



**AMERICA'S LONGLEAF RESTORATION INITIATIVE**

# **2013 RANGE-WIDE ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT**



2013 Piney Woods Project, Mississippi Forestry Association

**Longleaf Partnership Council**

**February 2014**



[americaslongleaf.org](http://americaslongleaf.org)

## MESSAGE FROM VERNON COMPTON, LONGLEAF ALLIANCE 2013 CHAIR OF THE LONGLEAF PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL

In 2011, conservation leaders across the southeast created the Longleaf Partnership Council (the Council) to promote effective communication and collaboration between the numerous partners working to conserve longleaf pine ecosystems. The Council consists of 33 members representing federal agencies, state agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs), private industry, universities, and private landowners. Together the many partners have provided the needed leadership and a growing synergism to advance the restoration and management goals identified in the *Range-Wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine*. The Council also identified capturing and reporting restoration progress as priorities.

The dedicated work of public and private partners that began in earnest in the 1980s and continues today has for the first time resulted in halting the century's long decline of longleaf pine forests (Figure 1). Reversing the long decline that had occurred with longleaf forests across the range has not occurred without tremendous effort and investment of resources by those in both the public and private sector. Increased funding has played a pivotal role in reversing the decline, allowing much more on-the-ground work to be accomplished with landowners. It is also providing much needed support for the establishment of more local implementation teams. These local teams foster the same increased communication and collaboration that the Council does at the range-wide level. That translates into more education, outreach, and technical assistance provided to landowners, more longleaf planted across the range, and more management actions such as prescribed fire completed across the range.

In this report the Council partners share with you an amazing turnaround for the longleaf pine forests that once dominated the southeastern United States. The good news is that the turnaround includes not only an increase of acres planted with longleaf pine, but other key elements of recovering the longleaf ecosystem through needed management actions such as prescribed fire and invasive species control. Thank you to all of the partners, landowners, resource managers, and supporters that are working together and contributing to bringing back this iconic southern species, the majestic longleaf pine. Your efforts are truly making a difference as evidenced by the progress detailed in this report. Let's continue this momentum we have built together for the recovery of the longleaf forests so that future generations will again behold the forests that once stretched across the Southeast from Texas to Virginia.



Vernon Compton, 2013 Chair.

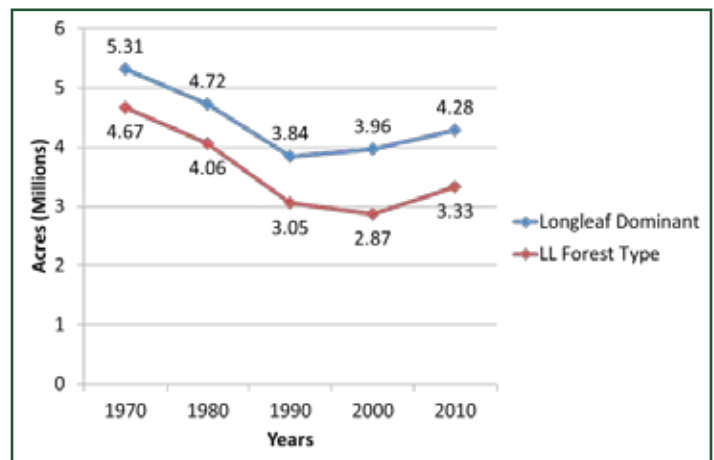


Figure 1. The trends in longleaf dominant and longleaf pine forest type from 1970 to 2010. (Source: USDA Forest Service, Forest Inventory and Analysis, Forest Inventory Online State Reports, August 2013.) Note: Longleaf Dominant includes both longleaf forest type and longleaf/oak forest type.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Longleaf pine forests once covered 90 million acres from Virginia to Texas. These forests provide world class habitat for a large number of native plants and animals, provide valuable forest economic opportunities for landowners, and are well adapted and more resistant to catastrophic loss from fire, storm events, and forest pests. In addition, longleaf forests offer compatible land uses for military training and testing that are important to national defense. For a variety of reasons longleaf forests declined to roughly 3 million acres by the late 1990s. Diverse public and private partners began working in earnest in the 1980s and are continuing today to restore longleaf pine forests back to the southern landscape. These efforts have halted the century long decline in longleaf pine and resulted in increasing trends over the past decade.

The *Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine* was released in 2009 and established an ambitious goal to increase longleaf pine forests to 8 million acres and improve the conditions of existing longleaf pine forests. Since the release of the Conservation Plan, a strong partnership of agencies and organizations has coalesced around longleaf conservation in an effort referred to as the America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative (ALRI). Achieving the restoration goals laid out in the Conservation Plan requires annually sustaining extraordinary levels of on-the-ground work. In 2011 the Council formed to provide the overall leadership for ALRI and provide a forum for communication among the partners.

The Council approved moving forward with this *2013 Range-wide Accomplishment Report* to communicate the restoration work collectively accomplished by the partners involved in ALRI. This is the first range-wide comprehensive look at the annual restoration work that is occurring to bring back the iconic longleaf pine forest to the South. This report illustrates the scale of the on-the-ground work that is occurring, shows how public and private funds are being leveraged, and measures how the partnership's strategic priorities are being accomplished in moving toward achieving the 8 million acre longleaf restoration goal identified in the Conservation Plan.

### Findings

The partners involved in the ALRI accomplished a remarkable 1.38 million acres of longleaf restoration work (planting, prescribed burning, mid-story treatments, etc.) in FY2013 and the collaborative partnership grew as the number of local implementation teams expanded to 15 and now cover all the identified Significant Geographic Areas (SGAs) across the range. These expanded teams and their members provide the prospect of generating even greater longleaf restoration results in the future, particularly on private lands. The teams increase collaboration among the local partners within the SGAs and provide additional capacity to share resources, conduct conservation planning and mapping, and increase outreach to private landowners.

### Prescribed Burning

At 1.1 million acres, the prescribed burning accomplishments are impressive, and nearly meet ALRI's overall annual goal for prescribed burning for all ownerships. Accomplishments on public lands are nearly in line with the overall annual goals, while much work is needed to increase prescribed burning on private lands.



## **Longleaf Establishment**

The estimated 156,000 acres established in 2013 exceeds the near-term annual goals for ALRI, with the large majority (86%) of these accomplishments occurring on private lands. The partnership will need to continue monitoring the net increases or decreases in overall longleaf pine acreages to gauge the desired annual longleaf pine establishment goal.

## **Accomplishments in Significant Geographic Areas**

Approximately 70% of the overall accomplishments occurred within the SGAs, which complements the goals for these priority landscapes as envisioned in the Conservation Plan. Approximately 79% of the prescribed burning and 51% of the other improvement activities (mid-story treatments, invasive species treatments, and native understory plant establishment) are being accomplished in the SGAs. The accomplishments in the SGAs are primarily due to the impressive work occurring on the public lands that anchor these landscapes.

