



America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative
Longleaf Partnership Council

2014 Range-wide Accomplishment Report





Mike Black, credit Heather Inman

Message from Mike Black

*National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative
2014 Chair of the Longleaf Partnership Council*

On behalf of the members of the Longleaf Partnership Council, we are pleased to present the *2014 Range-wide Accomplishment Report*. In this second year of preparing a document highlighting the annual accomplishments of the America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative, you will find a detailed summary of the on-the-ground restoration activities that occurred from Texas to Virginia. These accomplishments include not only establishment of new longleaf pine forests through planting, but also activities such as prescribed fire, mid-story harvests, and invasive species control... activities that are crucial in restoring the entire forest ecosystem and improving habitat for the numerous plant and wildlife species that make their homes there.

I was fortunate to have served as Chair of the Longleaf Partnership Council in 2014, which marked the 5th year since the release of the *Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine*. We marked this milestone with impressive events in Washington, D.C., where many of the leaders of our Federal partners were recognized, and in Mobile, Alabama, where the focus was more on the dedicated folks who support longleaf restoration at the ground level. While both events celebrated the accomplishments of the past five years, there was also recognition that we have much more left to do. The accomplishments highlighted in this report are impressive, and illustrate that we are meeting many of our short term goals. However, we also recognize that much of our current work is setting the stage for even greater accomplishments, and that the rate of restoration must be accelerated in order to reach our eight million acre goal.

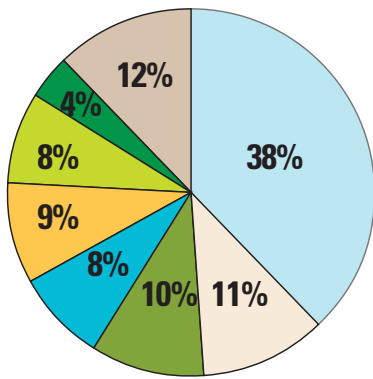
While public lands continue to provide the base for longleaf, there is increasing recognition and focus on the additional and additive opportunities on private lands, particularly with respect to prescribed fire. Funding for longleaf restoration continues to be strong, but we should all be aware that as we add acres of longleaf, we continually build a base that needs to be maintained in order to provide the optimal benefit for providing both landowner revenue and desired wildlife habitat. We must remember that America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative is not just a tree-planting program, but an entire forested ecosystem restoration program.

As outgoing Chair, I cannot overstate the value and importance of the funding support from our Federal partners. In addition to critical USDA support through Farm Bill programs administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Farm Service Agency, extensive financial, technical, and administrative support comes from the USDA Forest Service, the Department of Defense, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. We are extremely proud that the longleaf ecosystem was designated one of eight Critical Conservation Areas under the NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program in 2014. We have also been fortunate to receive great support from the nine states in the longleaf range, as well as from private funding sources such as the Southern Company and International Paper through their partnerships with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Numerous NGOs and State agencies have shown great leadership and contributed valuable resources to ALRI efforts and are integral members of the Longleaf Partnership Council. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the 17 Local Implementation Teams, who translated all the resources and funding support to actual results at the ground level and played such a large role in the longleaf establishment and enhancement activities reported.



credit Katherine Taylor

1.55 million acres



- Alabama
- Florida
- Georgia
- Louisiana
- Mississippi
- North Carolina
- South Carolina
- Texas
- Virginia (<1%)

Figure 1. Overall 2014 range-wide accomplishments for longleaf pine stratified by State.

2014 Range-wide Accomplishment Findings

2014 marked the 5th anniversary of the release of the *Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine*. A strong partnership has emerged over the past five years to support the America’s Longleaf Restoration Initiative (ALRI). The Longleaf Partnership Council, representing 33 agencies and organizations, is entering its fourth year of providing range-wide leadership and facilitation of communication and collaboration among partners. There are now 17 Local Implementation Teams working within designated longleaf Significant Geographic Areas (SGAs) to implement on-the-ground longleaf restoration activities. The Federal Coordination Committee continues to coordinate the critical contributions of federal programs and resources. Together, the partners are making demonstrable and significant progress towards the goals outlined in the *Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine*.

In 2012, the Longleaf Partnership Council identified four major priorities and associated short-term restoration goals in ALRI’s *Strategic Priorities and Actions 2013-2015*. The Council releases annual accomplishment reports to document the overall progress made toward achieving these goals. The data in this report covers accomplishments between October 1, 2013 and September 30, 2014 and was compiled by the nine State Coordination Teams working in concert with the State Foresters’ staffs. This report provides the Council and its individual members a means to communicate the scale of the on-the-ground work conducted, demonstrates how public/private funds are being leveraged, and illustrates the degree to which the partnership’s strategic priorities are being accomplished.

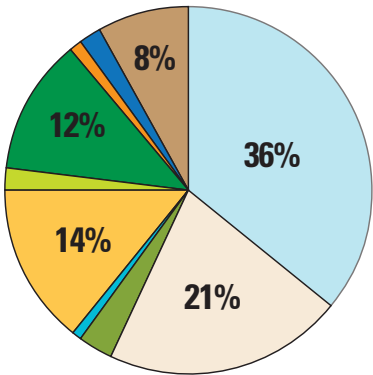
Key Overall Findings

The combined efforts of the many partners involved in longleaf restoration across the Southeast resulted in over 1.55 million acres of various on-the-ground longleaf restoration accomplishments. These restoration activities included tree planting, prescribed burning, mid-story treatments, invasive species control, native understory plant establishment, over-story treatments, and land acquisition/easements. Approximately 69% of the total accomplishments occurred within the SGAs.

Approximately 61% of the overall 2014 accomplishments occurred in Florida (38%), Alabama (12%), and Georgia (11%), states which make up two-thirds of the current range-wide longleaf-dominated forest acreage. Most of the work on public lands (55%) occurred in Florida and Georgia and totaled over 658,000 acres. Restoration activities on private lands in Alabama and Georgia accounted for roughly one-half (175,000 acres) of the range-wide private lands total. Approximately 21% of the overall accomplishments occurred in the western range (Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas), while 17% occurred in the eastern range (South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia). See Figure 1 for a breakdown of range-wide accomplishment percentages by state.

