



America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative 2023 RANGE-WIDE ACCOMPLISHMENTS



AMERICA'S
LONGLEAF

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR



This is an exciting time for the America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative (ALRI) as we approach our 15th anniversary and look toward the next phase of the Initiative! These first 15 years have involved a large list of partners who have contributed to the successes of this truly collaborative initiative. No one individual, organization, or agency could have accomplished by themselves what ALRI has done collectively. 2023 was a milestone year for ALRI with federal partners of the Federal Coordinating Committee signing a new Memorandum of Understanding. This commitment to the Initiative from our Federal partners is critical for ensuring the future of longleaf.

Learning from the lessons of the first 15 years, members of the Longleaf Partnership Council (LPC) also worked collaboratively in 2023 to release the new Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine 2025-2040 (Conservation Plan). This Conservation Plan serves as a foundation that guides the work of the Initiative by setting goals, objectives, and recommended actions for the next 15 years. We have taken this opportunity to be more strategic with our goals, utilizing innovative tools for measuring success, and incorporating new approaches to expanding longleaf restoration across the landscape in the context of climate resilience, all while bringing a wider variety of partners into the effort.

While we are still focused on many of the actions included in the original 2009 Conservation Plan, some priorities have shifted over the years due to new and changing needs. This second iteration of the Conservation Plan guides the continued efforts to reach the goal

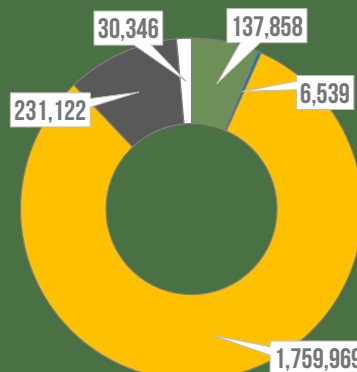
of eight million acres of longleaf pine forest in the Southeast. In addition to acreage, though, it is essential to recognize the importance of broader guiding principles that shape our work to achieve our shared goals of restoring functional, viable longleaf pine ecosystems with the full spectrum of ecological, economic, and social values.

To better align our reporting with the elements of the new Conservation Plan, this year's Accomplishment Report is organized according to the strategies that are detailed in the Conservation Plan. These six strategies are broken down into Public Lands Strategy, Private Lands Strategy, Longleaf Ecosystem Restoration Strategy, Prescribed Fire Management Strategy, Economic and Market-Based Financial Strategy, and Climate Resilience and Co-benefits Strategy. Annual accomplishment reporting, paired with 5-year Strategic Priorities & Actions documents throughout the same timeframe, maintains accountability and keeps our key recommendations top of mind as we set targets and measure metrics of success.

This 2023 Accomplishment Report includes ALRI's accomplishment data for FY 2023 (October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023) compiled from partners across the longleaf range. Annual accomplishment reporting is a vital tool for assessing the scale of on-the-ground work and measuring progress towards meeting the goals and priorities identified by the Range-wide Conservation Plan and Longleaf Partnership Council. It is a reflection on the collective efforts made by public and private partners to restore this iconic forest and highlights the benefits of longleaf to Southeastern communities.

2023 LONGLEAF PINE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In fiscal year 2023, partners across the range recorded 2.17 million acres of longleaf management activities. Since 2010, more than 23.8 million acres* of longleaf management activities have been reported translating to positive outcomes for local economies, national defense, rare species, recreation, forest resiliency, wildfire risk, clean air and water, carbon sequestration, and climate change mitigation.



- PRESCRIBED BURNING
- MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES
- LONGLEAF ESTABLISHMENT
- ACQUISITION & EASEMENTS
- LONGLEAF THRU SILVICULTURE

*multiple treatments applied to some acres

RENEWING PARTNERSHIPS

Federal MOU Supports Longleaf for Next 15 Years

ALRI recently celebrated its initial 15 years of conservation success and announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of Defense (DoD), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the Department of the Interior (DOI) to renew partnership efforts to restore longleaf pine forests across the Southeast for another 15 years.