## **Private versus Public Lands**

Some 77% of the overall accomplishments occurred on public lands, with prescribed burning on National Forest System lands and military installations being a primary driver. The remaining 23% of the overall work took place on private lands, which contain 61% of the overall longleaf pine acreage.

## **Broadening the Resource Base**

While federal partners continue to be the major source of funding for longleaf restoration, substantial progress is being made in attracting non-federal funds with \$8 million in non-federal matching funds to the Longleaf Stewardship Fund (LSF) in the past two years and an additional multi-year Forestland Stewards Initiative getting underway. Enhanced collaboration among federal agencies is expected to result in successful proposals to the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), while opportunities to contribute to Gulf Coast restoration are being aggressively pursued.

## **Recommendations**

Based upon the findings, the following are areas of priority for the ALRI partnership to focus on in 2014-15:

- Place emphasis on increasing the acreage of prescribed burning and other improvement activities on private lands.
- Increase the capacity and coordination of private landowner technical assistance and outreach. Explore the economics and incentives for increasing the involvement of medium and large private landowners in the longleaf restoration effort.
- Continue to support the local implementation teams and the development of SGA conservation planning and mapping efforts.
- Incorporate processes for tracking and monitoring changes in the condition classes for longleaf pine forests, which includes the release of longleaf maintenance condition class definitions.
- Complete the ongoing coordinated effort to identify and map range-wide land protection priorities for longleaf pine. The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, Trust for Public Land, and the local implementation teams are working to develop this product.
- Continue to increase corporate and other private funding through the LSF and pursue opportunities for longleaf restoration to contribute to Gulf Coast recovery efforts.

## 2013 RANGE-WIDE ACCOMPLISHMENT RESULTS

The Council members approved moving forward with this *2013 Range-wide Accomplishment Report* to communicate the annual restoration work accomplishments by both public and private sources. The Council identified four overarching priorities in the *America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative Strategic Priorities and Actions 2013-2015*, and this report measures how the overall partnership is achieving these priority actions. This report covers accomplishments between October 1, 2012, and September 30, 2013, compiled by nine State Coordination Teams. The report provides the Council and its individual members with a venue to communicate the scale of the on-the-ground work, illustrate how public/private funds are being leveraged, and measure how the partnership's strategic priorities are being accomplished in moving toward achieving the 8-million-acre longleaf restoration goal identified in the *Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine*.

In 2013, public and private sector partners completed 1.38 million acres of on-the-ground activities to bring back longleaf pine forests across the South. Restoration activities included tree planting, prescribed burning, mid-story treatments, invasive species control, over-story treatments, establishment of native groundcover, and land acquisition. Some 70% (966,000 acres) of these total accomplishments occurred within the 18 identified SGAs across the range (Figure 2) where local collaborative efforts are underway. Over half (54%) of the accomplishments occurred in the central portion of the range (Georgia, Florida, and Alabama), with 25% occurring in the western states (Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas) and 21% occurring in the east (South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia) (Figure 3). A large majority (77%) of the overall accomplishments occurred on public lands, with National Forest System (NFS) lands and military installations being the primary sites (Figure 4).

An estimated \$77 million was expended for longleaf restoration work in 2013, with 68% provided from public funds and 32% from private sources. Most of the support for longleaf restoration (approximately 77%) came from well-established natural resource programs for both public and private lands. These include hazardous fire fuels treatment programs (for prescribed burning and mid-story treatments), forest management/silviculture programs (for over-story improvements, longleaf establishment, and



Figure 2. The 18 recognized Significant Geographic Areas for longleaf pine in 2013.

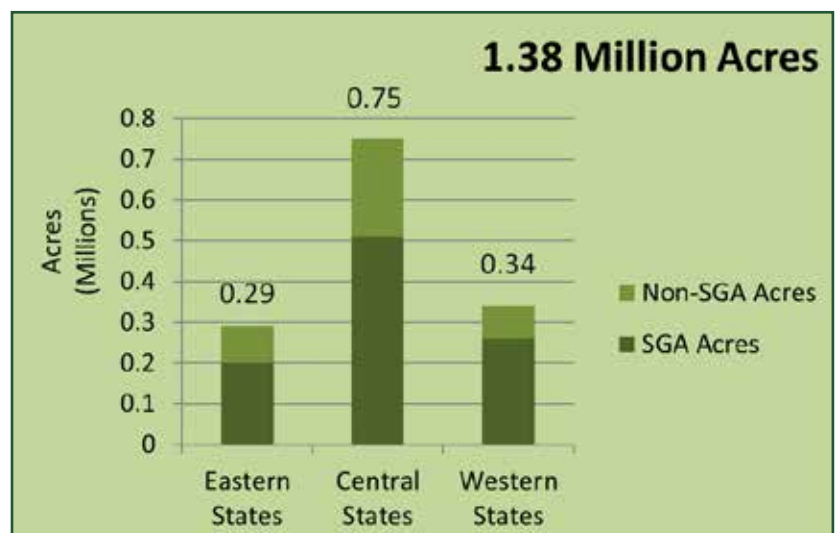


Figure 3. The distribution of overall longleaf work accomplishments stratified by state groups and Significant Geographic Areas for 2013.

invasive species treatments), wildlife habitat improvement programs, and programs to improve military readiness and national security. Longleaf restoration aligns well with the objectives of all these programs. Programs that specifically target longleaf restoration, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) – Longleaf Pine Initiative, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) longleaf cost/share program, and the LSF, comprise about 23% of the overall expenditures and are critical to addressing priority needs on private lands within the SGAs.

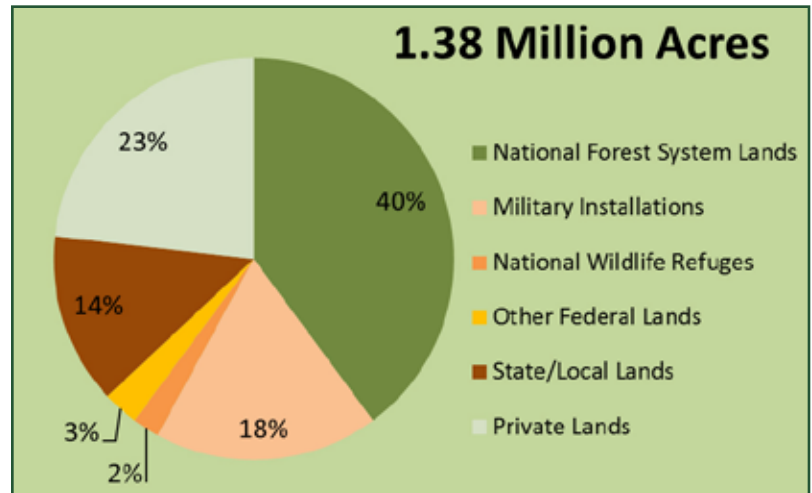


Figure 4. The overall range-wide accomplishments for longleaf pine stratified by ownership category for 2013.