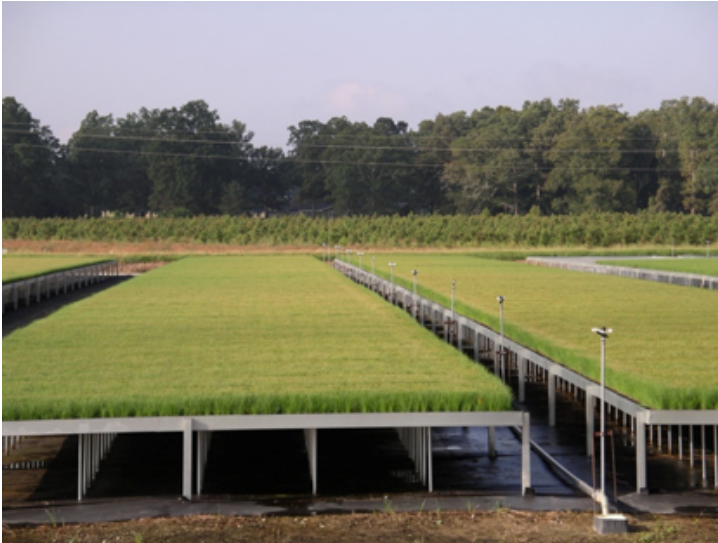
Public lands accounted for 77% of the overall reported range-wide accomplishments (1.19 million acres) in 2014 (Figure 2), with National Forest System (NFS) and Department of Defense (DoD) lands the major contributors to these totals. The public land accomplishments represent an 13% increase from the 2013 totals, much of which can be attributed to improved reporting on DoD installations. Other public lands reporting accomplishments include National Wildlife Refuges, Savannah River Site, State Forests, State Wildlife Management Areas, and numerous other federal/state/local lands. Longleaf restoration work on private lands was reported at 360,810 acres (23% of the overall accomplishment totals) and represents a 12% increase from the 2013 Accomplishment Report.

1.55 million acres



- National Forest System Lands
- Military Installations
- State/Local Lands
- Private Lands-Federal Programs
- Private Lands-No Cost Share
- National Wildlife Refuges-3%
- Public Lands-Longleaf Stewardship Fund-2%
- Private Lands-Longleaf Stewardship Fund-2%
- Private Lands-State Programs-1%
- Other Federal Lands-1%

Figure 2. Overall 2014 range-wide accomplishments for longleaf pine stratified by ownership category.



Longleaf containerized seedling production at the Claridge State Nursery operated by the North Carolina Forest Service in Goldsboro, credit Drew Hinnant.

The accomplishments are inversely related to the ownership distribution of existing longleaf-dominated forests, where private lands contain 61% and public lands 39% of existing longleaf. With the exception of private lands participating in incentive programs, reporting mechanisms for accomplishments in the private sector are poorly developed and these data are difficult to capture. More robust reporting mechanisms for private lands would likely lessen the disparity between figures for public and private lands.

An estimated \$118 million was spent to restore, maintain, and protect longleaf pine forests in 2014, with \$91.5 million going toward land management activities and the remainder to land protection through acquisitions or easements. Public funding accounted for 78% of the overall on-the-ground restoration or stand improvement expenditures, but only half of these expenditures occurred on public land, indicative of the support provided to private landowners through various cost-share programs. Of the

overall expenditures on private lands, funding from private sources accounted for 40%, with cost-share programs covering most of the remainder.

Strategic Priority 1.

Significantly Increase Acres Established in Longleaf Pine

In 2012, the Longleaf Partnership Council identified an annual longleaf establishment goal of between 105,000 and 130,000 acres, with 75% (79,000 to 98,000 acres) occurring on private lands and 25% (26,000 to 32,000 acres) occurring on public lands. A total of 153,000 acres of longleaf pine establishment is estimated to have occurred range-wide in 2014 (Figure 3). The estimate is based on known restoration acreages combined with tree nursery survey findings from Auburn University showing that 110 million longleaf seedlings were produced for the FY 2014 planting season. An estimated 120,000 acres (78%) of longleaf pine were established on private lands and approximately 33,000 acres (22%) were established on public lands. Nearly half of the acres established on private lands were done independent of public cost-share programs. Farm Bill programs administered by the US Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) accounted for one-third of the acres established on private lands. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program accounted for over 2% of overall establishment acres, while various state forestry and wildlife agency programs accounted for another 4%.

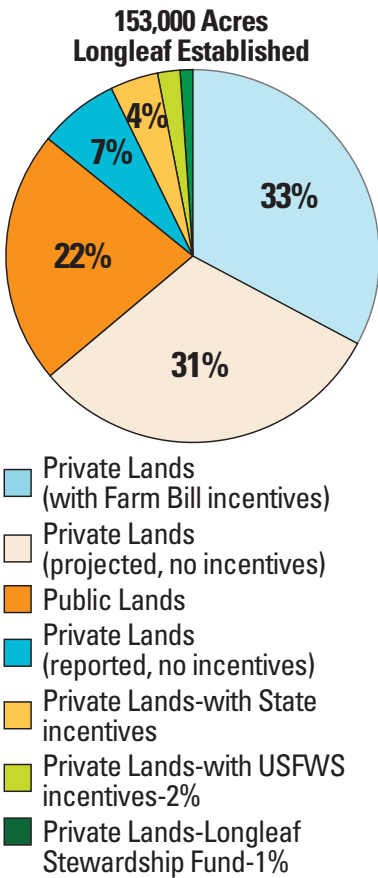
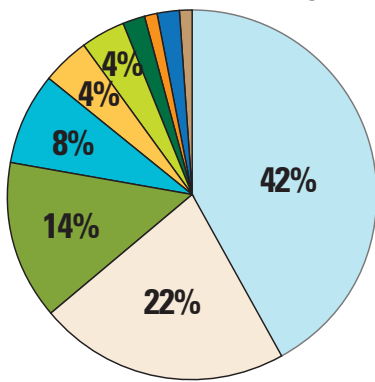


Figure 3. Total acres of longleaf pine established range-wide and stratified by ownership category in 2014.

2014 - A Great Cone Year

The 2014 longleaf cone crop was the most plentiful in North Carolina since 2009, according to James West of the North Carolina Forest Service (NCF’S). The timing of this year’s cone crop coincides with a roughly 5-7 year perceived cycle of enhanced seed production. The last true range-wide bumper crop (defined as production greater than 100 cones per tree) occurred in 1996, according to a report by the US Department of Agriculture-Forest Service (USDA-FS) Southern Research Station. At 98 cones per tree, the 2014 crop estimate fell just short of that mark. Longleaf pine seed supply is often considered the limiting factor for seedling production at nurseries, magnifying the importance of taking advantage of high cone production years. Informal surveys conducted by the NCF’S indicate just under 40,000 bushels of cones were collected range-wide, which probably represents about half of the actual bushels collected. Assuming that 80,000 bushels were collected, this would account for nearly 300 million future seedlings propagated in nurseries.

**1.2 Million Acres
of Prescribed Burning**



- National Forest System Lands
- Military Installations
- State/Local Lands
- Private Lands-Farm Bill incentives
- Private Lands-no incentives
- National Wildlife Refuges
- Public Lands-Longleaf Stewardship Fund-2%
- Private Lands-Longleaf Stewardship Fund-2%
- Private Lands-Other Federal/State incentives-1%
- Other Federal Lands-1%

Figure 4. Total acres of prescribed burning accomplishments in longleaf pine ecosystems in 2014 stratified by ownership categories.



Prescribed burning activities conducted by The Nature Conservancy at the Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary in Texas, credit T. Parker Schuerman.

Strategic Priority 2.