In November 2023, forestry and conservation leaders from across the United States, including representatives from federal, state, and private agencies, gathered in Washington, D.C. to recognize years of longleaf pine restoration accomplishments and to reaffirm the commitment to continue restoring longleaf pine ecosystems across federal, state, and privately managed lands.

At the event, partners also celebrated a milestone recognizing 1 billion longleaf seedlings planted through the Initiative.



The Honorable Brendan Owens, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations, and Environment, USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Meryl Harrell, and DOI Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks Shannon Estenoz sign the renewed MOU. USDA photo by Tom Witham.

PRIVATE LANDS

WITH 86% OF LAND IN THE SOUTHEAST UNDER PRIVATE OWNERSHIP, IT IS VITAL TO DEVELOP STRATEGIES AND GROW RESOURCES FOR PRIVATE FOREST LANDOWNERS TO REACH ALRI GOALS.

While private lands represent the greatest opportunity for longleaf restoration, the conservation actions on these lands are inherently voluntary. ALRI engaged in numerous outreach efforts and achieved programmatic successes representative of the Private Lands Strategy of the new Conservation Plan.



The Longleaf and the Landowner Academy debuted in 2023 as a new outreach offering specifically designed to engage traditionally underserved and unserved landowners who are often dealing with heirs' property issues. The Longleaf Alliance worked with the ALRI Longleaf for All Working Group to present the initial Longleaf and the Landowner Academy on the Willie Hodges Estate Family Farm near Swainsboro, Georgia, to a packed house, 30 landowners strong. Additional workshops and events followed the Academy, including a Georgia Heirs Property Law Center's Estate Planning Workshop in November 2023.

CONSERVATION INVESTMENTS IN LONGLEAF

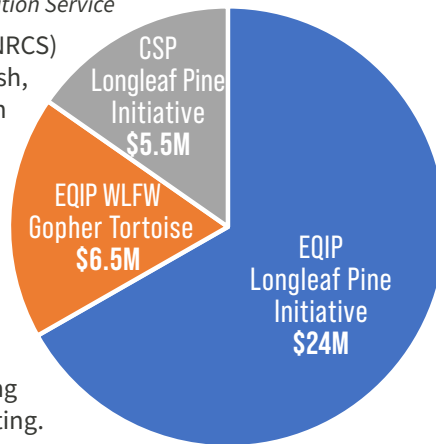
By Matthew Vandersande, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) works with small private forest owners to establish, restore, and improve longleaf pine forests through two conservation programs and two landscape conservation initiatives.

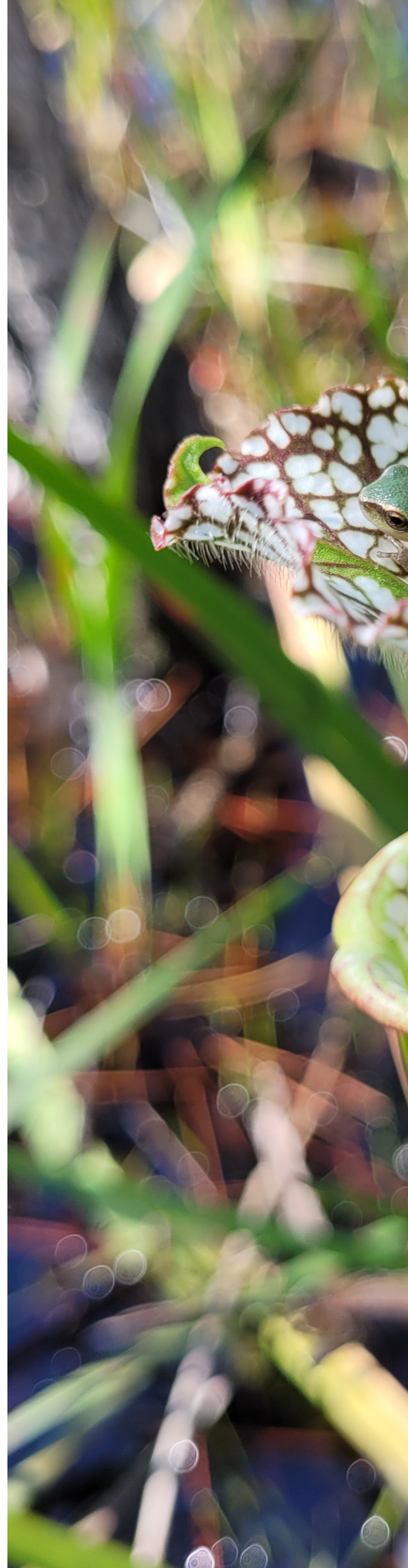
The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is NRCS's flagship conservation program providing technical and financial assistance to address resource concerns. EQIP helps forest landowners achieve their goals of growing healthy resilient forests through planning and implementing conservation practices, such as site prep and tree planting.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) helps private forest owners build on their existing conservation efforts while strengthening their operation. CSP offers annual payments for maintaining existing conservation efforts and implementing new practices to address additional resource concerns. CSP contracts are for five years and along with conservation practices also include specific enhancements, such as sequential patch burning, and bundles, which are composed of multiple enhancements.

