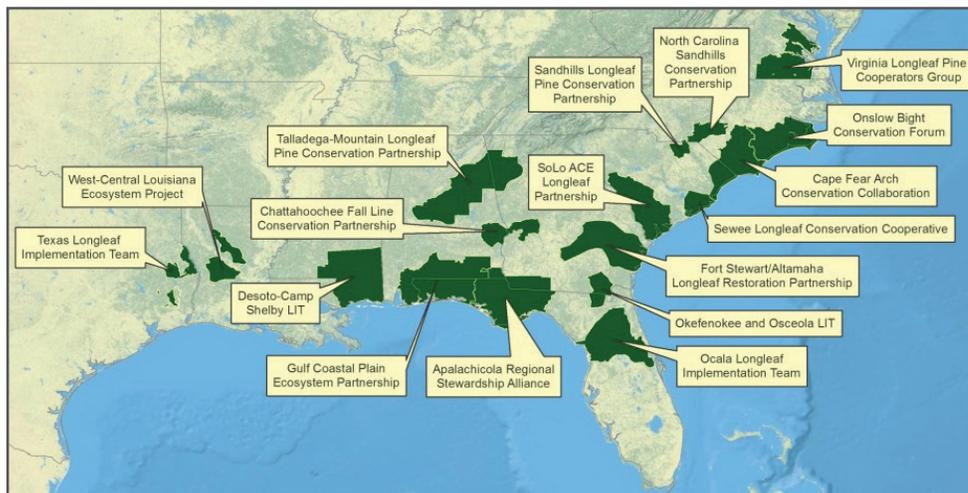


Figure 5. Seventeen Local Implementation Teams are in place across the longleaf range, providing coverage to all 18 Significant Geographic Areas identified in the *Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine*.



A road sign tells drivers they are entering the new Chattahoochee Fall Line Wildlife Management Area, near Columbus, GA.

the planning skills of Rob Sutter (Enduring Conservation Outcomes, LCC), the ARSA steering committee met several times to develop a 10-year Longleaf Pine Conservation Plan, to be completed in early 2017. The group focused on major obstacles that currently interfere with planting new acres of longleaf habitat (including understory) on public and private lands, as well as challenges in burning at the quality and quantity necessary to achieve our key conservation goals. The combined efforts of the 10 ARSA Memorandum of Understanding signatory agencies and numerous other partner organizations have consistently resulted in 1,000-2,000 acres of new longleaf each year and prescribed fire management on 150,000-200,000 acres. The new conservation plan will ensure that those acres are restored and burned according to a mutually agreed upon spatial priority: an array of hubs and corridors where high-quality existing longleaf on or near conservation lands is buffered by new acres and connected across the landscape. Related efforts by the USDA-FS, Florida Forest Service, Florida Natural Areas Inventory, several landscape conservation cooperatives, and NFWF have made this work more accurate and more relevant to both ARSA objectives and those laid out by ALRI. We are looking forward to implementing the 10-year plan starting in 2017.

Chattahoochee Fall Line Conservation Partnership (CFLCP)

LuAnn Craighton, CFLCP Coordinator, The Nature Conservancy

Partnerships produce results! The new Chattahoochee Fall Line Wildlife Management Area (CFLWMA) opened in the fall of 2014 and was created through a cooperative partnership between Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), TNC, and the U.S. Army at Fort Benning. The 11,000 acre CFLWMA, located near Columbus, Georgia, is co-owned and co-managed by the Georgia DNR and TNC. Land stewardship activities on the CFLWMA are focused on restoring the longleaf pine ecosystem. During its second year of operation (FY16) significant strides were

made toward restoration goals including refining the land management plan, removal of invasive sand pine, and 3,246 acres of prescribed burning. To track forest response to restoration activities, follow long-term changes in ecological conditions, and enable adaptive management, an ecological monitoring program was developed for the property. Fifty-nine vegetation monitoring plots were established and will be visited biennially for data collection and analysis. Research launched on the CFLWMA included a project in partnership with Auburn University to better understand the drought resilience of longleaf pine and a geological analysis of unique rock formations with Columbus State University. The CFLWMA also provided new opportunities this year for public hunting, outdoor recreation, and outreach programming in the region, including successful adult/youth hunts for deer and turkey and a private landowner forestry field day.