Improve and Maintain Existing Longleaf Pine Ecosystems, with Emphasis on Prescribed Burning

There is growing consensus among partners involved in ALRI that the number one priority is to improve and maintain the existing 4.7 million acres of longleaf pine forests estimated to occur range-wide in 2015. This will require a continued commitment to maintain the excellent ongoing work occurring on public lands, which contain only 39% of the existing acreage, but a much greater percentage of mature, intact natural longleaf pine forests. Much more effort is required on private lands, where more complex challenges exist to expand the use of prescribed burning, restore native understory, and conduct other restoration activities.

Prescribed Burning

ALRI's *Strategic Priorities and Actions 2013-2015* set a goal of increasing annual prescribed burning in longleaf pine ecosystems to between 280,000 and 360,000 acres on private lands and between 1.1 and 1.4 million acres on public lands by 2015. The overall goal across all lands is 1.38 to 1.76 million acres.

A total of 1.22 million acres of prescribed burning was reported in longleaf pine for all ownerships in 2014 (Figure 4). Of these acres, one million acres (85%) occurred on public lands, primarily on NFS lands and DoD installations. An additional 180,000 acres (15%) were reported on private lands. Roughly 75% of the overall prescribed burn totals occurred within the 18 designated SGAs.

The findings indicate that overall prescribed burning accomplishments are at 88% of the short-term goals in *Strategic Priorities and Actions 2013-2015*. Prescribed burning on public lands only reached about 91% of the short-term ALRI partnership goals, but is still in line with long-term needs of burning on a 2-3 year return frequency. The reported prescribed burning acreage on private lands is only 64% of the short-term 2015 minimum goal of 280,000 acres and is well short of needs relative to the total amount of longleaf pine acreage on private lands. A more comprehensive reporting system for private lands would refine our understanding of actual accomplishments and needs.

Other Longleaf Pine Improvement Activities

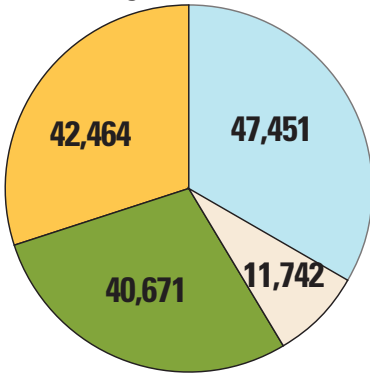
Additional activities beyond the use of prescribed burning are being utilized to accelerate the restoration of native understory plant communities, restore desired longleaf stand structure in the over-story and mid-story, and combat invasive plant species. Decades of fire suppression have resulted in degraded conditions on many of the remaining acres of longleaf pine. Without these additional treatments, it would take many years to achieve desired results using prescribed fire alone.

In 2014, a total of 142,328 acres of additional restoration activities were reported (Figure 5). This included 11,742 acres of native plant establishment, 47,451 acres of mid-story treatments, 42,464 acres of over-story treatments, and 40,671 acres of non-native invasive plant treatments.

NRCS and Partners Exceed Goals in Priority Areas for Fiscal Year 2014

NRCS established clear goals in FY 2013 to provide better direction on the agency's role, expectations, and target areas in support of the overall ALRI objectives. The nine states participating in the NRCS Longleaf Pine Initiative committed to increase restoration activities to 67,500 acres annually, with at least 50% of these activities located within selected priority counties. These priority counties are identified as focal areas for restoring longleaf pine ecosystems and are typically located near military installations, National Forests, National Wildlife Refuges, State Forests, or Heritage Reserves.

**142,328 Acres
Enhancement Accomplishments
for Longleaf Pine Forests**



- Mid-story Treatments
- Over-story Thinning
- Invasive Plant Treatments
- Native Understory Establishment

Figure 5. Total acres of mid-story treatments, native understory plant establishment, invasive species treatments, and over-story thinning in 2014.

The planning efforts paid off in FY 2014, resulting in contracts for longleaf pine restoration activities on nearly 64,000 acres, which represents over 90% of the overall acreage establishment goal. In addition, NRCS exceeded the acreage and funding goals in priority counties, approving contracts for agricultural producers and forest landowners to restore nearly 50,000 acres of longleaf pine in these areas. Of the \$11.8 million of NRCS Longleaf Pine Initiative investments for the year, over \$8.6 million (73%) was obligated to support activities planned in priority counties.

Strategic Priority 3.

Enhance the Ability to Successfully Implement Restoration Actions

Local Implementation Teams

The Nature Conservancy published *Longleaf Pine: Protecting and Restoring an American Treasure*. The publication highlights the 17 Local Implementation Teams (Figure 6) and their collaborative work within SGAs. It provides an excellent overview of the importance of longleaf pine forests and the range-wide partnership that is in place. The publication is available online at <http://www.americaslongleaf.org/media/13207/Longleaf-Rangewide-Teams.pdf>.

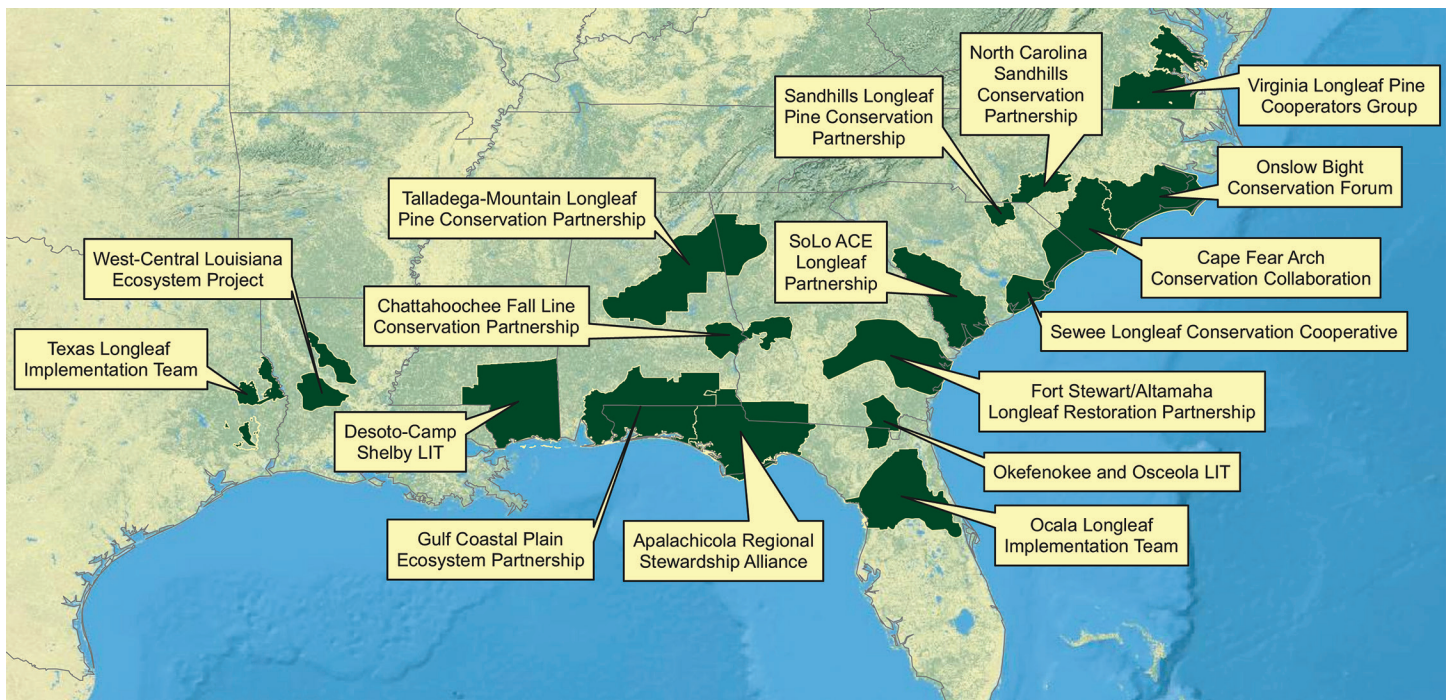
Jones Center Economic Workshop Recommendations – Large Acreage Landowners

