



THE
LONGLEAF
LEADER

Healthy Forests

VOLUME XIII - ISSUE 3

FALL 2020

News from the Longleaf Partnership Council

By Tiffany Woods, LPC Chair, National Wildlife Federation, Director of Southeast Private Lands Forestry



Summer LPC meeting Zoom screenshot. Courtesy of Tiffany Woods.

Like you, American's Longleaf Restoration Initiative (ALRI) spent the summer adjusting to new norms. I am happy to share that the first virtual Longleaf Partnership Council (LPC) meeting this summer was incredibly insightful and engaging. The LPC found that the virtual platform, Zoom, was a useful way to reconvene when our in-person meeting could not occur. With over 40 participants, we found that using the breakout feature allowed all attendees the opportunity to voice their thoughts on how current events impact our longleaf work. Moving forward, we plan on opening our virtual meetings to the entire longleaf community so that more individuals can participate and see how the range-wide coalition operates.

This coming year, many organizations, companies, and staff will face new challenges due to these dynamic and changing times. The LPC recognizes that COVID-19 will have ongoing effects for ALRI and our 8-million-acre goal, and we are looking into how we address and potentially prepare for this. We identified immediate challenges during our meeting: reductions in funding/staff capacity for organizations/agencies, landowner preferences shifting towards shorter rotation pine species, and timber markets being down compared to 2019 levels. Some members of the LPC are also working to address a potential shortage in H-2B workers (workers on seasonal temporary visas), which is projected to cause drastic reductions in forestry crews able to plant, burn, and manage properties.

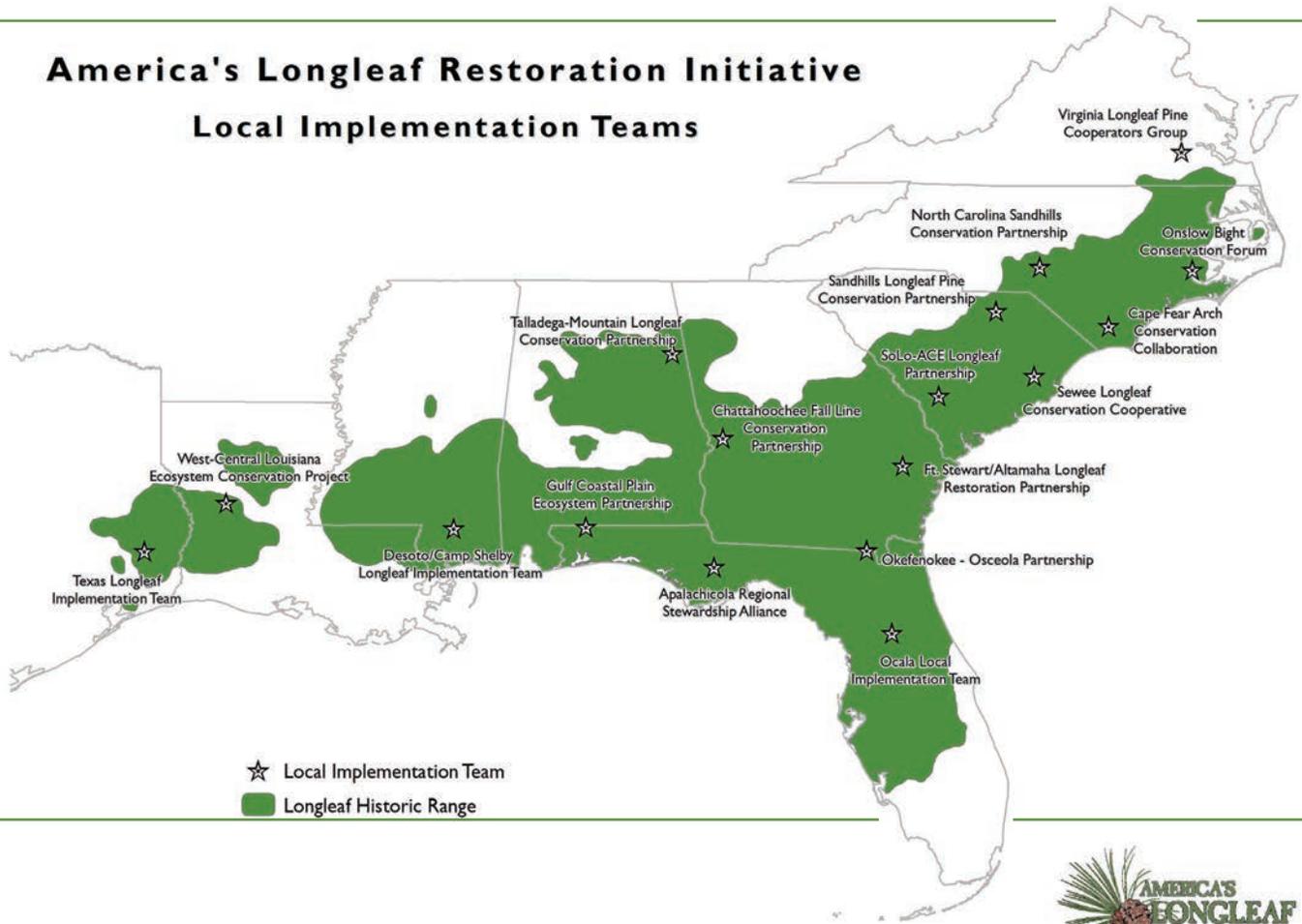
Another current and timely discussion topic for the LPC is inclusivity, diversity, and racism related to forestry, private, and public lands. ALRI's success is rooted in bringing people together to forge productive relationships; introducing and engaging as many people as we can to longleaf is core to our mission. However, we recognize that private and public land opportunities are not equal for all. The LPC is taking time to listen, learn, and educate ourselves on these issues. There is excellent work being done by many groups and individuals in the forestry realm that we want to elevate and to become more reliable partners. As a coalition, we have an opportunity and responsibility to see that all people have a right to enjoy and access longleaf on public lands and receive equal opportunities for outreach (whether as landowners or service providers) on private lands. The LPC is committed to creating more opportunities and spaces where conversations and actions can occur to generate positive change; this commitment will remain on our agenda well into the future.

