

America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative Strategic Priorities and Actions 2013-2015

Longleaf Partnership Council



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Executive Summary

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Since the release of the Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine in 2009, a robust partnership has come together to support restoration of longleaf pine ecosystems and gained national recognition as a model of collaborative landscape conservation. Organized in 2011, the Longleaf Partnership Council is providing an important forum for communication and collaboration among key Partners involved in the ongoing efforts to restore longleaf pine ecosystems across nine Southern states. Comprised of more than 30 state and federal agencies, conservation groups and other key constituencies, the Council recently conducted a review and assessment of both the restoration progress and the challenges during the initial three years of Plan implementation. Using insights from that process, the Council members aim to build upon the substantial momentum for longleaf restoration in its Strategic Priorities and Actions document. This “blueprint” for the next three years details where priorities should be placed and identifies the associated actions needed at various scales to advance the longer-term goal of restoring eight million acres over a 15 year horizon. The four strategic priorities and associated actions which will guide partners in their individual and collective efforts are as follows:

1. ***Increase acres established in longleaf pine ecosystems.*** The Council and its partners are committed to establishing between 75,000 and 95,000 acres of longleaf annually on private lands and, furthermore establishing longleaf pine on between 30,000 and 35,000 acres annually on publicly owned lands. To meet these near-term goals, partners will utilize a wide variety of existing programs and authorities supporting restoration activities on private and public lands. Partners will seek to collaborate and align efforts and thereby leverage resources and funding when possible. They will also continue to advocate for additional resources necessary to meet restoration goals.
2. ***Improve and maintain existing longleaf pine ecosystems, with emphasis on significantly increasing the acres of prescribed fire accomplished.*** Because fire is critical to longleaf ecosystems, including its highly diverse native plant communities, partners will increase acres burned annually to between 1.4 million and 1.8 million acres across all lands. This will require significantly enhancing the capacity to apply prescribed fire through existing programs and authorities, always coordinating, aligning and leveraging resources and funding. In addition to increasing capacity to burn, the Council and its partners will ensure appropriate consideration of these fire dependent ecosystems whenever smoke management issues are reviewed.
3. ***Enhance restoration delivery across all lands.*** Building upon the several State Coordination Teams and the eleven Local Implementation Teams across the range and to increase the effectiveness of on the ground restoration efforts, the Council will support efforts to establish at least six additional teams in targeted landscapes. Restoration effectiveness will be further promoted by offering additional longleaf education and training opportunities for resource managers and landowners alike. Enhanced delivery to landowners of technical and educational information, e.g., much needed analyses of the economics of longleaf, will be made through a well-organized network of technical assistance providers. Federal program managers will place greater emphasis on coordination of technical assistance resources with Local Implementation Teams to reach the maximum number of landowners.



4. ***Maintain and broaden the resource base.*** The Council and its partners will work to ensure that the significant federal investments in longleaf are leveraged by substantial contributions from public and private organizations as well as individuals. The federal departments involved in the Federal Coordinating Committee (FCC) for Longleaf Pine (Agriculture, Defense and Interior) contribute significantly to longleaf restoration on both public and private lands. Supporting and growing the Longleaf Stewardship Fund, which is supported by public and private sponsors, is the priority action relative to leveraging these substantial federal investments. In addition, the ability of the Council and the FCC to track and report restoration progress will be enhanced to ensure accountability for all investments.

In conclusion, the *Strategic Priorities and Actions* document is aimed at maintaining and building upon the substantial momentum for longleaf pine conservation that has developed since the initiation of the America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative. This “blueprint” provides a basis to leverage existing cooperative efforts within the Longleaf Partnership Council and serve as a platform for the development of new collaborative relationships in the effort to restore one of America's iconic forests.