A report entitled *Longleaf Pine Economics: Large Acreage Landowner Perspectives and Opportunities* was completed for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) by the Joseph W. Jones Ecological Research Center (Jones Center) based upon findings from a workshop held in January 2014. The report provides discussion and recommendations for

- Market Development,
- Growth and Yield, Tree Improvements, and Silviculture,
- Large-Landowner Incentives, and
- Motivations, Barriers, and Opportunities for Longleaf Management.

The Jones Center, located in Newton, Georgia, hosted a number of additional longleaf-related educational events in FY 2014. Visiting groups included regional universities, the Southern Group of State Foresters, the Georgia Forestry Association and many other NGO, governmental, and private land manager groups. Overall, the Jones Center held 28 different longleaf-related educational events reaching over 500 participants.

Figure 6. Local Implementation Teams in place across the longleaf pine native range





Joseph W. Jones Ecological Research Center, Newton, Georgia, credit Jessica McCorvey.

Overview of Longleaf Tree Improvement

Twelve agencies and organizations are currently working on longleaf tree improvement, including the U.S. Forest Service, North Carolina Forest Service, Florida Forest Service, Mississippi Forestry Commission, South Carolina Forestry Commission, Louisiana Department of Forestry, International Forest Company, Virginia Department of Forestry, Kimberly Clark, Packaging Corporation of America, Plum Creek, and Rayonier. There are now 608 acres of longleaf pine tree orchards across the South.

This year marks the largest collection of orchard cones in the last ten years and likely the largest crop of improved seed ever harvested. The purpose of the longleaf tree improvement program is to develop families of longleaf that possess superior growth, form, and disease resistance. Longleaf volume gains will be made on height growth and taper reduction. Those involved understand the importance of not diminishing wood quality characteristics of longleaf.

*James West,
North Carolina Forest Service*

Longleaf Alliance Academy Update

The Longleaf Alliance (LLA) developed the Longleaf Academy program in 2008 to better prepare foresters, landowners, and other natural resource professionals to address management problems and issues specific to longleaf pine ecosystems. During the first six years of the program, 41 Longleaf Academies were successfully held across the longleaf range.

In fiscal year 2014, the LLA held a total of five Longleaf Academies in Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The Academies consisted of the flagship course, Longleaf 101, as well as Understory Restoration 201 and the first-ever Gopher Tortoise 301. The Gopher Tortoise Academy was held in Lucedale, MS and taught participants about the biology, life history, and habitat management for the tortoise.

During 2014, the LLA also developed Longleaf and Fire 201, which will debut in Summer 2015. This academy will take an in-depth look at the “hows” and “whys” of fire in longleaf ecosystems. The LLA also plans to hold nine other academies across the range in 2015. See the website (www.longleafalliance.org) for more information.

Florida’s Longleaf Inventory and Mapping Effort

Florida Forest Service (FFS) partnered with Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) to develop the Longleaf Pine Ecosystem Geodatabase (LPEGDB), a project to design and populate a spatial database that will serve as the central repository for data on the distribution and condition of longleaf pine forests in Florida. The LPEGDB is part of a larger effort by the FFS to conduct a Longleaf Pine Forest Conservation Assessment to support conservation, protection, management and enhancement of longleaf pine ecosystems on public and private lands in Florida. The project was divided into four major tasks:

- 1) Compilation of existing data and identification of data gaps,
- 2) Collection of condition field data via rapid assessment,
- 3) Integration of existing rapid assessment data into LPEGDB, and
- 4) Summary of longleaf pine ecosystem conditions and priorities.

Numerous longleaf pine restoration practitioners were invited to provide input on various aspects of Version 1 of this database at an August 2014 meeting at the FFS Eyster Auditorium in Tallahassee.

Results of the initial assessment indicated that there is significantly more longleaf acreage in the State of Florida than previously estimated. The project confirmed the location of 2.2 million acres of longleaf pine ecosystems in Florida (an increase of over 800,000 acres), indicating that Florida is home to about half of all known longleaf pine. The next phase of the project will focus on further clarifying ecosystem condition and could actually increase acreage estimates as some areas that were unable to be assessed initially are reported. Efforts are already planned in FY2015 to resolve acreage discrepancies with the USDA-FS Forest Inventory and Analysis estimates and also to look for opportunities to replicate the FFS/FNAI effort in other states.

Consensus Reached on Longleaf Maintenance Condition Class Definitions

The Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine calls for doubling the current estimated acreage of longleaf pine in the maintenance condition class, with an ultimate objective of having about three million of the eight million acre ALRI goal in this condition. However, the Conservation Plan did not define this condition. The Longleaf Partnership Council developed a guide that provides definitions to assist land managers and practitioners in assessing longleaf pine forests to determine whether their forest is in this condition, and also serves as a target for reaching this condition.



credit Clay Ware

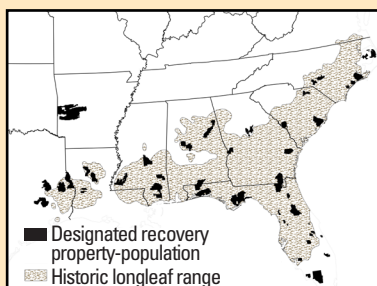
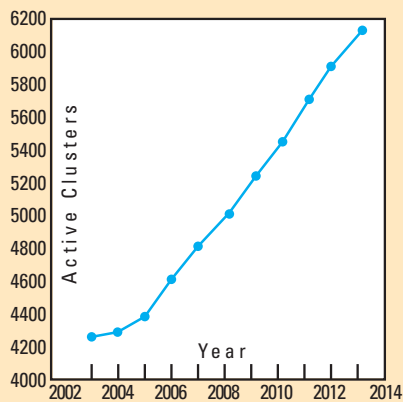
For landowners whose objectives are primarily conservation-based, the maintenance condition class has the potential to provide optimal habitat for plant and wildlife species associated with longleaf pine ecosystems.