The two region-based landscape conservation initiatives are the Longleaf Pine Initiative (LLPI) and Working Lands for Wildlife – Gopher Tortoise (WLFW-GT). LLPI covers the entire longleaf range and funds contracts with both EQIP and CSP. WLFW-GT covers the southeastern portion of the gopher tortoise range and uses EQIP to improve habitat conditions for this keystone species. While LLPI and WLFW-GT have dedicated funding for longleaf pine ecosystems, funding to private forest landowners in the region could also be through a state's general EQIP and CSP funding or other funding opportunities such as the Inflation Reduction Act.



NRCS contract obligations in fiscal year 2023 to be implemented by 2028.





PUBLIC LANDS

FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES PLAY A VALUABLE ROLE IN INSPIRING COLLABORATION AMONG PARTNERS AND ENSURING COORDINATED CONSERVATION ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE.

By Kathryn Smith, Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute

National Forests, DoD lands, State Forests, Wildlife Management Areas, National Wildlife Refuges, and other public lands not only provide opportunities for landscape-scale conservation of longleaf but also serve as sources of plant material and populations of listed or at-risk species like the Red-cockaded Woodpecker and gopher tortoise that can be reintroduced or relocated to restored private lands.

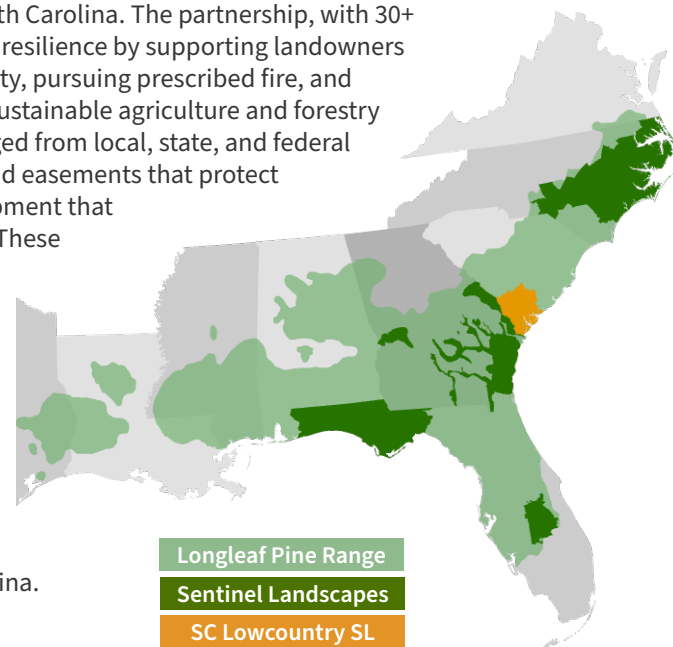
Successful restoration of the longleaf ecosystem depends upon these public partnerships and public lands which make up approximately 37% of the existing acres of longleaf forests. Through the Million-Acre Challenge, a key program to reaching the 8 million acre goal, the USDA Forest Service has committed to putting one million additional acres “on the path” to longleaf in the National Forest System by 2025. DoD continues to manage approximately 14% of the total existing longleaf pine forests across 36 military installations.