NC Sandhills Conservation Partnership (NCSCP)

Susan Miller, NCSCP Coordinator, USFWS

Five new properties, totaling 515 acres were protected in FY 2016. RCW populations in the NC Sandhills increased from 684 Potential Breeding Groups in 2015 to 690 in 2016. Ongoing RCW translocation efforts from Ft. Bragg to private lands continue to be successful. The Partnership conducted ground-truthing surveys of potential quality longleaf habitat on private lands previously identified from aerial photos and surveyed partners to determine research and information needs (fire effects was the most frequently mentioned topic). Other research efforts included an assessment of upland depressional wetland habitat quality, which showed that density of wetlands within a connected landscape is the largest predictor of rare amphibian presence, more so than quality of any individual wetland. There was also a state-wide Bachman's sparrow status assessment published this year. Over 75,000 acres were burned on conservation lands in 2016, and the NC Sandhills Prescribed Burn Association for private landowners was created. At the Winter Quarterly Steering Committee Meeting, founding members of the Partnership from 2000 gave a presentation to current members about the history of the formation of the partnership, how they worked together in the early 90s to tackle RCW recovery efforts, and how we were able to move from conflict to collaboration.

Osceola/Okefenokee Local Implementation Team (O2LIT)

Hunter Bowman, O2LIT Coordinator, The Nature Conservancy

The O2LIT had a busy year in 2016. With its focus on landowner outreach and building technical capacity, the team organized multiple workshops and training events designed to educate landowners and managers on the benefits of planting longleaf, successful establishment, and stand maintenance.

nance. The O2LIT area has become a focal point for those wishing to establish Fire Adapted Communities (FAC), a designation awarded to communities making a commitment to educating and preparing its citizens for wildfires. Baker County, Florida is a FAC sitting on the edge of the Okefenokee Swamp, where catastrophic wildfires periodically originate. This year, O2LIT team members hosted a workshop for fire practitioners and community leaders from across the country to better understand how and why to set up a FAC. Moving forward, the O2LIT will work to build FACs in all counties that surround the Okefenokee. Team members also reached out to landowners afflicted with southern pine beetle to convince them to replant in longleaf, rather than slash or loblolly pine. Finally, the O2LIT helped organize two Tools for Effective Landowner Engagement (TELE) workshops for natural resource professionals working within the longleaf range. Run by the Yale School of Forestry, the primary focus of these workshops was to learn how to produce turn-key marketing or outreach campaigns directed at woodland landowners.

Ocala Longleaf Pine Local Implementation Team (OLIT)

Cheryl Millett, OLIT Coordinator, The Nature Conservancy

FY16 was a busy year for the Ocala LIT, digging into the longleaf work now, garnering resources to continue, and planning for the future. We finished the first Florida Forest Service private landowner incentive program, Wildland Restoration International began work with partners, and we conducted longleaf sandhill restoration work on Camp Blanding Joint Training Center. Overall, we facilitated 1,907 acres of controlled burning, herbicide treatment, hardwood thinning, longleaf planting, native understory establishment, and invasive plant control on public and private lands. The OLIT coordinated a TELE workshop for all four Florida LITs, with 28 incentive program leads and others creating outreach plans to private landowners for increased longleaf management, prescribed fire, and engagement with incentive programs. We also worked with partners to train 95 public land managers and private landowners through a LLA Herbicides and Longleaf 201 Academy, a longleaf-focused Florida Forest Stewardship Program workshop, and a Southern Fire Exchange Sandhill Restoration Workshop. Planning for the future, the NFWF Longleaf Stewardship Fund awarded \$250,000 to continue our work into 2018. We helped partners get Arbor Day Foundation funding for longleaf planting. We also dug into conservation planning to guide our work, with plans to have a draft plan completed in January. Finally, we began planning for a change in leadership. While TNC continues to lead OLIT for the time being, the Alachua Conservation Trust enthusiastically stepped up to apply for funding to lead the LIT through 2018.

SEWEE Longleaf Conservation Cooperative (SLCC)

Colette DeGarady, Sewee Coordinator, The Nature Conservancy

The SLCC has made great strides in mapping longleaf pine signatures, engaging the USDA-FS with forest plan revision (impacting more than 160,000 acres) and holding successful Fire Fest events in March of 2015 and 2016. To further prescribed fire education, March was designated as “Prescribed Fire Awareness Month” in South Carolina in both 2015 and 2016. This proclamation by the governor was organized by SLCC members in conjunction with the SC Forestry Commission and SC Prescribed Fire Council. In FY16, 2,577 acres of prescribed fire was applied on private lands. Approximately 4,567 acres of prescribed fire were completed on state-owned lands and 38,694 acres of fire were applied on the FMNF. Longleaf pine was planted on 206 acres on private lands, and approximately 60 acres of mid-story treatments were also conducted on private lands.

Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership (SLPCP)

Charles Babb, SLPCP Coordinator

2016 was an eventful time for the SLPCP. Utilizing funds from NFWF, the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) program, and USFWS Partners for Wildlife, the partnership assisted 53 private landowners in establishing 2,325 acres of longleaf. In addition, six cost-share contracts were written to apply management practices (prescribed fire and competition control) on 741 acres of existing longleaf stands. Outreach and education continued to be priority elements for the SLPCP. During FY 2016, the LIT Coordinator participated in three outreach events, directly reaching 103 landowners with information about available technical and financial assistance. The Partnership held its fourth annual “Longleaf and Lunch” landowner field day to provide education on understory restoration, forest management and proper herbicide site preparation for planting. In addition, an LLA “Longleaf 101” Academy was held in Cheraw, SC to reach those landowners with higher management intentions. Late winter offered the SLPCP an opportunity to continue its annual “Learn and Burn” field day, where landowners and experienced burners come together to share a drip torch during an actual burn. Late fall found partners in the field collecting native understory seed. Using a Prairie Habitats seed harvester, 212 pounds of wiregrass and other native species were collected and subsequently used to restore 25 acres of understory on private lands. Eight landowners rented the prescribed fire burn trailer to burn nearly 261 acres on private land.

Southern Low Country/ACE Basin LIT (SoLo/ACE)

Bobby Franklin, SoLo/ACE Longleaf Partnership Coordinator, The Longleaf Alliance

Since the initiation of SoLoACE Longleaf Partnership in 2014, we have provided cost-share to support the following: 1) 1,084 acres of longleaf planting, 2) 224 acres successfully referred to Federal and State cost-share programs, 3) 520 acres of mid-story hardwood and loblolly pine control in longleaf stands, and 4) 354 acres of prescribed burning in longleaf that leveraged an additional 4,800 acres of longleaf prescribed burning. Since 2014, four field days were held and attended by 284 landowners and managers. We have also sponsored three longleaf academies with a total of 72 attendees. In addition, 80 RCW nesting cavity inserts were installed at three locations (Aiken Gopher Tortoise Preserve, Donnelley Wildlife Management Area and Hitchcock Woods). Earlier this fall, South Carolina DNR translocated RCWs onto the Donnelley property and back in the summer, RCWs from the nearby Savannah River Site located artificial nest boxes installed at the Aiken Gopher Tortoise Preserve. Hitchcock Woods also received translocated RCWs, a return of the birds for the first time in 60 years. All of this great work would not have happened without the involvement and support of our partners: LLA, Beaufort Open Land Trust, Clemson University, Ducks Unlimited, The Hitchcock Woods, International Paper Company, Lowcountry Open Land Trust, NFWF, NWTF, NRCS, TNC, Nemours Wildlife Foundation, SC Audubon Society, SC DNR, SC Forestry Commission, USFWS, and the USDA-FS Savannah River Forest Station.

Texas Longleaf Implementation Team (TLIT) **Kent Evans/Wendy Ledbetter, TLIT Coordinators, The Nature Conservancy**

This partnership promoted our 50% cost share program (Forestland Stewards grant, NFWF/International Paper) to landowners in Longleaf Ridge and Big Thicket SGAs. USFWS Partners grants and NRCS EQIP funds advanced private land restoration. The National Park Service, USDA-FS, TNC, and TIMOs all restored acres to longleaf. Since 2013, this partnership has reported an increase of 8,500 acres of new longleaf, representing a 15% gain in longleaf-dominated acreage in east Texas. Outreach efforts targeted landowners, consultants, and agency staff through assistance trips and hosted events. Team members spoke at landowner meetings, trade events, and conferences. We hosted a Longleaf 101 Academy and a TELE outreach workshop. We partnered with RMS to host a field day to observe strategies to control yaupon and establish longleaf. We launched a redesigned website (txlongleaf.org), hosted by the Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources (IRNR). A Texas NRCS videographer helped produce videos of Texas landowners conducting restoration, which was featured on its website. The Texas A&M Forest Service

provided leadership administering grants and conducting restoration on State Forests, including development of a longleaf orchard and native grass nursery. Campbell Global continued establishing longleaf pine and devoting acreage to conservation easements. Texas A&M Forest Service forester Brian Gowin serves on our LIT and the Council. TNC, USDA-FS, and NRCS are producing understory plants to support private land restoration. The Texas Comptroller's Office is supporting research to determine the presence of the Louisiana pine snake, recently proposed by USFWS as "threatened."