Longleaf Maintenance Condition Class Definitions, A Guide to Assess Optimal Forest Habitat Conditions for Associated Plant and Wildlife Species was endorsed by the Longleaf Partnership Council in the Spring meeting, with finishing touches completed shortly afterwards. Data from various sources, including NatureServe, USDA-FS, USFWS-East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture, Jones Center, and NFWF, were evaluated and merged to create a single document which applies to all ten of the identified longleaf pine community types. The document can be found at <http://www.americaslongleaf.org/media/14299/final-lpc-maintenance-condition-class-metrics-oct-2014-high-res.pdf>.

Longleaf Leader Magazine

In April 2014, the LLA expanded their newsletter to a 40-page full color magazine completely dedicated to the restoration and management of the longleaf ecosystem. *The Longleaf Leader* magazine is mailed out quarterly to 2,000 members, partners and individuals interested in the future of the longleaf pine. It contains timely information on all aspects of longleaf pine management, including the proper use of herbicides, planting density recommendations, site prep techniques, the use of prescribed fire, and management of understory.

The magazine also includes a landowner spotlight, news from around the region, and personnel changes within longleaf partner organizations. There are quarterly updates from the Longleaf Partnership Council Chair and the Local Implementation Teams to keep everyone up-to-speed on longleaf recovery efforts. The magazine also brings in historical perspectives, book reviews and highlights of longleaf art. The Longleaf Destinations section tells readers where they can easily view the longleaf ecosystem across the range. Each issue closes with Heartpine, a regular column penned by guest writers that gets to the heart of why so many of us care so deeply for this ecosystem that has been so important to the history of our country.



Red-Cockaded Woodpecker Populations Status and Trends – An Indicator of Improved Longleaf Pine Habitat Conditions

Restoration and management of longleaf pine have been critical to the successful conservation and recovery of the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW). The 2003 RCW Recovery Plan strategy includes increasing and sustaining 39 designated core and essential recovery populations with other support populations. All or parts of 34 of these 39 populations are within the historic longleaf pine range, mostly on federal lands.

It is no coincidence that many of the designated recovery populations in the longleaf range are associated with 16 of the 18 Significant Geographic Areas identified by ALRI. These core areas are landscape foundations to restore, increase, and sustain significant ecological resources. Since enacting the 2003 RCW Recovery Plan, RCWs have increased from 4,254 to 6,120 active territories in designated recovery populations, with about 5,533 territories in the historic longleaf pine range. Managers use prescribed fire, thinning, and other methods to improve nesting and foraging habitat and induce new RCW groups to increase population size. In the last five years, management activities to establish new RCW groups have generated about 50,000 acres of habitat restoration each year. Moreover, ongoing habitat restoration activities restored or maintained over one million acres of habitat to support existing RCW populations in the longleaf range.

Though RCW habitat in recovery populations often includes offsite pine, long term restoration objectives routinely include conversion back to longleaf in the historic range. RCW recovery has been an important objective driving longleaf pine restoration for many years prior to the development of ALRI's Conservation Plan and its implementation by the Longleaf Partnership Council. ALRI's restoration achievements have created a new dimension and synergy including benefits to RCW recovery, while restoration directed to RCW recovery also contributes to ALRI objectives and the conservation of longleaf pine biota.



The Longleaf Alliance released the first quarterly issues of The Longleaf Leader magazine in the Spring of 2014, credit Robert Abernethy.

Publication was made possible by grants from USFWS, USDA-FS and NRCS. For more information on how you can receive *The Longleaf Leader*, please contact LLA at office@longleafalliance.org.

Partners Release Brochure on Longleaf Pine Management

In October 2013, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) added the longleaf pine to its “red list” as endangered. This determination was made because longleaf acreage had declined 50-80% over the last three generations of the species’ history (90 years). Several members of the Longleaf Partnership Council met and discussed this unexpected determination and what impact it might have on the restoration of the longleaf pine.

During the Summer of 2014, the National Council for Air and Stream Improvement and LLA, funded by a grant from Sustainable Forestry Initiative, completed a brochure entitled *Longleaf Pine: Sustainable Forest Management and the*

Restoration of a Species. The purpose of the brochure is to explain the importance of maintaining strong forest products markets for the management of the longleaf pine ecosystem. The document explains why the continued, sustainable use of the longleaf pine is essential to its restoration. The IUCN specifically allows for commercial usage and has stated, “Well-regulated trade can contribute positively to the conservation of some threatened species.” The brochure explains how the continued and expanded use of markets for longleaf pine forest products is absolutely essential for the continued restoration of this species. To obtain copies of the brochure, please contact LLA at office@longleafalliance.org.



Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack (left) hosting a panel discussion at the Five Year Anniversary Celebration in Washington on July 22, 2014. Longleaf Partnership Council Chair Mike Black (center) and private landowner and longleaf advocate Salem Saloom (right), participated on the panel, credit Lark Hayes.

Strategic Priority 4.

Maintain and Broaden the Resource Base

Washington, DC Five-Year Anniversary Celebration

To mark the 5th Year Anniversary of the release of the ALRI *Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine*, national anniversary events took place in Washington, DC on July 22-23 in the USDA Whitten Building. An estimated 200 participants attended the Progress and Promise themed events to celebrate ALRI’s past successes and look to the future for ways to maintain the momentum needed to achieve the eight million acre restoration goal. On July 22, NFWF held a press event to announce 2014 Longleaf Stewardship Fund grant awards. Undersecretary of Agriculture Robert Bonnie participated in the event, as well as executives from the Southern Company and International Paper. Afterwards, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack hosted a one-hour panel discussion with USDA-FS Chief Tom Tidwell. The final event of the day was a reception and awards event hosted by Chief Tidwell and Chief Weller of

NRCS. On July 23, Undersecretary Bonnie convened a core group of NGOs to discuss restoration needs for years 6-10 and ways to increase longleaf restoration activities on private lands in the face of declining budgets.

2014 Longleaf Stewardship Fund

NFWF awarded more than \$3.38 million in grants through the Longleaf Stewardship Fund to further restoration of the longleaf ecosystem in 2014. Fifteen projects across eight states were selected to receive funding that will ultimately reforest nearly 12,000 acres and enhance over 116,000 acres of longleaf pine habitat, while leveraging over \$3.8 million in additional funds from grant partners.

Society of American Foresters - 2013 Convention and Longleaf Partnership Council Meeting

The Fall Longleaf Partnership Council meeting was held in Charleston, SC on October 22-23 in conjunction with the Society of American Foresters (SAF) Annual Conference. It was the final meeting for numerous members whose seats rotated off the Council, including Catherine Rideout (East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture), Wayne Bell (International Forestry), Lisa Samuelson (Auburn University), and Roel Lopez (Texas A&M University). The importance of the contributions of these members during the formative years of the Council cannot be overstated. In Council leadership roles, Vice-Chair Mike Black (National Bobwhite Quail Initiative) moved up to assume the Chair role. Vernon Compton (Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership) relinquished the Chair role to assume the Past-Chair position, and Kevin McIntyre (Jones Ecological Research Center) was approved as the new Vice-Chair.