SENTINEL LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIPS

The Sentinel Landscape Partnership continues to forge successful conservation initiatives within the longleaf range and contributes meaningfully to the goals and objectives of ALRI through the enhanced collaboration between USDA, DoD, and DOI along with collaboration from state, municipal, and tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, and private landowners and land managers.

Five of the 13 Sentinel Landscapes occur within the historic longleaf range including the newest: South Carolina Lowcountry. Supporting immense biodiversity, this newly designated 2.2 million acre area also actively supports three military installations in southeastern South Carolina. The partnership, with 30+ partners, will improve landscape resilience by supporting landowners in maintaining habitat connectivity, pursuing prescribed fire, and promoting clean water through sustainable agriculture and forestry practices. Funding will be leveraged from local, state, and federal sources for acquiring working land easements that protect strategic properties from development that could impact military readiness. These easements also protect and enhance ecologically significant areas that support imperiled species.

Other Sentinel Landscapes contributing to longleaf conservation and restoration include Avon Park Air Force Range, Northwest Florida, Georgia, and Eastern North Carolina.



LONGLEAF RESTORATION

RECORD INVESTMENTS IN LONGLEAF PINE RESTORATION MADE 2023 A YEAR OF MILESTONES FOR ALRI.

As public and private entities seek to address the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss, many are turning to nature-based solutions, such as longleaf ecosystem restoration. Longleaf pine's resilience to drought and fire, ability to sequester carbon, and immense wildlife value are attributes that align well with the growing interest in nature-based solutions.

The ability to prioritize restoration efforts and measure outcomes is also increasingly important to funders seeking to understand the impact of their investments. The new Conservation Plan details additional strategies for accelerating longleaf pine restoration to reach 8 million acres of longleaf, including economic and market-based financial strategies, climate resilience and co-benefits strategies, and efforts to improve monitoring and evaluation of restoration efforts.

An important example of the increased funding for longleaf pine restoration in 2023 is the \$18 million in grants awarded to projects through National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's (NFWF) Longleaf Landscape Stewardship Fund (Fund). This record-breaking funding level builds on a long-standing public-private funding partnership and is due to the collective investment of 11 funders, including a major contribution from the Bezos Earth Fund.

These investments will scale-up longleaf restoration and

enhancement activities that contribute to ALRI goals. These projects will also enable NFWF and partners to pursue additional game-changing strategies, such as collaborating with and supporting seedling nurseries, seed orchards, and tree improvement experts to produce more than 30 million longleaf seedlings over the next five years.

Building upon these successes, in late 2023, the Bezos Earth Fund awarded NFWF additional funding to support longleaf restoration projects in 2024, which will help further build capacity, accelerate longleaf reforestation efforts, and provide landowners with additional tools and resources to restore longleaf pine. This new award has already helped spur additional federal funding for longleaf pine restoration available through the Fund in 2024, including a \$25 million NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program award, as well as additional USDA funding provided through the Inflation Reduction Act which will expand technical assistance to private landowners to implement climate-smart forestry practices that support long-term sustainable climate and wildlife outcomes.

Inflation Reduction Act funding is also being awarded to ALRI partners through other federal agencies to increase restoration and landowner assistance. These additional investments have set ALRI on a path for another record funding level in 2024.

INCREASING LONGLEAF ACRES

Longleaf tree planting estimates for 2023 increased from the prior year, largely due to increases on public lands. For the first time since reporting began, new longleaf acreage on public lands accounted for more than 40% of accomplishments.