The Federal agency partners contributed significantly to the overall accomplishments on both public and private lands. In 2010, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by the Departments of Agriculture (USDA), Defense (DoD), and Interior (DOI) committing the signatories to achieving the goals in the Conservation Plan. The MOU established the Federal Coordinating Committee (FCC), which actively works to coordinate and leverage compatible federal programs toward achieving the restoration goals of the Conservation Plan and to support ongoing partnership efforts.

### Strategic Priority 1. Significantly Increase Acres Established in Longleaf Pine

In its *Strategic Priorities and Actions* (2012), the Council identified as a goal increasing longleaf pine acres to 4.73 million acres (a net increase of 308,000 acres from the 2012 State baseline estimates) by 2015. To achieve this, the Council identified an annual longleaf establishment goal of 105,000 to 130,000 acres, with 75% of these acres projected to occur on private lands.

**A total of 156,800 acres of longleaf pine establishment is estimated range-wide in 2013 (Figure 5). The estimate is based upon nursery reports that 113 million longleaf seedlings were produced (Enebak, Scott. 2013 Auburn University Southern Forest Nursery Cooperative Report). The State Coordination Teams reports provide detailed information on about half of these acres (84,088 acres). It is estimated that 134,455 acres (86%) were established on private lands and 16% of the accomplishments occurred within the SGAs.**

The Farm Bill programs administered by the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) accounted for 26% of the accomplishments and state forestry and wildlife agency programs accounted for 8%. Around 46% of the establishment acres are projected to be occurring on private lands outside of public cost/share programs. Additional efforts are needed to improve information on establishment acres occurring on private lands that are not involved in publicly funded cost/share programs.

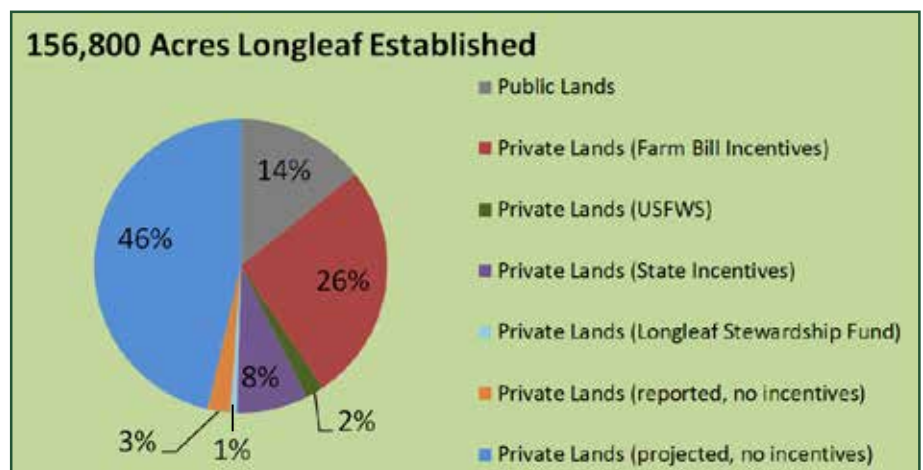


Figure 5. The total acres of longleaf pine established range-wide and stratified by ownership category in 2013.

USDA - NRCS and several federal, state and local organizations are working together to help private landowners create and restore habitat for the gopher tortoise through the Working Lands for Wildlife program. In 2013, NRCS reported over 18,000 acres of habitat improvements for this program.

Named for its burrowing habits, the gopher tortoise is a key-stone species in longleaf pine ecosystems from southeastern Louisiana to southwestern South Carolina. One excited landowner is sixth generation Georgian Reese Thompson, who believes it's his responsibility to help bring back the state's natural landscape.

"My mission in life is to restore the habitat to the way it was before man got here and changed it," Thompson said.

Through Working Lands for Wildlife, Thompson recently planted 200 acres of longleaf pine and did a controlled burn on 1,000 acres. Controlled burning helps improve the habitat by maintaining an open canopy and providing diverse ground vegetation—both needed by the tortoise. He is also restoring native wiregrass, one of the gopher tortoise's favorite foods, to his land.

By Ciji Taylor, NRCS



## Strategic Priority 2. Improve and Maintain Existing Longleaf Pine Ecosystems

Critical to the success of the range-wide effort is maintaining and improving existing longleaf pine ecosystems. This requires expanded use of prescribed burning, especially on private lands, and incorporating other treatments to improve the over-story, mid-story, and native plant understory conditions. It is projected that by 2015, there will be approximately 4.73 million acres of longleaf pine range-wide, with 61% and 39% occurring on private and public lands respectively.

### Prescribed Burning

The Council adopted a goal of increasing prescribed burning in longleaf ecosystems on private lands by between 280,000 to 360,000 acres and on public lands by between 1.1 to 1.4 million acres, for an overall goal of 1.38 to 1.76 million acres by 2015.

**In 2013, 1.1 million acres of prescribed burning were reported in longleaf pine ecosystems for all ownerships. Approximately 966,000 acres (87%) of prescribed burning occurred on public lands, primarily NFS lands and military installations (Figure 6.). An additional 135,000 acres (13%) were reported on private lands. Seventy-nine percent of the prescribed burning accomplishments occurred within the 18 SGAs.**



Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP) team member conducting prescribed burning on portion of the 175,000 acres accomplished within the Eglin/Blackwater/Conecuh SGA in Florida and Alabama for 2013.

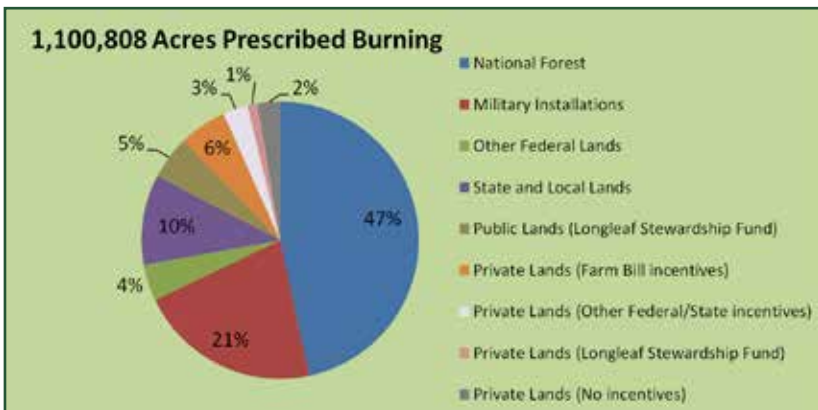


Figure 6. The total acres of prescribed burning accomplishments in longleaf pine ecosystems stratified by ownership categories for 2013.