After the Longleaf Partnership Council meeting, many members stayed to take part in the SAF Conference, where the Council hosted a panel session entitled America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative - Restoring the Native Southeastern Pine Forest. Presentations included: Overview of ALRI and the Longleaf Partnership Council (Vernon Compton), National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Longleaf Stewardship Fund (Clay Ware, USFWS), Longleaf Restoration Assessment: Conservation Outcomes & Performance Metrics (Kevin McIntyre), Longleaf Restoration Delivery - One Landowner at a Time (Luke Lewis, National Wild Turkey Federation), Iconic Landscape Evolution: Longleaf Pine Conservation in the Seewee-to-Santee Landscape (Eric Krueger, The Nature Conservancy), and Expanding Longleaf Restoration & Prescribed Fire in the NC Sandhills (Ryan Elting, The Nature Conservancy).

Since 2012, the Longleaf Stewardship Fund has invested \$9.54 million in projects to reforest more than 35,000 acres of longleaf pine and improve more than 380,000 acres of existing longleaf habitat for the native species that rely on it. The 2014 grants continue to build on the success of this public-private partnership and ALRI, further expanding the restoration of the longleaf pine ecosystem through collaborative and results-oriented actions.

2014 Forestland Stewards Stakeholder Forum

International Paper and NFWF hosted the first Forestland Stewards Stakeholder Forum on September 11-12, 2014 in Charleston, South Carolina. More than 80 representatives from federal and state agencies, NGOs and private companies attended. The event provided an opportunity for NFWF and IP to engage stakeholders to increase communication and knowledge sharing, expand public-private cooperation, and enhance ALRI's effectiveness in supporting shared priorities, including restoring and enhancing longleaf pine.

Coordination of Land Acquisition and Easement Opportunities

The Longleaf Partnership Council supported an effort to identify top protection priorities for longleaf pine across the historic range of longleaf pine. The Nature Conservancy, along with The Conservation Fund and the Trust for Public Land, collaborated to develop a comprehensive assemblage of top protection priorities across the nine-state range. With coordination and input from Local Implementation Teams, State Coordination Teams, National Wildlife Refuges, National Forests, and state agencies as key partners in this process, this effort resulted in a database that identified 3.6 million acres of priority lands within the longleaf range that could be acquired or protected through easements. The database can be queried to yield a variety of results based on potential funding streams (Land and Water Conservation Fund, DoD's Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative, RESTORE Act, etc.) and also based on protection opportunity (conservation easement, fee title, willing seller, etc.).

This effort also yielded the previously mentioned *Longleaf Pine: Protecting and Restoring an American Treasure* marketing document that can be used with funding agencies or legislators to build a stronger case for funding to protect longleaf forests. This document summarizes all of the Local Implementation Teams and the SGAs where they are working to restore and protect longleaf pine forests. It includes select activities of interest, identifies partners involved, and illustrates some key benefits that these partner activities are providing for wildlife, military readiness, water quality, and other environmental services.

Gulf Coast Restoration Update

The Longleaf Partnership Council formed a Gulf Recovery Technical Team in 2013. This Team continued to engage in the Gulf recovery process to advance conservation/restoration of longleaf pine forests through RESTORE Act funding. The Gulf Recovery Team identified opportunities to overlay work with State partners in Florida, Mississippi, and Alabama to develop a better understanding of longleaf related project proposals that are underway. The USDA-FS and NRCS are taking the lead to coordinate several longleaf restoration proposals linked to coastal recovery. Approximately \$170 million will be available to fund the first round of projects in November 2014.



Angelina National Forest, credit Clay Ware

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

RCPP was authorized under the new Farm Bill to promote coordination between the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and its partners in delivering conservation assistance to producers and landowners. RCPP funding is allocated across three categories; Critical Conservation Areas (CCA), National, and State. The longleaf pine range was one of eight landscapes to receive CCA designation by the Secretary of Agriculture. In January 2015, USDA announced that two projects - the Conservation Fund (Coastal Headwaters) and the US Endowment for Forestry and Communities - totaling \$17 million, were approved in the longleaf pine CCA. In the State level category, two entities were selected for longleaf-related projects - the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the Virginia Department of Forestry.

Summary and Discussion

The various public and private sector partners involved in ALRI accomplished over 1.55 million acres of on-the-ground activities to further the conservation of longleaf pine in 2014. The reported accomplishments represent an increase of about 13% from the 2013 totals. Much of this increase can be attributed to improved reporting from the involved partners, an area in which there is an ongoing need for continued improvement. An estimated \$118 million of public and private sector funds were utilized in 2014 to achieve this success.

Approximately 69% of the reported work occurred within the 18 SGAs, due largely to the accomplishments that occurred on the public lands that anchor these areas. The number of Local Implementation Teams expanded to 17 through the addition of teams in Southeastern Virginia and in the Southern Low Country/ACE Basin of South Carolina, and these Teams now provide coverage to all 18 of the identified SGAs across the range. These expanded collaborative efforts provide the prospect of generating greater longleaf restoration results in the future, particularly on private lands.

Public vs. Private Lands

Approximately 77% of the overall 2014 accomplishments occurred on public lands (1.22 million acres), with NFS lands and military installations continuing to be the primary contributor to overall accomplishment acreage. Prescribed burning accounted for 87% of the accomplishment acres on public land.

Of the 23% of overall accomplishments reported on private land, longleaf establishment made up one-third of the reported acres. Estimates from 2012 indicate that private lands contain 61% of the current longleaf-dominated forest acres, while public lands hold the remaining 39%. While all acreage of private land accomplishments are certainly not being captured due to under-reporting or the lack of tracking of some activities (i.e. acres of prescribed fire or over-story thinning), there continues to be a wide disparity in the restoration work needed to maintain and improve existing longleaf pine forests on private lands.

Prescribed Burning

An impressive 1.22 million acres of prescribed burning in longleaf pine ecosystems was reported in 2014. This meets 85% of the overall ALRI *Strategic Priorities and Actions 2013-2015* short-term goal of 1.43 million acres for prescribed burning (Figure 7).

Prescribed burning in longleaf forests on public lands was just over one million acres in 2014, which falls just short of ALRI's short-term annual public lands goals. Overall, prescribed fire is being applied on public lands across nearly three million acres of potential longleaf pine ecosystems on various multiple-year rotations.

A total of 180,160 acres of prescribed burning was reported on private lands in 2014, which represents only 64% of ALRI's short-term goals for private lands. The private land short-term goals were developed based on prescribed fire application on a 2-3 year rotation across 20-25% of the private longleaf-dominated forest acres (2.87 million acres). When considering prescribed fire application across both private lands and public lands, the current 1.22 million acres of prescribed fire activities represents only 53% of ALRI's projected long-term need of 2.3 million acres/year, with most of the additional acres needed on private lands.