As we prepare for a new season, I am excited and grateful to think about all that longleaf continues to offer us all. Hunters will be taking their bows and rifles into the woods; families will prepare for hiking and camping trips, and restoration and forestry work will continue.

Regards,
Tiffany

America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative

Local Implementation Teams



**PRONONE[®]
POWER
PELLET
HERBICIDE**

"As a Longleaf tree farmer, I have been very pleased with the results from using PRONONE Power Pellets for the past ten years.

It has provided effective control of undesirable hardwoods and bushes.

I also like the selective targeted approach of pellets versus sprays or hack and squirt.

I feel safer using solid pellets instead of liquid chemicals."

Reese Jordan Thompson
Vidalia, Georgia

PRONONE[®] Power Pellets are available at your local ag retailer or visit us on our website at www.pro-serveinc.com

PRONONE[®] Power Pellet is a registered trademark of Pro-Serve, Inc. Memphis TN

Happy 20th Birthday



APALACHICOLA REGIONAL STEWARDSHIP ALLIANCE

By Brian Pelc, The Nature Conservancy

Sharing resources: tractors and staff from The Nature Conservancy, Florida State Parks, and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission participate on a groundcover restoration project in the Sandhills of Torreya State Park. Photo by Brian Pelc.

The Apalachicola Regional Stewardship Alliance (ARSA) Local Implementation Team (LIT) is almost old enough to buy moonshine – well almost. While not ancient, like the old-growth longleaf pine it supports, this nearly grown-up LIT does cover a vast region in the eastern half of the Florida Panhandle, reaching up into the southwest Georgia Red Hills and southeast Alabama. An impressive 1.5 million acres of longleaf are known to occur within the LIT, and over a million acres of state, federal, and private conservation land is managed for conservation, timber, recreation, and ecosystem services. There are less than 750,000 people in the region, among the lowest population density in all the longleaf range; Florida's State Capitol is here in Tallahassee, as well as several state and federal agency headquarters, three universities and at least as many community colleges and trade schools.