The Northern Bobwhite, once common across the South, has seen severe declines in populations. This species will benefit greatly from the optimal habitat that the restored longleaf ecosystem provides.

### Other Longleaf Improvement Activities

In addition to the critical use of fire, a variety of additional treatments are required to accelerate the improvement of the conditions of longleaf pine ecosystems. Decades of fire suppression have led to degraded conditions for many of the remaining acres of longleaf pine. Without additional treatments, the restoration of the over-story, mid-story, and native understory conditions would take many years with the use of fire alone.

**In 2013, partners involved in the restoration effort accomplished 75,188 acres of additional activities to improve the structure and composition of longleaf pine forests (Figure 7). Fifty-one percent of these accomplishments occurred within the 18 SGAs and 68% were on public lands.**

More specifically, accomplishments include 23,632 acres of mid-story treatments, 14,391 acres of treatments of non-native invasive plant species, 33,084 acres of over-story thinning, and 4,081 acres of native understory plant establishment.

National Forest System (NFS) Lands provide important “anchors” in 12 of the 18 SGAs and maintain significant acreages of the remaining longleaf pine ecosystems. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) contributed significant accomplishments in 2013 for longleaf pine with over 551,000 acres treated on NFS lands (90% occurring in SGAs).

For example, the Osceola National Forest is implementing its 10-year Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project, “Accelerating Longleaf Pine Restoration in Northeast Florida.” In 2013 the Osceola prescribe burned 21,256 acres, thinned 1,588 acres, pre-commercially thinned 741 acres, established 2,158 acres of longleaf pine, and chopped 1,047 acres of palmetto to improve native understory conditions. These treatments also greatly reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire, an important objective in the Osceola/Okefenokee SGA.



Area before treatment of palmetto, Osceola NF.



Area after treatment of palmetto and prescribed burn, Osceola NF.

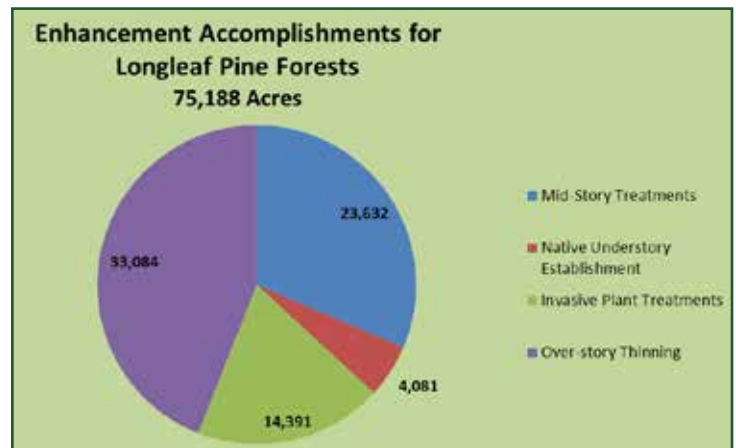


Figure 7. The total acres of the range-wide accomplishments for treatments of mid-story treatments, native understory establishment, non-native invasive plant species treatments, and over-story thinning for 2013.





A partnership between the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas, USDA-NRCS, and Cook's Branch Conservancy grows plugs of Pinehill Bluestem (left) for transfer to production fields. Seed for this project were collected from the Angelina National Forest (right), providing a local seed source for longleaf understory restoration projects.

### **Strategic Priority 3. Enhance the Ability to Successfully Implement Restoration Actions**

Restoring longleaf pine ecosystems effectively requires extensive collaboration of the public and private partners involved in ALRI. To this end, 2013 saw an impressive expansion of outreach efforts, training opportunities, and management tools made available for natural resource managers and landowners. Contributions toward this expansion came from a variety of dedicated professionals, including academia, dedicated local implementation teams and state coordination teams, and members of the Council. Some examples of the accomplishments made in enhancing longleaf pine restoration capabilities are described below.

#### **9<sup>th</sup> Longleaf Alliance Biennial Conference**

The Longleaf Alliance's Biennial Conference took place on October 23-26, 2012 in Nacogdoches, Texas. The conference was well attended by private landowners and involved federal/state agencies and non-government organizations. Robert Abernethy was introduced as the new President of the Alliance. The local implementation teams and the Council hosted concurrent sessions. These biennial conferences have been key in bringing resource professionals and private landowners together to hear about the opportunities and learn the latest news related to longleaf restoration.

#### **Longleaf Planting Density Guidance**

Appropriate planting densities for longleaf pine have been the subject of debate among foresters, wildlife biologists and landowners for many years. Landowners were often left confused and frustrated by conflicting planting density recommendations or the inconsistent requirements of the particular landowner assistance programs.

To address the situation, the Council facilitated an in-depth examination of planting densities by a diverse group of natural resource experts. That process resulted in the development of the Council's *White Paper on Longleaf Pine Planting Density* and a companion fact

#### **Longleaf Alliance Academy Program**

Since the inception of the Longleaf Academy program in 2008, The Longleaf Alliance (LLA) has successfully completed a total of 40 academies, including 32 Longleaf 101 academies and eight Longleaf 201 academies (either understory restoration or herbicides and longleaf classes). The Longleaf 101 course is an intensive 3-4 day in-depth classroom and field instruction in "all things longleaf." The target audience consists primarily of private landowners in the landscape and partner staff and agency personnel who instruct others in how to properly establish, manage, and restore longleaf pine ecosystems. LLA conducted eight Longleaf Academies in 2013. Four of these were Longleaf 101 Academies in Georgia, North Carolina, Louisiana, and Alabama. The remaining four included three Herbicide and Longleaf 201 Academies (conducted in Georgia and South Carolina) and one Understory 201 Academy held in Alabama. The Alliance staff also participated in three Engine Academies, led seven other specific National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Prescribed Fire courses, and presented the first Prescribed Fire Workshop for Landowners at the new Learning Center on the Solon Dixon Forest.

sheet. Together they provide landowners with unbiased information about the potential benefits and drawbacks of a range of planting densities. For landowners wanting to balance timber and wildlife objectives, 400-600 seedlings per acre is the recommended planting range. Higher stocking rates of 600-900 seedlings per acre are appropriate for landowners seeking greater early pine straw yields and improved sawtimber and pole production.

### **Release of Longleaf Growth and Yield Models**

In the Spring, much-needed growth and yield models specific to longleaf pine were made available by the University of Florida Carbon Resources Science Center, Auburn University, and Southern Research Station. These can be downloaded free of charge at <http://carboncenter.ifas.ufl.edu/models.shtml>.

There are two longleaf models available: one for natural stands and one for plantation longleaf. Both models are in easy-to-use Excel spreadsheet formats. For carbon sequestration evaluations, below-ground carbon is included in the model, but it does not include understory grasses or brush. In a preliminary analysis the model showed greater carbon sequestration in longleaf pine forests, compared to loblolly and slash pine, over an 80-year period.

