



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





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### **Introduction**

Since the release of the Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine in 2009, a robust partnership of agencies and organizations has coalesced around longleaf conservation and restoration in an effort referred to as the America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative (The Initiative). This partnership has gained national recognition as a model of collaborative landscape conservation. The Longleaf Partnership Council was formed in 2011 to increase communication, collaboration, and leverage for implementation of the Range-wide Plan. The purpose of this document, Strategic Priorities and Actions, is to:

- Recommend both strategic priorities and actions needed over the next 3 years that move The Initiative toward reaching the restoration goals in the Plan;
- Provide outreach information to interested parties that describes the partnership;
- Provide mechanisms to demonstrate progress and accomplishments;
- Affirm the current roles and contributions of the various individual agencies and organizations.

Success in accomplishing the actions outlined in this document will require the involvement and commitment of the large and collaborative partnership now in place (See Appendix A). It is important that the agencies, organizations, and individuals involved with The Initiative understand and be able to explain how the collective partnership will work toward those goals. This document will communicate to a broader audience the commitment of the partners to these common goals. The strategies and actions summarized in this plan will help maintain and build upon the substantial momentum for longleaf pine conservation that has developed over the last few years and help ensure continued support for longleaf restoration and conservation efforts (See Appendix B).

## ***Range-Wide Partnership Framework***

Strategic Priorities and Actions focuses on collaborative approaches of the involved partner agencies and organizations at all scales. The Initiative and involved partners operate at the “national”, range-wide or “regional scale”, the “state scale” and importantly at the “local scale”. Each scale offers an opportunity to coordinate and collaborate for different purposes (See Appendix C).

- **National**- Three federal departments (Interior, Agriculture and Defense) have committed to work toward achieving the goals of the Conservation Plan. The White House profiles Longleaf Pine in the Southeast as one of five featured landscapes nationally and seeks to harmonize locally driven programs with federal programs and policies. Federal agency coordination is accomplished through the Federal Coordinating Committee. In addition, several non-government organizations that operate at the national level, have adopted longleaf restoration as priorities. This national profile offers the opportunity to bring national resources, programs and policies to bear in order to achieve the goals of the Conservation Plan.
- **Regional**- At the regional scale, agencies and multi-state organizations represent regional partners working together in a coordinated fashion. It is at this scale the Longleaf Partnership Council works (See Appendix D). Also, several key issues, like coordination of seedling supplies, development of understory plant material supply chains, and development of strategies to increase prescribed burning are best addressed at the multi-state or range-wide scale. Technical Teams, typically staffed by the regional partners, address range-wide issues and work with the members of the Council and the State and Local Teams to implement their key actions (See Appendix E).
- **State** – At the state level, State Coordination Teams serve to coordinate actions of Federal and State Agencies and numerous non-government organizations and help define programs, allocate funds and report accomplishments. State Coordination Teams work through those existing organized entities to help identify state level goals, track accomplishments and coordinate and leverage opportunities among programs both public and private.
- **Local** - At the local scale, Local Implementation Teams work to bring specific landowners, managers and their partners together to deliver results on the ground. Local Implementation Teams typically are centered on Significant Geographic Areas and Sites (described in the Conservation Plan). They are responsible for identifying boundaries for focused restoration and maintenance activities, bringing key stakeholders together, defining and implementing priority management actions as well as tracking and reporting results of the local efforts. They work with other Local Implementation Teams as part of a network to share their approaches as well as help identify priority work that needs addressing at larger scales (See Appendix F)

Communication and coordination are necessary across all of these scales to effectively achieve the goals of the Conservation Plan by the leveraging of resources, replicating successes, and avoiding common mistakes. This is typically accomplished through the Longleaf Partnership Council and individual agency/organization member staff that supports The Initiative.

### Three Year Strategic Priorities and Actions

1. Significantly increase acres established in longleaf pine ecosystems. The Conservation Plan calls for roughly doubling the acres of longleaf pine to 8 million acres, with 80 percent of the potential for these increases occurring on private lands and 50 percent of the increases within Significant Geographic Areas or state identified significant sites. State Coordination Teams recently assessed current status of longleaf pine within states and projected desired 3-year and 15-year restoration outcomes (See Appendix G). ***Over the next three years, the States forecast increasing longleaf pine from 4.43 million to 4.73 million acres range-wide (308,000 acre net increase).*** A net increase of around 203,000 acres on private lands and 105,000 acres on public lands is envisioned.