Longleaf Establishment

An estimated 153,039 acres of longleaf establishment occurred in 2014, exceeding the short-term annual ALRI goals. A total of 122,254 (80%) of establishment acres were reported on private lands. ALRI's short-term goals were developed to achieve a desired annual net increase in overall longleaf pine forests of 100,000 acres. If these net increases are realized, it is estimated that overall longleaf pine forest acres will approach 1970 levels by 2020 (Figure 8).

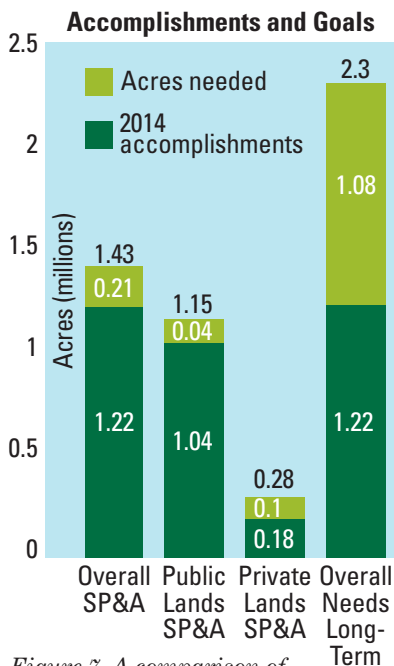


Figure 7. A comparison of 2014 prescribed burning accomplishments with the Strategic Priorities and Actions 2013-2015 short-term annual goals and the long-term prescribed burning needs across all longleaf pine acres.

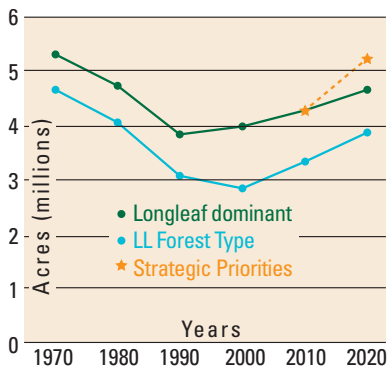


Figure 8. Trends for longleaf dominant and longleaf pine forest types from 1970-2010 and 2020 projections for longleaf dominant forest type. Note: Longleaf dominant includes both longleaf and longleaf/oak forest types. (Source: USDA-FS, *Forest Inventory and Analysis, Forest Inventory Online Reports*, August 2013).



credit Katherine Taylor

Broadening the Resource Base

Various opportunities to expand sources of funding continue to be pursued. One of the most promising opportunities is the effort to integrate the restoration of longleaf pine forests into the overall Gulf Coast restoration work as part of the RESTORE Act and penalties resulting from Deep Water Horizon oil spill settlements. The longleaf landscape is a highlighted priority in the newly authorized Regional Conservation Partnership Program and efforts to develop projects in all three funding pools (National, CCA, State) will be pursued in the future by ALRI partners. The Longleaf Stewardship Fund continues to grow, attracting new corporate sponsors.

The Longleaf Stewardship Fund is a key resource in supporting and sustaining the collaborative work of Local Implementation Teams. The ALRI partnership will continue to look for successful long-term opportunities to engage large acreage landowners in conservation of longleaf pine on private lands.

Recommendations

Based upon the findings, the following are priority focus areas for the ALRI partnership in 2015-16:

- Continue to emphasize improving and maintaining the existing 4.7 million acres of longleaf pine forests by increasing the acreage of prescribed burning and other improvement activities on private lands, while maintaining or increasing the current level of effort on public lands.
- Continue efforts to increase the capacity and coordination of private landowner technical assistance and outreach, including further refining of economics tools and identifying additional incentives for increasing the involvement of medium and large private landowners in the longleaf restoration effort.
- Support range-wide and Local Implementation Team planning and mapping efforts to enhance ALRI's ability to prioritize and implement restoration actions within these landscapes, identify new funding and conservation opportunities, track and monitor changes in the longleaf pine forests condition classes, and better inform future accomplishment reporting.
- Continue to seek increased corporate and other private funding through the Longleaf Stewardship Fund and pursue opportunities to incorporate longleaf restoration into Gulf Coast RESTORE Act recovery efforts.
- Continue to seek ways to improve longleaf reporting mechanisms for annual accomplishments, particularly for prescribed fire.
- Develop *Strategic Priorities and Actions 2016-2018* to identify and prioritize short-term recovery activities and goals for 2016-2018.

2016-2018 Priority Needs/Looking Ahead

In 2012, the Longleaf Partnership Council developed *Strategic Priorities and Action 2013-2015* as a step-down document to guide activities and identify focal areas more broadly defined in the *Range-Wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine*. The goals of the document are to:

- Recommend strategic priorities and actions needed during the three year period to move ALRI toward reaching the restoration goals in the Plan.
- Provide outreach information to interested parties that describes the partnership and its work.
- Provide mechanisms to demonstrate progress and measure accomplishments.
- Affirm the current roles and contributions of the various individual agencies and organizations.

The four specific items identified in *Strategic Priorities and Action 2013-2015* formed the basis for evaluating and reporting accomplishments in this *2014 Range-wide Accomplishment Report*.



Looking forward, a committee has been established and is currently developing *Strategic Priorities and Action 2016-2018* to continue this focused approach at recognizing more immediate needs and setting short-term goals that support the *Range-wide Conservation Plan*. Focusing on specific action items not only facilitates increasing overall acreage of longleaf pine and improving conditions of existing longleaf pine ecosystems, it also lays the groundwork for even greater advances toward ALRI goals by improving outreach, coordinating on-the-ground restoration activities, and expanding the resource base to broaden the scope and efficiency of our activities.

2014 Accomplishment Report Team

The development of this report required contributions and a lot of work from many partners at the regional and state level. The Report Team would like to thank all those who took the time to compile and draft accomplishment estimates and narratives for the report. The Team thanks the leadership of the Longleaf Partnership Council, the ALRI Communication Team, and the staff at USFWS for assistance in drafting, editing, layout, and printing of the report.

Regional Coordinators (Leads)

Glen Gaines, US Forest Service
Clay Ware, US Fish and Wildlife Service

State Coordination Team Leads

Brian van Eerden, The Nature Conservancy - Virginia
Hank McKinley, Alabama Forestry Commission
Anna Stout, North Carolina Forest Service
Jim Hancock, Mississippi Forestry Commission
Russell Hubright, South Carolina Forestry Commission
Bonnie Stine, Florida Forest Service
Scott Griffin, Georgia Forestry Commission
Todd Nightingale, Texas A&M Forest Service
David Campbell, Louisiana Department of Forestry