### **Prescribed Fire Work Group**

To increase the amount of prescribed burning in longleaf pine forests, especially on private lands, representatives from federal, state, and non-governmental entities meet regularly as part of the Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability's (SERPPAS) Prescribed Fire Work Group. The work group's 2013-2014 priorities align with research findings and include additional prescribed fire resources, training, liability protection, and air quality/smoke management. Recent work has been focused on increasing opportunities for education for private burners through the development of the Smoke Management Mobile Application, creation of laws and liability summaries for the longleaf pine states, and expansion of online learning opportunities such as the five-part prescribed fire webinar series with the Southern Fire Exchange, which reached over 570 individuals. The Work Group continues to stay engaged with stakeholders by participating in meetings with the prescribed fire councils, fire chiefs, Society of American Foresters, and air quality/prescribed fire work groups. In 2014, the Work Group will increase prescribed fire training opportunities through the development of online, integrated prescribed fire curriculum, field classes, and resource sharing options. As efforts move forward, the Work Group will continue to collaborate with prescribed fire and air quality partners in the quest to conduct more prescribed fires in a coordinated and effective manner. Stay in touch with the Work Group's progress by visiting: <http://cnr.ncsu.edu/blogs/southeast-fire-update/>.

### **Local Implementation Teams**

In 2013 the number of local implementation teams expanded to 15 and provided coverage for all 18 SGAs (Figure 8) across the range. In addition, a new team has taken steps to form in the Southern Low County/ACE Basin area in South Carolina in 2014.

Detailed summaries of activities occurring across all the local implementation teams can be found at <http://www.americaslongleaf.org>. The highlights from the state and local implementation teams can be found in a Special Section of this report.



Figure 8. The current distribution of the 15 local implementation teams for longleaf pine for 2013.

## Strategic Priority 4. Maintain and Broaden the Resource Base

The partner's success in achieving the long-term goal of 8 million acres of longleaf pine will directly depend upon securing necessary resources to support the many diverse components of the restoration effort. While the Federal partners contribute significantly to longleaf restoration (largely through integration with existing natural resource programs), efforts are well underway to diversify sources of support through state agencies and private entities. With the continued tightening of federal and state budgets, the Council members understand that increased attention to diversifying, coordinating, and leveraging funding is needed. The following highlights the ongoing efforts to address this need and broaden the resource base.

### Longleaf Stewardship Fund

The LSF was established in 2012, expanding upon the very successful Longleaf Legacy grant program sponsored by the Southern Company and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). Additional grant sponsors include DoD, NRCS, USFS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and International Paper through the Forestland Stewards Initiative (see below). In its first two years, 31 project grants totaling \$6 million have been awarded in eight states and an additional \$8 million of non-federal funding has been leveraged. In 2013, project activities resulted in over 70,000 acres planted or prescribe burned and 146 private landowners committed to enroll in longleaf programs (Figure 9). It is anticipated that \$3.3 million will be available for the FY2014 grants. The LSF has been a catalyst in providing resources to help support the formation of local implementation teams and to implement priority restoration work within the SGAs.

#### Stewardship Contracting Highlight – National Forests in Alabama, Oakmulgee Ranger District Project

Local U.S. Forest Service land managers have long recognized the need for additional flexibility to more effectively implement land management activities. Many view Stewardship End-Result Contracting (stewardship contracting) as a move in that direction. Stewardship contracting authorities allow local managers such as the Forest Service's Cindy Ragland, District Ranger, Oakmulgee Ranger District, to package a diverse array of land stewardship work by combining the disposal of goods (e.g. timber or other forest products) with contracts to perform service tasks (e.g., longleaf restoration work, fuels reduction treatments). Stewardship contracting is also intended to generate social and economic benefits to local communities and the public at large.

In 2003, the Talladega National Forest, Oakmulgee District was coming to grips with two very significant issues – a declining red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) population and over 5,000 acres of “off-site” pine stands that were converting to mixed pine hardwood areas due to loblolly die-off. In 2013, the RCW population rebounded from below 100 clusters to 120 active clusters and over 2,000 acres of dying loblolly have been replaced with longleaf seedlings. Acting as a catalyst to this success is the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) and its partnership with the Southern Company and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Through four separate Stewardship Agreements, this partnership has garnered \$550,000 to add to the over \$1,500,000 obtained from the sale of the timber harvested.

### Forestland Stewards Initiative

International Paper and NFWF announced in 2013 the new Forestland Stewards Initiative. Through this initiative, International Paper is committing \$7.5 million over five years to restore native forests, strengthen fish and wildlife populations,

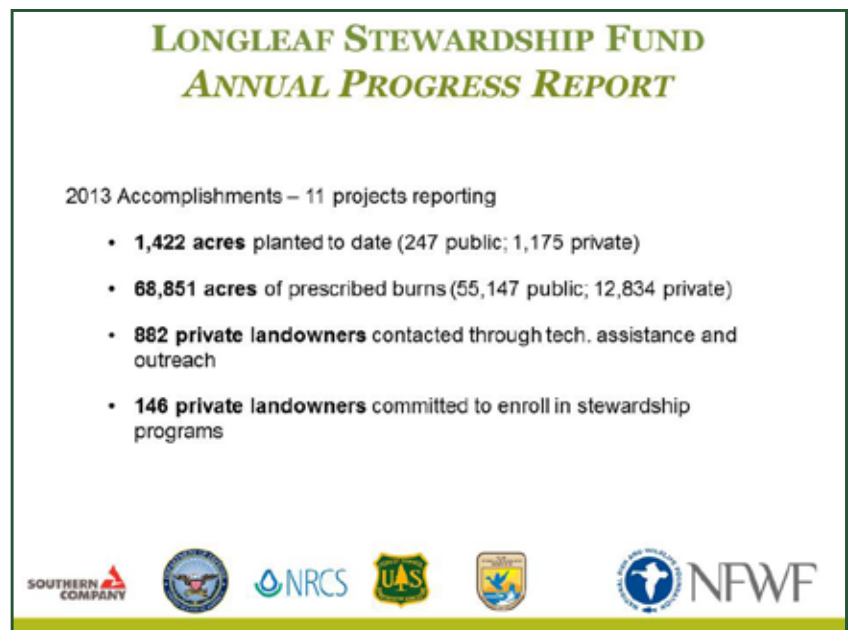


Figure 9. The 2013 accomplishments from the Longleaf Stewardship Fund administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

protect watersheds and support working forests in eight states across the Southeastern United States. This Initiative will benefit longleaf restoration efforts in the Carolina Low Country Forests (North Carolina and South Carolina) and the Piney Woods of Texas and Louisiana. The other targeted landscape is the Southern Cumberland Plateau, where shortleaf pine and riparian forest restoration will be the focus.