Within this boundary, the 150 or so ARSA members representing over a dozen state and federal agencies and several non-profit conservation organizations, are working to restore the landscape, ranging from high and dry pine uplands and sandhills to low and wet flatwoods and prairies. The conventional wisdom in this group includes: protect important places from conversion, implement more (and better) fire where appropriate, keep invasive species out of the best places, remember the species diversity is “from the knees down,” assist private landowners, and train future land managers within our communities. Some of the greatest longleaf accomplishments in the region are the perpetual protection of millions of connected acres in the heart of the ARSA region (Apalachicola National Forest, three State Forests, three State Parks, four State Wildlife Management Areas, and St Marks National Wildlife Refuge)



◀ *ARSA members meet bi-annually to exchange ideas and bear updates from across the Alliance. Photo by Brian Pelc.*

▼ *The Apalachicola Regional Stewardship Alliance LIT Boundary includes the eastern Florida Panhandle and adjacent Georgia and Alabama counties. Longleaf habitats in this area range from pine uplands and sandhills to mesic flatwoods.*

and equally important, but not connected protected areas (like Tyndall Air Force Base, Tall Timbers Land Conservancy, Torreya State Park, and many more).

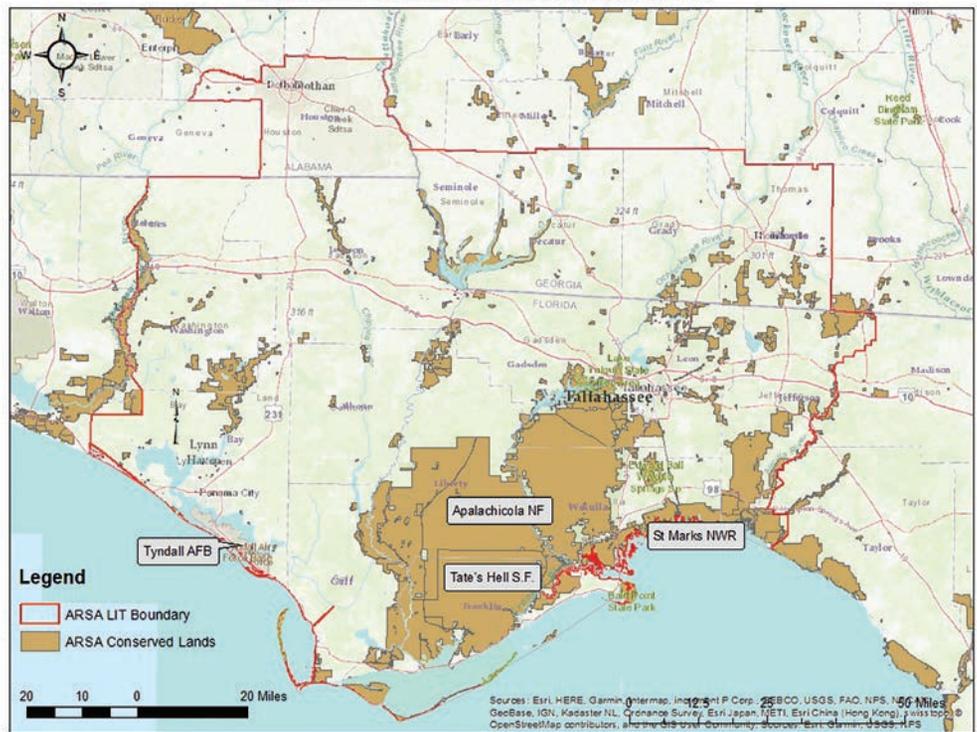
History

Like much of the longleaf range, the ARSA region suffered massive and unsustainable timber extraction followed by offsite pine reforestation and natural fire suppression. However, enclaves of landowners interested in quail hunting, livestock, and timber maintained fire management traditions while other parts of the range swelled up with hardwoods. The legacy of these early fire practitioners is found in places like The Wade Tract, where rebar can be hand pushed six feet deep into spongy soils that never suffered heavy machines and now offer a reference for pine community plant diversity. In the early days of the 21st century, land managers from a dozen state, federal and NGO (non-governmental organization) lands along the Apalachicola River decided the best way to solve common problems (such as limited funding, equipment, and staff) was to partner up and share resources and knowledge. A decade of informal, but committed partnership resulted in important cooperative projects and a genuine trust among the cooperators. This bedrock of trust evolved into a formal Memorandum of Understanding in 2010 and a committee-authored Longleaf Pine Conservation Plan in 2017.