Virginia Longleaf Cooperators

Brian Van Eerden, LIT Coordinator, The Nature Conservancy

The Virginia Longleaf Cooperators Group marked its 4th year of collaborative conservation in 2016. The group continues to expand longleaf restoration efforts across a 13-county region representing the northern reaches of the range. Key 2016 achievements include: creation of a new 1,965-acre state WMA by the VA Department of Game & Inland Fisheries to be managed in part for longleaf habitat; establishment of several new positions, including a VA Department of Forestry (VA DOF) Longleaf Pine Coordinator and a part-time burning crew to help meet increasing demand for prescribed fire on State and private lands; 2,575 acres of prescribed burning; production of 397,000 native longleaf seedlings, and 652 acres of longleaf pine establishment. This work was carried out with funding assistance from a Longleaf Stewardship Fund, NRCS and FSA cost-share programs, an Arbor Day Foundation grant awarded to TNC and the VA Department of Conservation & Recreation, Resilient Landscapes funding through the USFWS, and private foundation grants to Meadowview Biological Research Station. New discoveries of rare plant species on project lands such as Old Dominion University's Blackwater Ecological Preserve — including one previously believed extinct from the state — as well as continued expansion of the state's RCW population, speak to the biodiversity gains being achieved by the VA Longleaf Cooperators group. These successes continue to attract supporters, including the First Lady of Virginia, Dorothy McAuliffe, who has become a "First Lady of Longleaf" and champion for recovery of Virginia's longleaf pine forests.

West-Central Louisiana Ecosystem Partnership (WLEP)

Dan Weber, WLEP Coordinator, The Nature Conservancy

At the Biennial LLA Conference in Savannah, GA in November, conservation partners across the range were recognized for having made exemplary contributions to longleaf restoration. Both the Louisiana NRCS team and the USDA-FS team under District Ranger Lisa Lewis were recognized with Partnership Awards during the conference. Both agencies

serve on the steering committee of the WLEP and play a critical role in shaping longleaf restoration and protection strategies in the state. Lewis was recognized for her outstanding longleaf restoration efforts on the Vernon Unit of the Calcasieu Ranger District of the Kisatchie NF. The 85,000-acre Vernon Unit forms the core of the Fort Polk/Kisatchie NF SGA, where the DoD, State and Federal wildlife agencies, conservation NGO's, and others have united to accelerate restoration of longleaf pine and other native ecosystems within a six-parish conservation area. NRCS State Conservationist Kevin Norton leads the implementation of the Longleaf Pine Initiative in Louisiana, delivering cost share assistance and technical guidance to landowners interested in planting or improving existing longleaf stands in the state. The effort is split between a three-parish region in west-central Louisiana and an area targeting the enhancement of gopher tortoise habitat in Southeastern Louisiana. We are proud of these leaders and their recognition is a clear validation of the important advances being made in longleaf conservation in the state.

2016 Accomplishment Report Team

The development of this report required contributions and extensive work from many partners at the regional and state

level. The Accomplishment Report Team would like to express gratitude to all those who took the time to compile and draft accomplishment estimates and narratives for the report. The Team thanks the leadership of the Council as well as the State Coordination Team leads and various other contributors to this Report. Thanks also to the DoD and the staff at IRNR for assistance in drafting, editing, layout, and printing of the report.

Regional Coordinators

Clay Ware, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Lead)
 Kyle Jones, USDA Forest Service
 Stephanie Hertz, Texas A&M IRNR
 Tiffany Williams, National Wildlife Federation
 Ryan Bollinger, The Longleaf Alliance

State Coordination Team Leads

Brian van Eerden, The Nature Conservancy – VA
 Scott Griffin, GA Forestry Commission
 Shane Harrington, TX A&M Forest Service
 Russell Hubright, SC Forestry Commission
 Hank McKinley, AL Forestry Commission
 Cecilia “CC” Richmond, LA Department of Forestry
 Bonnie Stine, FL Forest Service
 Sarah Crate, NC Forest Service