State Coordination Team: 2014 Accomplishment Report Summary Tables

Category	Performance Measures														TOTAL		
	Longleaf Establishment		Prescribed Burning		Mid-story Treatments		Understory Establishment		NNIS Treatments		Overstory Treatments		Acquisition/ Easements		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	597	579	45,583	27,664	0	0	0	0	190	190	33	0	0	0	46,403	28,433	
Louisiana	3,280	3,280	123,534	121,600	1,955	1,955	0	0	45	45	7,717	7,717	480	480	137,011	135,077	
Mississippi	570	314	92,252	89,515	8,804	8,094	25	25	645	620	2,437	2,437	1,540	1,540	106,273	102,545	
Alabama	2,259	1,558	61,985	59,144	1,703	1,703	47	43	1,926	956	2,253	2,253	0	0	70,173	65,657	
Florida	19,112	16,683	476,024	348,919	11,203	3,872	458	39	29,231	2,351	9,708	8,072	21,144	21,144	566,880	401,080	
Georgia	4,211	2,315	79,652	62,612	2,433	1,696	126	80	1,304	1,225	1,954	1,213	1,410	1,410	91,090	70,551	
South Carolina	1,794	591	64,069	51,946	2,705	742	51	51	2,474	2,418	2,335	2,310	12	12	73,440	58,070	
North Carolina	1,208	1,208	92,938	90,940	1,575	1,355	212	110	112	87	3,170	2,457	1,690	1,683	100,905	97,840	
Virginia	95	0	755	0	75	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	925	0	
Total Public Lands	33,126	26,528	1,036,792	852,340	30,453	19,417	919	348	35,927	7,892	29,607	26,459	26,276	26,269	1,193,100	959,253	
Private Lands																	
Texas	1,783	1,385	4,847	4,390	1,350	1,012	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,785	4,785	12,765	11,572	
Louisiana	1,305	110	11,314	1,596	201	0	40	0	65	0	261	0	280	280	13,466	1,986	
Mississippi	4,531	1,551	6,813	1,888	505	80	168	112	19	19	3,653	9	0	0	15,689	3,659	
Alabama	19,537	4,086	76,859	9,453	4,486	620	1,166	515	1,844	202	1,954	1,595	0	0	105,846	16,471	
Florida	2,530	0	5,803	283	665	140	265	0	489	60	250	0	0	0	10,002	483	
Georgia	18,523	9,503	31,277	4,785	3,985	1,127	6,565	2,333	1,501	12	3,884	604	3,240	2,894	68,975	21,258	
South Carolina	14,375	1,189	19,532	8,576	2,361	573	2,253	941	721	211	1,395	211	5,574	4,925	46,211	16,626	
North Carolina	10,068	7,755	22,163	21,563	3,413	3,267	366	271	105	104	1,460	1,266	1,421	1,421	38,996	35,647	
Virginia	761	0	1,552	0	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	2,360	0	
Projected	46,500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	46,500	0	
Total Private Lands	119,913	25,579	180,160	52,534	16,998	6,819	10,823	4,172	4,744	608	12,857	3,685	15,315	14,305	360,810	107,702	
Grand Total - All Lands	153,039	52,107	1,216,952	904,874	47,451	26,236	11,742	4,520	40,671	8,500	42,464	30,144	41,591	40,574	1,553,910	1,066,955	

State Coordination Team: 2014 Accomplishment Report Summary Tables

Ownership Category	Performance Measures														TOTAL		
	Longleaf		Prescribed Burning		Mid-story		Native Understory		NINIS Treatments		Overstory		Acquisition/		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	Acres	Acres in SGA	
Public Lands																	
National Forest System - (USDA Forest Service)	14,627	14,431	518,718	499,719	10,425	10,425	90	87	4,658	3,688	16,803	16,803	0	0	565,321	545,153	
Savannah River Site - (USDA Forest Service)	548	548	9,019	9,019	235	235	51	51	583	583	1,332	1,332	0	0	11,768	11,768	
National Wildlife Refuges - (USFWS)	633	5	44,783	38,907	664	190	92	0	106	50	963	963	12	12	47,253	40,127	
Military Installations - (DoD)	6,526	5,749	271,355	218,088	9,770	7,478	164	117	1,777	1,643	6,603	5,783	24,094	24,094	320,289	262,952	
National Park Service Lands	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
State Forests	4,217	2,416	68,379	25,739	110	0	3	3	1,345	632	211	162	0	0	74,265	28,952	
State WMAs	2,589	225	96,264	34,486	8,610	555	509	80	26,452	290	3,524	1,328	1,819	1,812	139,767	38,776	
Other State/Local Lands	1,980	1,148	3,801	3,143	295	190	0	0	42	42	121	88	351	351	6,590	4,962	
Longleaf Stewardship Fund Projects (NFWF)	2,006	2,006	24,473	23,239	344	344	10	10	964	964	50	0	0	0	27,847	26,563	
Total Public Lands	33,126	26,528	1,036,792	852,340	30,453	19,417	919	348	35,927	7,892	29,607	26,459	26,276	26,269	1,193,100	959,253	
Private Lands																	
State Forestry Agencies	3,828	2,575	761	436	140	0	0	0	0	0	60	60	4,785	4,785	9,574	7,856	
State Wildlife Agencies	2,853	0	3,910	0	577	480	0	0	64	0	0	0	0	0	7,404	480	
WHIP - (NRCS)	10,906	4,359	46,041	2,563	4,137	733	3,572	2,062	9	9	647	139	0	0	65,312	9,865	
EQIP (NRCS)	28,416	5,721	32,583	1,707	3,631	626	166	38	868	51	1,297	405	3,589	2,594	70,550	11,142	
NRCS Total	39,322	10,080	78,624	4,270	7,768	1,359	3,738	2,100	877	60	1,944	544	3,589	2,594	135,862	21,007	
Conservation Reserve Program (Farm Service Agency)	11,417	3,303	11,381	2,401	1,463	237	5,500	1,068	3,067	2	7,927	1,765	0	0	40,755	8,776	
Emergency Forestry																	
Conservation Reserve Program (Farm Service Agency)	45	45	279	279	0	0	112	112	0	0	0	0	0	0	436	436	
Other Public Funded	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	15	0	
Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (USFWS)	3,595	1,951	5,559	3,613	2,234	1,463	35	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	11,423	7,062	
Corporate Land - private funds	2,812	2,109	15,937	3,800	467	0	5	0	2	2	50	0	300	300	19,573	6,211	
NGO Programs - private funds	2,203	1,848	10,720	7,098	648	415	220	220	135	70	676	606	2,101	2,101	16,703	12,358	
Private Landowners - private funds	5,290	2,938	25,939	9,185	1,876	1,576	684	116	300	175	2,000	660	4,525	4,525	40,614	19,175	
Longleaf Stewardship Fund Projects (NFWF)	2,048	730	27,050	21,452	1,825	1,289	529	521	299	299	200	50	0	0	31,951	24,341	
Projected Private Landowners	46,500														46,500	0	
Total Private Lands	119,913	25,579	180,160	52,534	16,998	6,819	10,823	4,172	4,744	608	12,857	3,685	15,315	14,305	360,810	107,702	
Grand Total - All Lands	153,039	52,107	1,216,952	904,874	47,451	26,236	11,742	4,520	40,671	8,500	42,464	30,144	41,591	40,574	1,553,910	1,066,955	

Longleaf Partnership Council



credit Jack Culpepper