The Path Forward

Those are the ARSA origins, but a timeline of the region would be incomplete without acknowledging the 2018 hurricane that put 70 years' worth of mill capacity timber on the ground in a matter of hours. ARSA members have been recovering together in the two years since. Colleagues at Tyndall Air Force Base suffered the most direct hit from Hurricane Michael. Still, the strong commitments by the Department of Defense and cooperators from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are doubling down on longleaf, using the disaster to replace offsite pines. Other corners of the ARSA region are equally

The Apalachicola Regional Stewardship Alliance LIT



sunny now that the storm has passed. Partners are looking forward to potential funding from the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act (RESTORE Act) while adding more prescribed fire acres each year. ARSA members are funding ongoing pre- and post-restoration monitoring to build a “Wet and Mesic Flatwoods Restoration Toolbox” and lowering the funding and equipment obstacles for groundcover restoration on private lands.

A Longleaf Reflection

ARSA is, in some ways, like a longleaf pine tree itself, forming strong roots that dig deep to reach resources to support the strong partnership and innovative stewardship. The trunk holds the mass and stands tall in strong winds and frequent fires; this is the people in our communities and working within our membership for the long-term good of the forest. Finally, the canopy turns sunlight from above into resources the whole forest benefits from; the long needles being the numerous funders, regional planners like the Longleaf Partnership Council, and support organizations like The Longleaf Alliance. Of course, all these components must work together for the tree to live.



NOT ALL SEEDLINGS ARE CREATED EQUAL.

VISIT US ONLINE

INTERNATIONALFOREST.CO/LONGLEAF

Restoration at Bonnie Doone Lake Natural Area

By Caroline Krom, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



Left: Caroline Krom and Wendy Dunaway assist with coring of old-growth trees for dendrochronology work by the UNC Greensboro laboratory. Photo by Joshua Junot. Right: Mechanical understory removal at Bonnie Doone. Photo by Wendy Dunaway.

The 262-acre Bonnie Doone Lake Natural Area boasts the largest old-growth longleaf stand remaining in North Carolina, and one of less than a dozen enduring in the Southeast. Located in the sandhills of Cumberland County, it is owned by the City of Fayetteville and managed by the Fayetteville Public Works Commission. Bonnie Doone Lake is the uppermost lake in a series of four within the Little Cross Creek watershed, a drinking water source for the city of Fayetteville.

The management goals for the property are protection of water quality and restoration and enhancement of the longleaf ecosystem for wildlife habitat. Recent projects include timber stand improvement on 47 acres, and the first prescribed burn in over 10 years. These two actions are

contributing to restoring the open forest aspect and have welcomed the first red-cockaded woodpeckers to the property in over four decades. Bonnie Doone is host to characteristic sandhill flora and fauna and was registered as a Natural Heritage Area by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program in 1990. The sandy, rolling hills harbor longleaf pines dating to 1770 with countless flattop, turpentine and relic cavity trees.

Contributing partners in the restoration efforts have been the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, NC Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, NC Sandhills Prescribed Burn Association, Dine Development Corporation, Ft. Bragg Endangered Species Branch, Dr. J.H. Carter III & Associates, Inc., NC Natural Heritage Program, and the dendrochronology laboratory with the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Groundcover Restoration Takes Root on the Chattahoochee Fall Line

By Nathan Klaus, Georgia Department of Natural Resources



Jennifer Ward and Luke Johnson, technicians with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, using a tree planter to plant lopsided Indiangrass on Sandhills Wildlife Management Area in Taylor County, GA. Photos by Nathan Klaus.