LONGLEAF ESTABLISHMENT

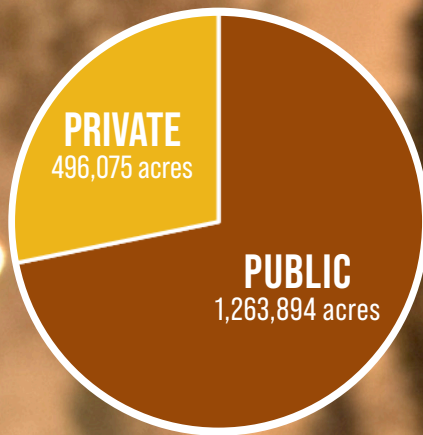
LONGLEAF THRU SILVICULTURE

ALRI measures longleaf pine acres gained through plantings and silvicultural practices. Silviculture activities can shift an existing forest with a minor component of longleaf to longleaf dominant through thinning, prescribed fire, or other treatments.

PRESCRIBED FIRE MANAGEMENT

THE NEED FOR INCREASED TRAINING AND CAPACITY FOR PRESCRIBED BURNING REMAINS HIGH.

By Jennifer Fawcett & Elliot Nauert, North Carolina State Extension



RECORD BURN ACREAGE FOR 3RD YEAR IN A ROW

28% of reported acres occurred on private lands

12,385 total acre increase compared to 2022

1,759,969 total reported acres of prescribed fire

Women-in-Fire Training Exchange

In February 2023, eight partner organizations hosted a Women-in-Fire Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (WTREX) in eastern North Carolina. Thirty participants from around the globe gathered for twelve days of practical field training, classroom workshops, mentorship, and discussions focused on the advancement of women and the value of diversity in wildland fire.

The event took place across multiple sites within the longleaf range. Participants learned about fire's role in the longleaf ecosystem, gained experience in the use of prescribed fire for longleaf management, and became integrated into the diverse network of longleaf practitioners. Longleaf forests managed by four agencies benefited directly from the application of prescribed fire with more than 1,400 acres burned during the training exchange.

Prescribed Burn Associations

It has been well-documented that more prescribed burning is needed on private lands. As one avenue to address this need, Prescribed Burn Associations (PBAs) and similar landowner cooperatives have “caught fire” across the longleaf range and are expanding rapidly. A PBA is a group of landowners and other interested citizens that form a partnership to conduct prescribed burns on privately owned lands. More than 130 PBAs are now found in 22 states across the U.S., at least 75 of which are active and collectively have more than 7,000 members.

Within the historic longleaf range, the first PBA began less than a decade ago in the North Carolina Sandhills. Since that time, 13 more PBAs and one Cultural Burn Association led by the Lumbee Tribe in North Carolina have been established (at least three in 2023 alone). Three additional PBAs are currently in formation in Florida and South Carolina. These PBAs within the longleaf range burn an average of more than 22,000 acres and nearly 300 burns annually.





ECONOMICS, MARKETS, & CLIMATE

INVESTMENTS IN LONGLEAF PINE FOR POSITIVE FUTURE IMPACT

By Lisa Lord, The Longleaf Alliance

This year saw a rise in longleaf outreach, business impact investing, and initiatives that furthered the connections between longleaf restoration, ecosystem services, and climate benefits. The Florida Forests and Water Forum convened stakeholders in Gainesville, Florida, to discuss the correlation between well-maintained forests and clean, reliable drinking water while also exploring pilot programs for implementing innovative long-term conservation strategies, such as Payment for Watershed Services. This was the third such forum in two years that included longleaf restoration as a focus.

The USDA Forest Service, The Longleaf Alliance, and other partners hosted a Longleaf Forests Water and Research Forum at the USDA Forest Service Santee Experimental Forest within the larger Francis Marion National Forest in South Carolina to synthesize current scientific knowledge on the relationship between longleaf pine forests and water resources in the Southeast and identify knowledge gaps and future areas for research.

Through a USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities grant, Clemson University began a pilot project in 2023 to incentivize private landowners, with a focus on underserved landowners, to implement climate-smart longleaf practices. In addition to providing funding for site preparation, prescribed burning, and additional climate-smart forest stand improvement practices, another component of

the project includes measuring how practices impact greenhouse gas emissions, soils, and forests.