### **Coordination of Land Acquisition and Easement Opportunities**

An estimated \$44.5 million was reported spent in 2013 for land acquisition, easements, and CRP rental payments. That resulted in more than 43,000 acres of land acquisition and easements and 364,000 acres under CRP rental contracts, all aimed at conserving longleaf pine ecosystems.

#### *Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)*

The LWCF is a federal program aimed at protecting valuable lands and improving recreational opportunities. In an effort to better align land acquisition priorities with the ongoing large landscape collaborative for longleaf pine, the USFS, USFWS, and National Park Service (NPS) began to collaborate on LWCF land acquisition proposals. In 2013, \$5.3 million was awarded to the National Forests in Florida to acquire around 5,000 acres that will contribute to longleaf restoration with SGAs. This past year four additional longleaf proposals were submitted as part of the Longleaf Collaborative LWCF proposal that has the potential to protect over 70,000 acres.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), The Conservation Fund (TCF), and the Trust for Public Land (TPL) are currently leading an effort to compile and map the range-wide longleaf land protection priorities. The local implementation teams are very involved in the effort to build these priorities. This product will be beneficial in providing a basis and rationale for developing improved FY2016 Collaborative LWCF proposals for longleaf that will be submitted in 2014. The information will also enhance the Council's ability to communicate how the priority land acquisitions will contribute to achieving the range-wide restoration goals for longleaf.

#### *Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program*

Longleaf restoration is also aligning with DoD's interest in buffering its installations from encroaching development. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), TPL and landowner M.C. Davis partnered to conserve 20,800 acres of critical habitat land east of Eglin Air Force Base after being awarded **\$1.75 million from the DoD 2013 REPI Challenge**. The Florida DEP is slated to contribute \$10.2 million of Florida Forever funds, Davis discounted the property by \$9.7 million, DoD contributed \$1.75 million as part of the 2013 REPI Challenge, and Eglin AFB contributed \$550,000.

### **Gulf Coast Restoration Funding – Opportunities for Longleaf Restoration**

Many members of the Council have been working to integrate longleaf restoration into efforts to restore and recover the Gulf Coast as part of the British Petroleum (BP) Deep Water Horizon Settlements. In the spring of 2013, the Council submitted a letter to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council on behalf of its members highlighting how longleaf restoration will contribute to the overall health and recovery of the Gulf Coast Region. Building on the Council's letter, the Federal Coordinating Committee developed a white paper entitled "Restoring Longleaf, Restoring the Gulf" that describes in detail the partnership framework in place to deliver Gulf restoration work on the ground (both documents are available at [www.americaslongleaf.org](http://www.americaslongleaf.org)). In addition, agencies and organizations are working individually on efforts related to Gulf recovery.

### **Summary and Discussion**

The public and private partners involved in the ALRI accomplished a remarkable 1.38 million acres of longleaf restoration work (planting, prescribed burning, mid-story treatments, etc.) in FY2013. The number of local implementation teams grew to 15 and now cover all the identified SGAs across the range. These expanded teams and their members provide the prospect of generating even greater longleaf restoration results in the future, particularly on private lands. The teams increase collaboration among the local partners within the SGAs and

provide additional capacity to share resources, conduct conservation planning and mapping, and increase outreach to private landowners.

### ***Prescribed Burning***

At 1.1 million acres, the prescribed burning accomplishments are impressive, and nearly meet ALRIs overall annual goal for prescribed burning for all ownerships. Accomplishments on public lands are nearly in line with the overall goals, while work is needed to increase prescribed burning on private lands.

### ***Longleaf Establishment***

The estimated 156,000 acres in 2013 exceeds the near-term annual goals for ALRI, with the large majority (88%) of these accomplishments occurring on private lands. The partnership will need to continue monitoring the net increases or decreases in overall longleaf pine acreages to gage a desired annual longleaf pine establishment goal.

### ***Accomplishments in the Significant Geographic Areas***

Approximately 70% of the overall accomplishments occurred within the SGAs, which complements the goals for these priority landscapes as envisioned in the Conservation Plan. Approximately 79% of the prescribed burning and 51% of the other improvement activities (mid-story treatments, invasive species treatments, and native understory plant establishment) are being accomplished in the SGAs. The accomplishments in the SGAs are primarily due to the impressive work occurring on the public lands that anchor these landscapes.

### ***Private versus Public Lands***

Some 77% of the overall accomplishments occurred on public lands, with prescribed burning on NFS lands and military installations being a primary driver. The remaining 23% of the overall work took place on private lands, which contain 61% of the overall longleaf pine acreage.

### ***Broadening the Resource Base***

While federal partners continue to be the major source of funding for longleaf restoration, substantial progress is being made in attracting non-federal funds with \$8 million in non-federal matching funds to the LSF in the past two years and an additional multi-year Forestland Stewards Initiative getting underway. Enhanced collaboration among federal agencies is expected to result in successful proposals to LWCF, while opportunities to contribute to Gulf Coast restoration are being aggressively pursued.

### ***2014-15 Priority Needs***

- Place emphasis on increasing the acreage of prescribed burning and other improvement activities on private lands.
- Increase the capacity and coordination of private landowner technical assistance and outreach. Explore the economics and incentives for increasing the involvement of medium and large private landowners in the longleaf restoration effort.
- Continue to support the local implementation teams and the development of SGA conservation planning and mapping efforts.
- Incorporate processes for tracking and monitoring changes in the condition classes for longleaf pine forests, which includes the release of longleaf maintenance condition class definitions.
- Complete the ongoing coordinated effort to identify and map range-wide land protection priorities for longleaf pine. TNC, TCF, TPL, and the local implementation teams are working to develop this product.
- Continue to increase corporate and other private funding through the LSF and pursue opportunities for longleaf restoration to contribute to Gulf Coast recovery efforts.

## **2013 Accomplishment Report Team**

The Report Team would like to thank the many partners at the regional and state level that took time to compile and contribute longleaf accomplishment information for 2013. The Team also thanks the leadership of the Longleaf Partnership Council, the ALRI Communication Team, and staff at Texas A&M University for their invaluable help in editing and drafting this report. Additional thanks goes to Suzanne Sessine and Jon Scott of NFWF, David Hoge with FSA, and Luther Jones and Tom Ward with NRCS for providing supplemental accomplishment data.

### ***Regional Coordinators***

Glen Gaines, U.S. Forest Service (Lead)  
Clay Ware, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

### ***State Coordination Team Leads***

Todd Edgerton, Virginia Department of Forestry  
Barry New, North Carolina Forest Service  
Russell Hubright, South Carolina Forestry Commission  
Scott Griffin, Georgia Forestry Commission  
David Campbell, Louisiana Department of Forestry

Hank McKinley, Alabama Forestry Commission  
Jim Hancock, Mississippi Forestry Commission  
Bonnie Stine, Florida Forest Service  
Todd Nightingale, Texas Forest Service

## SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL SECTION

### LONGLEAF IMPLEMENTATION TEAM 2013 HIGHLIGHTS

#### Alabama

##### **Talladega - Mountain Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership.**

- Established in April 2013.
- Developing strategies to increase protection and restoration in three Primary Focus Areas: 1) Talladega NF/Okmulgee/Cahaba, 2) Talladega NF/Coosa, and 3) the Northwest Georgia area.
- Collecting data that can be used to measure success, such as current longleaf acreage, management activities (prescribed fire, etc.), and protected land.