Members of the Department of Natural Resources West-Central Georgia crew take groundcover seriously. We've learned how important it is to the biodiversity of our longleaf pine ecosystems and how critical good groundcover is to fuels. For five years now, our crew has spent a portion of their time restoring groundcover from sites where it was lost through heavy-handed herbicide use or past agriculture, rebuilding our longleaf ecosystem, and laying the foundation for great burns in the future. Throughout the summer, hourly technicians with this crew collected the seed of over 50 species of forb and a half dozen species of grass. During the fire season, volunteers from the crew with an interest in

restoration, botany, or related disciplines undertake the tedious work of cleaning the wildflower seed, treating it with cold-stratification or other techniques to enhance germination, then planting it into plug trays. Hand-collected grass seed is sent to Roundstone Native Seed Company, where plugs are grown and shipped back. The 2020 crew outplanted more than 3,200 wildflower and 10,000 native grass plugs into restoration areas, jump-starting the return of these species to several properties. Outplantings are regularly monitored; survival is high and getting better every year. Most exciting is the discovery that many restored species are beginning to spread on their own!

Nighttime burning: versatile and beautiful land management tool

By Matt Grunwald, Georgia Department of Natural Resources



Left: The pines lit up by the moonlight above and the flickering orange glow below. Right: Burn crew members enjoy the satisfaction of seeing their firing patterns in action. Photos by Garrett Anderson.

purposes. Prescribed fire after dark also presents unique hazards compared to our normal operations. The firefighter watch-out situations, “In country not seen in daylight” and “Taking a nap near the fireline,” suddenly become very real and dangerous scenarios. However, with a solid briefing, communication, and a buddy system, everyone felt comfortable going into the night. The cool night air helped moderate fire behavior, and we made significant impacts in the name of habitat restoration. Everyone stayed safe, the burn boss was blown away by the effects, and on top of all that, the fire was beautiful.

In early May, burn crews funded through a Longleaf Stewardship Fund grant from NFWF to The Longleaf Alliance were lucky enough to burn through the night at the Orianne Indigo Snake Preserve. Large scale nighttime burns can be hard to pull off. The weather must be just right, with good winds and low humidity throughout the night, plus folks aren’t usually looking to end their shift at 4 am. But conditions were perfect, and there was a great showing from the Georgia Interagency Burn Team. The Orianne Society, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and Georgia Department of Natural Resources crews (all but TNC is currently receiving funding from The Longleaf Alliance) were all there, though we were kept separate in our groups for social distancing

Unique Natural Communities Thrive at the Blackwater River State Forest Thanks to Exemplary Prescribed Fire Program

By Vernon Compton, The Longleaf Alliance



Left: Blackwater River State Forest seepage slope after a burn. Right: Dewthreads. Photos by Vernon Compton, LLA.

There are many unique embedded natural communities in the longleaf ecosystem; like the longleaf pine itself, these communities are also fire-dependent. Due to the emphasis placed on prescribed fire as a critical management tool, the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP) landscape is fortunate to have numerous examples of highly diverse bog/seepage slope communities. These communities are full of life, including an abundance of carnivorous plants such as pitcher plants and sundews. To take in this high level of diversity, you must look below your knees at the ground layer, as some of these plants are very small. Carnivorous plants all have unique mechanisms to trap unsuspecting insects, essential to capturing nitrogen and other minerals otherwise unavailable to them in these environments. Without prescribed fire, these sun-loving natural communities quickly change to being dominated by woody species. Blackwater River State Forest has long prioritized prescribed fire, and it is clearly evident as one explores the forest and comes across a wetland filled with white-top pitcher plants, sundews, butterworts, and pine lilies. From 2015 to 2019, Blackwater River State Forest averaged 63,804 acres of prescribed fire per year, even with fire staff providing statewide emergency assistance such as hurricane relief. It is their dedication and hard work to keep prescribed fire in an ecosystem built for fire that leads Blackwater River State Forest to be one of the forest gems in the longleaf range.

Congratulations to the staff and fire crews that work each year to make it so through effective use of prescribed fire. Carry on this outstanding work!

Update from the Mississippi - Alabama - Louisiana Longleaf Implementation Team



Longleaf pine improvement project in collaboration with Weyerhaeuser Corporation. Photo by Clay Mangum.

The Mississippi Alabama Louisiana Longleaf Implementation Team (MS LIT), continues to collaborate with partners on longleaf restoration projects, including work committed through a NFWF grant received in 2018 to restore and improve longleaf pine in Southeast Mississippi. Since receiving the grant award in 2018, partners have completed 3,146 acres of prescribed fire on private land, three longleaf-related outreach programs with more than 100 participants, 325 acres of longleaf pine restoration, and 25 acres of non-native invasive species treatment.