Action	Lead Agency/Organization/Team	Timeline
<p><b>1.1</b> To achieve the 3-year projections for longleaf pine ecosystems acres on private lands, annually establish between 75,000 and 95,000 acres of longleaf pine through federal and state private landowner, incentives programs, cost-share programs, private land owner matches, and through additional privately funded programs targeted at longleaf restoration.</p>	<p>Federal Coordinating Committee (FCC) member agencies            USDA NRCS            USDA Forest Service            USDA Farm Service Agency            U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service            State Foresters            State Wildlife Directors            Longleaf Stewardship Fund Partners</p>	2015
<p><b>1.2</b> To achieve the 3-year projections for longleaf pine ecosystems acres on public lands, annually establish between 30,000 and 35,000 acres of longleaf pine on public lands administered by federal and state land managers;</p> <p>Look for opportunities to increase rate of longleaf establishment and review feasibility of completing establishment longleaf on all sites determined to be desirable as longleaf forest type in <math>\leq</math> five decades</p>	<p>FCC member agencies public lands integrated programs            USDA Forest Service            U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service            DoD Military Installations            State Foresters            State Wildlife Directors            Longleaf Stewardship Fund Partners</p>	2015
<p><b>1.3</b> State Coordination Team members will work to assess longleaf seedling needs and communicate needs through Longleaf Seedling Plant Material Team (Longleaf Alliance).</p>	<p>State Coordination Teams            Longleaf Alliance            Nursery Cooperatives – Auburn Univ.            USDA Forest Service – Southern Research Station</p>	2013 (ongoing)

- 2. Improve and maintain existing longleaf pine ecosystems, with emphasis on significantly increasing the acres of prescribed fire accomplished.** By 2015, the States envision 4.73 million acres of longleaf pine dominated forest range-wide, with 2.87 million acres on private lands and 1.87 million acres on public lands. The Conservation Plan places emphasis on improving the conditions of these existing longleaf pine ecosystems and calls for doubling the acres in the longleaf maintenance condition class to 3 million acres. These improvements will require increased prescribed fire and fire frequency, commercial and non-commercial thinning, mid-story treatments, artificial establishment of native understory plants, and treatment of non-native invasive species.

Action	Lead Agency/Organization/Team	Timeline
<p><b>2.1</b> Over the next three years, increase the practice of frequent prescribed fire (every 2- 2 <sup>1/2</sup> years) on 20-25% of longleaf pine acres occurring on private lands. This would require annually burning between 280,000 and 360,000 acres through federal and state landowner incentives programs, privately funded programs, and by increasing capacity of qualified prescribe fire practitioners.</p>	<p>FCC member agencies private lands integrated programs SERPPAS Prescribe Burning Technical Team State Foresters The Nature Conservancy Local Implementation Teams State Prescribed Fire Councils Longleaf Stewardship Fund Partners</p>	<p>2015</p>
<p><b>2.2</b> Improve and maintain 2.87 million acres of longleaf pine ecosystems (includes additional estimated 1 million acres of future longleaf) occurring on federal and state public lands over the next three years, by annually prescribed burning between 1.1 million and 1.4 million acres, with a burn frequency goal of between 2 - 2 <sup>1/2</sup> years</p>	<p>FCC member agencies public lands integrated programs State Foresters State Wildlife Directors SERPPAS Prescribe Burning Technical Team Longleaf Stewardship Fund Partners Local Implementation Teams</p>	<p>2015</p>
<p><b>2.3</b> Work to increase capacity and technical information needed to restore native understory plant communities by: (1) determining seed transfer guidelines for several species, (2) producing locally adapted plant material and (3) collecting seed from native plant populations from across the longleaf range for seed banks.</p>	<p>Southern Native Plant Restoration and Seed Increase Project (SNPRSIP) NRCS USDA Forest Service – S&amp;P Forestry Longleaf Alliance USDA Forest Service – Southern Research Station</p>	<p>2015 (ongoing)</p>
<p><b>2.4</b> In the short-term, continue the emphasis on treating high priority non-native, invasive plant species and develop estimates of annual accomplishments and projected needs.</p>	<p>FCC member agencies USDA Forest Service – S&amp;P Forestry State Foresters State Wildlife Directors</p>	<p>2015 (ongoing)</p>

- 3. Enhance the ability to successfully implement restoration actions on the ground.** The Conservation Plan serves as a framework for action and recognizes longleaf restoration efforts will occur at regional and local levels. *Significant Geographic Areas (SGAs)* were initially identified in the Plan to serve as anchors for longleaf restoration. State Coordination teams and Local Implementation teams are forming throughout the Southeast (See Appendix F or [www.americaslongleaf.org](http://www.americaslongleaf.org)).

The purpose of *State Coordination Teams* (State Teams) is to:

1. Coordinate local activities supporting implementation of the Conservation Plan within a state, and
2. Integrate those local/state activities with The Initiative.