#### Florida

##### **Florida Forest Service**

The agency completed field data collection for a longleaf pine ecosystem rapid assessment that includes condition of over-story, mid-story, and ground cover. The Florida Natural Areas Inventory developed this assessment protocol, and the protocol will provide the first qualitative geospatial information regarding current statewide longleaf conditions.

##### **Apalachicola Regional Stewardship Alliance (ARSA)**

ARSA formally adopted the longleaf local team role in late 2012. ARSA was awarded a \$350,000 LSF grant beginning in January 2014 that will enable them to:

- Plant 650,000 longleaf pine seedlings at four state-owned restoration sites.
- Provide 20,000 acres of prescribed fire assistance to partners.
- Fund a coordinator position.

##### **Okefenokee/Osceola Local Implementation Team and Ocala Local Implementation Team**

Both teams formed in 2013 and were awarded LSF grants to begin developing land protection priorities, initiate priority restoration work, and hire needed coordinator positions.

##### **Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP)**

GCPEP formed in 1995 and is one of the more established teams in the South. GCPEP's 2013 activities/accomplishments include:

- Providing land management assistance to GCPEP partners, with six employees trained in prescribed fire, invasive species treatment, ecological monitoring, and mechanical treatments.
- Partnering on land protection projects, with current priority on lands that buffer and protect air space for Naval Air Station - Whiting Field and Eglin Air Force Base.
- Received two LSF grants: 1) A \$60,000 grant to restore 400 acres of longleaf on public and private lands. 2) A \$350,000 grant to provide longleaf restoration on 750 acres, prescribed burning on 25,000 acres, invasive species control on 250 acres, establishment of a 40-acre native seed production area, and the relocation and protection of 125 gopher tortoises.

**The Chattahoochee Fall Line Conservation Partnership (CFLCP)** has implemented an outreach program aimed at engaging private landowners in our conservation partnership. This year, CFLCP organized a one day workshop in rural Marion County, GA entitled, "Growing Longleaf on the Fall Line." The CFLCP also hosted the 2nd annual "Wildflower Ramble in the Sandhills" event to offer landowners and other key constituents a chance to gather for a fun day of learning about the diverse ecology and flora of the Sandhills region.



Landowners and other conservationists gathered at the Fall Line Sandhills Natural Area for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual "Wildflower Ramble." Photo by Hal Massie, 2013.

## **Georgia**

### ***Fort Stewart/Altamaha Longleaf Partnership***

- Formed Land Protection and Fire Management Working Groups.
- Compiled a longleaf pine land protection priority list and prescribed burn Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) land adjacent to Fort Stewart.

In Burke County, Georgia, approximately 53 acres of longleaf pine ecosystem was restored at Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, in partnership with NWTf and Georgia Power/Southern Company.

## **Louisiana**

### ***West-Central Louisiana Ecosystem Partnership***

This partnership covers the Fort Polk/Kistachie National Forest SGA. The team accomplished the following:

- A prescribed fire trailer was outfitted by Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and made available for conducting prescribed burns on private land at a cost of \$5,000.
- Held a field day/workshop entitled “Restoring and Managing Longleaf Pine on Private Lands” on the Kisatchie National Forest in May 2013. The event was attended by 117 people.
- A three-day “Longleaf Academy 101” was conducted by the LLA in September to provide in-depth longleaf restoration and management technical training and 27 students attended.
- The NWTf produced 22 longleaf management plans for 19 private landowners, expected to result in 1,256 acres of longleaf establishment and improvements.

## **Mississippi**

The partner’s accomplishments include:

- Seven longleaf pine field days were conducted, reaching more than 500 landowners and two prescribed fire workshops were held.
- Programs administered by NRCS and USFWS resulted in more than 7,000 acres of improvements and 41 completed management plans for private landowners.
- National Forests in Mississippi established longleaf on 406 acres, burned more than 117,000 acres, and had over 3,200 acres of other improvement activities.
- Mississippi Forestry Commission reforested 1,500 acres of longleaf pine on private lands, burned approximately 1,300 acres, and harvested 700 bushels of cones for Baxterville Orchard.
- “Fire on the Forty” program provided funding for prescribed burning on over 10,000 acres.
- The USFWS awarded the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks a Competitive State Wildlife Grant to improve more than 3,000 acres of longleaf pine habitat on the Theodore Mars and Marion County State Wildlife Management Areas.
- A longleaf delivery specialist was hired with a LSF grant.

### ***DeSoto National Forest/Camp Shelby Local Implementation Team***

- The DeSoto National Forest, through special funding as “A National Priority Restoration Project,” established 140 acres of longleaf and prepared 225 acres to be planted in FY2014. In addition, prescribed burning was accomplished on approximately 85,000 acres, and 300 acres of pitcher plant bogs were restored.
- Recovery work for the endangered dusky gopher frog included protecting grassy vernal ponds, releasing tadpoles, and restoring frog breeding grounds.
- TNC planted 160 acres of longleaf pine and burned 1,045 acres on the Red Creek Preserve in Jackson County.
- The American Forest Foundation (AFF) led an effort to develop a landowner database in two pilot counties to improve outreach to underserved minority landowners.



## North Carolina

The local implementation teams reported significant accomplishments for 2013.

### ***Onslow Bight Conservation Forum (OBCF)***

- A LSF grant will support restoration of longleaf planting on over 200 acres of former loblolly plantation in Sandy Run Savanna State Nature Preserve and help implement 6,000 acres of prescribed burning.
- A priority focal area is linking RCW populations between Camp Lejeune and the Croatan National Forest.



Pitcher-plant bog at Boiling Spring Lakes Preserve in Brunswick County, North Carolina.

### ***Cape Fear Arch Conservation Collaboration***

- LSF funding will support growing season burns and longleaf plantings on private and public lands.
- Fire was reintroduced at the Boiling Spring Lakes Preserve in Brunswick County.

### ***NC Sandhills Conservation Partnership***

Initiated a LSF project to expand prescribed fire and longleaf restoration capacity, utilizing a six-person seasonal crew.

## South Carolina

### ***Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership***

- Conducted a landowner workshop this summer and also hosted a Certified Prescribed Fire Manager workshop.



Sewee team members representing TNC, SC Wildlife Federation, SC Forestry Commission, and The Center for Heirs Property Preservation meeting with a landowner to discuss a conservation easement and longleaf establishment near McClellanville, South Carolina.