Expanding influence in priority areas, the MS LIT collaborated with Weyerhaeuser Corporation to identify portions of the Florida Parishes in Louisiana and South Mississippi to restore and improve longleaf pine. These projects will advance conservation goals, and particularly benefit listed and at-risk species.

South Carolina Sandhills Longleaf Conservation Partnership

By Charles Babb, SLPCP Coordinator



Johnny Stowe and Charles Babb guide students as they identify Indian artifacts during a field day last year. Photo by Susan Griggs.

Despite being hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, the South Carolina Sandhills Longleaf Conservation Partnership (SLPCP) found ways to educate youth about the importance of the longleaf ecosystem.

After a planned fourth grade field day was canceled, the SLPCP secured a coveted session at the 5th annual conference of The Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance, a collaboration of environmental educators covering the eight southeastern states from Kentucky to Florida. This virtual conference was hosted by the Environmental Education Association of South Carolina, and the theme was “Environmental Legacy. It’s our Past, Present, and Future.”

“We reached out to partners around us who have significant experience in longleaf history and management,” said Coordinator Charles Babb. “We wanted to make this a memorable experience for teachers to take back to their classrooms and pass on to the next generation of forest landowners.”

Bob Franklin (SoLoACE LIT Coordinator) and Jesse Wimberley (Sandhills Prescribed Burn Association) joined SLPCP partner, Johnny Stowe (SCDNR)

and student intern Savannah Hebler on the virtual platform. They discussed topics such as the influence of human activities in the longleaf forest, the history of fire and cattle in longleaf, the process of engaging private landowners in longleaf restoration, and the introduction of the next generation of managers into the longleaf forests.

Attendees heard the history of longleaf from the pre-historic period to-date, its demise, the ecological impact on Southeastern species, and how our plans for restoration will ultimately depend on the very students they teach.

SoLoACE — Growing Partnerships in the Region

By Bobby Franklin and Lisa Lord, *The Longleaf Alliance*



Natural recruit found at the gopher tortoise headstarting project site, heading toward his itty-bitty burrow. Photo by Lisa Lord, LLA.

The Southern Low Country/ACE Basin (SoLoACE) Partnership works closely with the Savannah River Clean Water Fund (SRCWF) to provide landowner outreach and permanently protect forests that support and protect the water supply for communities and businesses in the watershed. The Fund recently welcomed International Paper (IP), which owns and operates two Savannah River Basin mills in Port Wentworth and Savannah, as the first industry partner. IP announced ‘Vision 2030,’ which includes goals to increase focus on water stewardship, and this partnership will further multiple conservation goals in the region.

SoLoACE continues to move longleaf restoration forward despite the rain, heat, and social distancing. Prescribed fire carried on into the summer months while landowners also turned toward other restoration activities such as timber stand improvements and site-preparation before planting this winter. Seventy-six headstarted tortoises were released this summer as part of the SoloACE gopher tortoise headstarting project with the Savannah River Ecology Lab. We are meeting with landowners virtually, or we provide technical assistance through solo site visits, followed by reports to the landowner. The Partnership held its first virtual meeting

with twenty-four partners tuning in to hear about the Forest Action Plan, woodland grazing, and project updates. Throughout a week in June, we partnered with Clemson Extension to present an Invasive Species Workshop, a series of one-hour programs during the lunch hour. Forty-three landowners, foresters, and natural resource professionals participated.

Texas Team Focuses on Program Delivery & Digital Content Development

By Jenny Sanders, *Texas Longleaf Implementation Team Coordinator*



A snapshot of the new “Birds of the Longleaf Forest” page developed for the Texas Longleaf Implementation Team website earlier this year.

While the global pandemic threw challenges at all of us that few were prepared for, the dedicated and creative team in Texas did not allow the pace of longleaf restoration to be one of the casualties. As all face-to-face outreach activities came to a halt, we focused on program delivery and digital content development.