Finally, the Texas Longleaf Team, supported by Texan by Nature, initiated a collaboration with the Coca-Cola Foundation, Silk, Google, Meta, and Microsoft, who will be jointly investing \$972,000, to restore 2,000 acres of longleaf pine on private lands in Trinity County, Texas. The project will support a longleaf pine ecosystem that will enhance water filtration, carbon sequestration, biodiversity, and community well-being. The restoration project is projected to increase water filtration by over 200 million gallons annually for 8-12 years. It will provide a tangible benefit for companies looking to align with their water-related goals and strategies.





LOOKING FORWARD

By Jamelle Ellis, LPC Chair-elect, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

I am excited for the opportunity to serve as Chair-elect for the LPC. My engagement with ALRI resonates deeply with cherished memories of family gatherings and adventures in the longleaf pine forests of Dorchester State Park in the South Carolina Lowcountry. Growing up, those childhood escapades, from spirited games of hide-and-seek to the simple joy of collecting longleaf pine cones, painted the backdrop of my youth. But it wasn't until I joined the LPC that I truly comprehended the profound significance of longleaf pine ecosystems in nurturing wildlife habitat, preserving cultural heritage, and bolstering economic prosperity.

The accomplishments of ALRI's Longleaf for All initiative stand as a testament to the transformative power of collective action. Having had the privilege of presenting on the History of Black Landownership in the Southeast at the Hodges Farm, I've witnessed firsthand the tangible impact of outreach and training efforts on conservation professionals. The establishment of the Longleaf for All model farm and peer-to-peer programs across Alabama, North Carolina, and South Carolina heralds a new era of inclusive conservation that I am incredibly proud and excited to be a part of!

The groundbreaking Longleaf Sustainability Analysis (LSA) tool, developed by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory and the University of Florida Center for Landscape Conservation Planning, represents a monumental leap forward in visual data management. As a member of the LSA working group, providing continuous review and technical feedback, I've seen the potential of this tool to chart the course for prioritizing restoration efforts, conserving wildlife habitats, and supporting threatened species across the longleaf range.

Celebrating another milestone, the clear path forward for the new Conservation Plan underscores ALRI's unwavering commitment to preserving our natural heritage. The recent signing of the MOU by the Federal Coordinating Committee members signifies a renewed dedication to conserving and restoring the longleaf pine ecosystem for generations to come.

ALRI's success rests on the foundation of strong partnerships that extend from funding support to on-the-ground implementation. Joining the LPC has been a deeply gratifying experience, both personally and professionally. As I prepare to assume the role of LPC Chair-Elect, I am humbled by the dedication and passion of this remarkable team. We are poised to restore the splendor of the longleaf landscape for all in the years ahead. The Southeast is fortunate to have ALRI leading the charge, and I am honored to be a part of this remarkable journey. I eagerly anticipate the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead as we embark on this endeavor TOGETHER!

BY THE NUMBERS: 2023 LONGLEAF

BY OWNERSHIP

	Longleaf Establishment <i>Acres</i>	Longleaf thru Silviculture <i>Acres</i>	Prescribed Burning <i>Acres</i>	Maintenance Activities <i>Acres</i>	Acquisition/ Easements <i>Acres</i>	TOTAL <i>Acres</i>
PUBLIC LANDS						
National Forest System (USDA Forest Service)	6,665	4,778	502,962	23,276	1,362	539,043
Savannah River Site (USDA Forest Service)	318	0	1,800	1,731	0	3,849
National Wildlife Refuges (USFWS)	92	92	36,533	2,202	1,164	40,083
Military Installations (DoD)	10,166	0	382,623	131,987	0	524,776
US Army Corps of Engineers (DoD)	78	0	775	25	0	878
National Parks/Preserves (NPS)	1	0	0	1	0	2
State Forests	1,549	276	126,953	9,393	7,238	145,409
Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs)	4,052	254	69,097	17,415	13,795	104,613
Other State/Local Lands	39,735	350	143,151	6,200	763	190,199
Total Public Lands	62,656	5,750	1,263,894	192,230	24,322	1,548,851
PRIVATE LANDS						
State Forestry Programs	8,835	43	4,664	1,026	0	14,568
State Wildlife Programs	757	318	2,361	752	0	4,188
NRCS Programs	45,041	0	98,080	31,465	0	174,586
Conservation Reserve Program (FSA)	4,467	0	7,121	453	0	12,041
Emergency Forest Restoration Program (FSA)	985	0	299	8	0	1,292
Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (USFWS)	2,547	0	6,065	2,091	0	10,703
Coastal Program (USFWS)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Corporate Lands - (other funds)	2,596	0	4,074	329	0	6,999
NGO Lands (other funds)	3,099	0	40,933	2,552	6,024	52,608
Non-Industrial Private Lands (other funds)	341	428	332,478	216	0	333,463
Private Landowners - Additional Acres	6,535					6,535
Total Private Lands	75,203	789	496,075	38,892	6,024	616,983
GRAND TOTAL - ALL LANDS	137,858	6,539	1,759,969	231,122	30,346	2,165,834