### ***Sewee Longleaf Conservation Cooperative***

- Initiated a cost-share program for FY2014 for private landowners through a LSF grant.
- Collaborated with USFS in its Forest Plan Revision by hosting several public meetings and field days.

### ***Southern Low Country and ACE Basin Partnership***

- In addition to the two established teams, a new team, the Southern Low Country and ACE Basin Partnership, has formed and will begin collaborating on longleaf pine restoration in southwestern South Carolina in 2014.

## Texas

A cooperative agreement with the LLA and USFWS has been established to fund restoration projects in Texas. The first projects are set up to be accomplished in the 2013/2014 planting season. A Longleaf Pine Implementation Team Coordinator for Texas has been hired and will serve as the lead person to advance the communication and coordination of public, private, industrial and non-industrial interests on implementation of strategies for protection, restoration, management, and education/outreach in the state.

### **Texas Ridge Partnership**

- The longleaf restoration efforts encompass work that is occurring on four national forests, Big Thicket National Preserve, Village Creek State Park, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department land, as well as for private landowners through USFWS assistance.
- A field day/workshop on May 21, 2013 targeted specifically for private landowners included private, state and national forest examples of restoration efforts in Texas. The event was attended by 123 people most of whom were private landowners in the Longleaf Ridge SGA.
- With support from Entergy, a utility company, TNC will acquire 114.5 acres of wet longleaf savanna habitat and then transfer to the Big Thicket National Preserve.
- TNC is in the process of closing on a 4,593-acre tract to enroll in the Forest Legacy Program and is situated within the Sabine/Angelina National Forest SGA.

### **Virginia**

Private landowners are becoming increasingly interested in restoring longleaf pine. In Sussex County, private landowner Bill Owen now has the largest acreage of longleaf pine in Virginia after deciding to plant “something different than loblolly pine” on his family property near Yale. Since 2002, he has established around 600 acres in longleaf pine. He takes an active role in planning and management on the property, with assistance from six different federal and state agencies. Recently, Mr. Owen partnered with TNC to donate a conservation easement on 1,400 acres of family land, forming the core of TNC’s Raccoon Creek Pinelands Conservation Area.

# STATE COORDINATION TEAM: 2013 ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT SUMMARY TABLES

FY2013 ALRI  
State Coordination Team  
Accomplishment Report REVISED Work Sheet

Category Data Source- (Team Member)	Performance Measures																TOTAL		
	Longleaf Establishment		Prescribed Burning		Mid-story Treatments		Native Understory Plant Establishment		NNIS Treatments		Overstory Thinned		Acquisition/ Easements		Contracts/TA Plans (Private Lands)		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	# Individuals	# Individuals in SGAs					
<b>Public Lands</b>																			
Texas	475	242	40,841	34,652	194	194	0	0	0	0	1,116	811	174	174	0	0	42,800	36,073	
Louisiana	966	255	129,677	109,033	2,984	2,984	3	3	184	3	5,954	5,590	0	0	0	0	139,768	117,868	
Mississippi	751	470	126,788	89,503	2,057	500			273		3,004	1,500					132,873	91,973	
Alabama	2,393	2,117	58,514	56,019	768	582	16	16	2,547	2,542	1,076	1,076	0	0	0	0	65,314	62,352	
Florida	9,396	6,083	285,288	282,658	1,487	1,487	88	88	503	503	3,233	3,233	5,000	5,000	0	0	304,995	299,052	
Georgia	5,721	2,349	126,710	107,098	1,876	966	352	197	2,244	214	2,341	2,105	9,886	0	0	0	149,130	112,929	
South Carolina	1,341	69	136,432	93,343	5,445	2,604	45	0	2,164	1,838	4,715	595	0	0	0	0	150,142	98,449	
North Carolina	761	614	59,256	53,790	1,979	844	65	65	46	41	4,355	3,521	503	72	0	0	66,965	58,947	
Virginia	541	0	2,441	0													2,982	0	
<b>Total Public Lands</b>	22,345	12,199	965,947	826,096	16,790	10,161	569	369	7,961	5,141	25,794	18,431	15,563	5,246	0	0	1,054,969	877,643	
<b>Private Lands</b>																			
Texas	2,447	2,155	4,334	3,499	452	276	30	0	268	0	0	0	0	0	72	24	7,531	5,930	
Louisiana	3,708	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	131	33	3,708	0	
Mississippi	5,367	3,730	10,826	3,617	325	90	0	0	122	67	0	0	0	0	743	172	16,640	7,504	
Alabama	15,826	496	35,271	540	1,657	48	659	184	3,077	1,239	1,247	345	0	0	2,344	310	57,737	2,852	
Florida	4,183	1,196	19,805	8,232	420	0	93	29	1,975	2	1,162	0	20,850	20,850	456	146	48,488	30,309	
Georgia	11,072	653	25,382	583	1,615	36	2,294	44	456	13	1,716	0	2,986	0	6,776	259	45,521	1,329	
South Carolina	10,520	645	7,278	3,209	1,080	0	196	0	407	335	2,360	0	265	0	1,271	7	22,106	4,189	
North Carolina	4,725	3,967	31,965	27,851	1,293	1,111	240	106	125	124	805	310	3,389	3,389	1,728	639	42,542	36,858	
Virginia	3,894	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	52	0	3,894	0	
Additional Private Lands (PROTECTED based on Nursery Sales Reports)	72,712																72,712	0	
<b>Total Private Lands</b>	134,455	12,842	134,861	47,531	6,842	1,561	3,512	363	6,430	1,780	7,290	655	27,490	24,239	13,573	1,590	320,880	88,971	
<b>Grand Total - All Lands</b>	156,800	25,041	1,100,808	873,627	23,632	11,722	4,081	732	14,391	6,921	33,084	19,086	43,053	29,485	13,573	1,590	1,375,849	966,614	





the  
**JOSEPH W. JONES**  
ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH CENTER  
*at Shawnee*



International Forest Company



THE LONGLEAF ALLIANCE



SOUTHERN GROUP  
of STATE FORESTERS



THE CENTER FOR LONGLEAF  
PINE ECOSYSTEMS



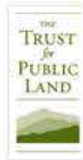
Conserve. Hunt. Share.



National Association of  
Conservation Districts



# Longleaf Partnership Council



THE TRUST  
for  
PUBLIC  
LAND



East Gulf Coastal Plain  
JOINT VENTURE



TALL TIMBERS  
Specialty of Wildlife & Woodland



The Nature  
Conservancy  
Protecting nature. Preserving life.



THE  
CONSERVATION FUND



TEXAS  
A&M Institute of Renewable  
Natural Resources



NATIONAL  
WILDLIFE  
FEDERATION



American Pine Foundation  
The great american pine story.



GCPEP  
Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership



RMS  
Resource Management Service, LLC