First, the Texas team launched a new e-newsletter focused on appealing to the growing cadre of landowners interested in wildlife and recreational values. Bright, colorful, and fresh – the newsletter content highlights the many values of the longleaf forest, management strategies, financial and technical assistance opportunities, and celebrates our partners and their accomplishments.

The e-newsletter also served as a launchpad for new digital content developed for www.txlongleaf.org. Visit the site to see new pages dedicated to the groundcover plants and birds of the longleaf forest. Lastly, the team worked with partners at the Texas A&M Forest Service to develop a program delivery dashboard for easy, real-time

assessment of progress toward annual restoration objectives.

Thanks to this creative use of digital resources and active promotion by our partners, our team has leveraged over \$250,000 of cost-share funds into longleaf projects on more than 6,000 acres, resulting in a total longleaf restoration and enhancement value of over half a million dollars, year-to-date!

Despite the frustration, fear, and sadness that has characterized recent months, this time has allowed groups like ours a bit of a reset, and for that, we are grateful.

USFS Storm Cleanup Creates Restoration Opportunity on the Kisatchie

By Dan Weber, *The Nature Conservancy*



Tornado damage and salvage harvest on the Kisatchie. Photos by Jim Caldwell, U.S. Forest Service.

In December of 2019, a devastating tornado moved through Vernon and Rapides Parishes damaging approximately 3,700 acres on the Kisatchie. The storm cut a swath from DeRidder to Pineville, Louisiana 60 miles long and a quarter to one-half mile wide. Most of the damage occurred on the Calcasieu Ranger District, a longleaf showpiece equaling anything else found across the range and features prominently in statewide restoration plans for both the red-cockaded woodpecker and the Louisiana pine snake.

The U.S. Forest Service estimates 35 MMBF (million board feet) of timber was damaged as a result of the storm. Approximately 27 MMBF have been removed so far during salvage operations, with a remainder of 1-2 MMBF left to go. The storm did not discriminate impacting all ecosystem types, but a significant portion (1,400 acres) of the blowdown occurred across high-quality longleaf stands. Woodpecker inserts were introduced to make up for lost nesting cavities and were very shortly after occupied. Once the salvage work is finished, restoration work will get underway. Much of the impacted area will be reforested with longleaf seedlings this planting season, while other areas will be left to regenerate naturally.

Note: Impacts to the area from Hurricane Laura, which made landfall on August 27th near Cameron, Louisiana as a Category 4 storm, are still being assessed.

The Kisatchie National Forest consists of 604,000 acres in several large tracts throughout northwest and west-central Louisiana. It forms the core of the Kisatchie/Fort Polk Significant Geographic Area (SGA) where the local longleaf implementation team, the West Central Louisiana Ecosystem Partnership, composed of the U.S. Department of Defense, state and federal wildlife agencies, conservation non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and others have united to restore longleaf pine and other native ecosystems within a six-parish conservation area.

NORTH AMERICA'S LEADING DEVELOPER AND SUPPLIER OF FOREST CARBON OFFSETS.

Talk with us to learn more about how your land can generate carbon revenue. Contact Dylan Jenkins, ACF CF, at 570.321.9090.

FiniteCarbon

www.finitecarbon.com

11

FORESTERS
The Longleaf Leader

48

FOREST OFFSET
PROJECTS

2.9M

ACRES

67M

FOREST OFFSETS
ISSUED

\$750M

TOTAL PROJECT
REVENUE

PUBLISHER The Longleaf Alliance, **EDITOR** Sarah Crate, **ASSISTANT EDITOR** Margaret Platt, **DESIGN** Bellhouse Publishing
ADVERTISING Sarah Crate – sarah@longleafalliance.org

COVER The brilliant red of winged sumac under montane longleaf in Cherokee County, Alabama. Photo by Ad Platt.

The Longleaf Leader (USPS#) is an official publication of The Longleaf Alliance, 12130 Dixon Center Road, Andalusia, Alabama 36420 and is published 4 times a year. The Longleaf Alliance reserves the exclusive right to accept or reject advertising or editorial material submitted for publication. Advertising rates quoted upon request. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Longleaf Alliance, Address 12130 Dixon Center Road, Andalusia, Alabama 36420. Periodicals Postage Paid at Montgomery, Alabama.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, or disability. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs.) To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