GOPHER TORTOISE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

The Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative is a Georgia-based effort that has worked since 2015 to conserve gopher tortoises and help prevent Endangered Species Act listing of Georgia's state reptile in the eastern part of the species' range. Georgia has at least 125 known viable populations (defined by USFWS as 250 adult tortoises) with a protection goal of 65. Permanent protection of populations is achieved through a combination of fee-simple land acquisitions and conservation easements on both public and private lands.

When the effort started, Georgia had 36 permanently protected tortoise populations. The total is currently 64, translating into over 127,000 acres of high-priority lands protected within the heart of the longleaf range. The Initiative expects to reach its goal of 65 by the end of calendar year 2024.

ACCOMPLISHMENT SUMMARIES

BY STATE

	Longleaf Establishment Acres	Longleaf thru Silviculture Acres	Prescribed Burning Acres	Maintenance Activities Acres	Acquisition/Easements Acres	TOTAL Acres
PUBLIC LANDS						
Texas	254	66	4,582	347	0	5,249
Louisiana	2,673	0	131,735	32,237	40	166,685
Mississippi	3,517	824	113,527	6,917	440	125,225
Alabama	1,224	2,372	146,368	3,746	1,385	155,095
Florida	47,493	1,940	514,188	47,951	20,357	631,929
Georgia	4,365	92	197,951	54,175	517	257,100
South Carolina	1,837	75	64,465	10,740	1,141	78,258
North Carolina	1,258	308	87,040	36,062	442	125,110
Virginia	35	73	4,038	55	0	4,201
Total Public Lands	62,656	5,750	1,263,894	192,230	24,322	1,548,851
PRIVATE LANDS						
Texas	1,133	0	4,130	369	0	5,632
Louisiana	2,296	0	10,342	1,824	0	14,462
Mississippi	6,837	0	23,222	5,108	0	35,167
Alabama	9,358	0	231,209	9,696	0	250,263
Florida	8,500	0	26,273	5,485	0	40,258
Georgia	25,324	318	180,000	9,233	0	214,875
South Carolina	6,431	463	3,152	3,747	0	13,793
North Carolina	8,127	0	14,841	1,560	5,997	30,525
Virginia	662	8	2,906	1,870	27	5,473
Additional Acres	6,535					6,535
Total Private Lands	75,203	789	496,075	38,892	6,024	616,983
GRAND TOTAL - ALL LANDS	137,858	6,539	1,759,969	231,122	30,346	2,165,834



Photo by Lisa Lord

Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative Cooperators include Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Georgia Forestry Commission, DoD, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, Georgia Conservancy, Knobloch Family Foundation, Robert W. Woodruff Foundation, Bobolink Foundation, Georgia Chamber of Commerce, the Orianna Society, and others.

2023 LONGLEAF PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL



American Forest Foundation



THE CONSERVATION FUND



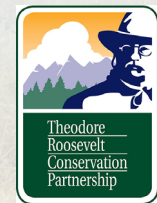
Department of FORESTRY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION



MAC RHODES



TALLADEGA-MOUNTAIN LONGLEAF CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP



Natural Resources Conservation Service



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources



Weyerhaeuser



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