The purpose of *Local Implementation Teams* is to:

1. Organize, plan, and deliver on-the-ground conservation actions within their self-defined geographic area, and
2. Engage landowners with technical and financial resources to meet the overall goals of The Initiative.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Agency/Organization/Team</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
<b>3.1</b> Support the continued development and highlight accomplishments of the existing collaborative efforts in North Carolina, Texas/ Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Work to initiate State Coordination Team efforts in Georgia, Florida, South Carolina and Virginia.	Longleaf Partnership Council State Foresters State Wildlife Directors FCC Member Agencies	2013 (ongoing)
<b>3.2</b> Support the continued team development, demonstration pilot projects, and highlight accomplishments of the 10 existing local implementation teams. Support the establishment of at least 5-6 new local implementation teams in the Fort Stewart SGA, Francis Marion NF SGA, Talladega National Forest SGA, Montane Longleaf Region, and Sabine/ Angelina NF SGA.	Longleaf Partnership Council State Coordination Teams FCC Member Agencies Longleaf Stewardship Fund Partners	2015 – (ongoing)
<b>3.3</b> Improve the communication between the state coordination and local implementation teams by encouraging range-wide networking through regularly scheduled conference calls, periodic face-to-face meetings, and website	Longleaf Partnership Council USDA – Forest Service U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Longleaf Alliance Communication Team	2013 (ongoing)
<b>3.4</b> Identify increased funding aimed at providing longleaf technical assistance for private landowners	FCC Member Agencies – Private lands integrated programs- Longleaf Stewardship Fund Partners Longleaf Partnership Council	2015

<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Agency/Organization/Team</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
<p><b>3.5</b> Host at least 16 longleaf landowner field days and workshops annually across the range</p>	<p>State Coordination Teams Local Implementation Teams Education and Training Technical Team Longleaf Alliance Jones Ecological Research Center</p>	<p>2015 (ongoing)</p>
<p><b>3.6</b> Provided needed growth and yield models needed for private landowner technical assistance. This effort will result in the release both natural and plantation stand-level longleaf growth and yield management models and availability of user-friendly applications.</p>	<p>Economics Technical Team USDA-FS Southern Research Station University of Florida Auburn University Longleaf Alliance</p>	<p>2013 (ongoing)</p>
<p><b>3.7</b> Coordinate and evaluate the state network of technical assistance providers to ensure efficiency and service to private landowners</p>	<p>State Coordination Teams NRCS NFWF</p>	<p>2013</p>
<p><b>3.8</b> Support and continue providing continuing education for professionals and non-professionals, through the Longleaf Academies, advanced Academy courses, on-line economic short courses, and university “Maymester” courses.</p>	<p>The Longleaf Alliance Jones Ecological Research Center FCC Member Agencies SE Regional Forestry Extension – UGA Economics Technical Team</p>	<p>(ongoing)</p>



- 4. Maintain and broaden the resource base.** The federal departments (Agriculture, Interior, and Defense) contribute significantly to longleaf restoration on both public and private lands. Federal investments are in addition to substantial efforts already underway by public and private organizations and individuals. Federal longleaf restoration work is largely accomplished through the integration with existing natural resource programs of the USDA-Forest Service (all three branches), USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service, USDA-Farm Service Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Department of Defense and the individual military services. Other funds for longleaf efforts have come from state forestry and wildlife agencies, collaboratives like Joint Ventures, non-government organizations, corporations and private landowners. With the anticipated tightening of federal and state budgets and the increased attention to longleaf, it is important to diversify, coordinate, and leverage funding in a more deliberate manner.

Action	Lead Agency/Organization/Team	Timeline
<p><b>4.1</b> Support and evaluate the Longleaf Stewardship Fund, administered by the NFWF, as an additional tool to implement range-wide priorities. The grants are aimed at implementing regional restoration priorities and will be awarded annually. Grow the fund, utilizing both public and private sources.</p>	<p>NFWF FCC Member Agencies Southern Company Other Corporate Sponsors</p>	<p>ongoing</p>
<p><b>4.2</b> Develop and implement a process for a periodic partner restoration progress report aimed at tracking goals of Conservation Plan (every 5 years).</p> <p><u>And</u></p> <p>Develop and distribute longleaf maintenance condition class metrics and a user guide for landowners and land managers</p>	<p>Assessment and Reporting Team Auburn University (mapping) USDA Forest Service Tall Timbers Longleaf Alliance NBQI EGCPJV NatureServe State Coordination Teams Local Implementation Teams,</p>	<p>2013</p>
<p><b>4.3</b> Implement a process to prepare, evaluate, and publicize an annual range-wide partner work accomplishment report</p>	<p>Assessment and Reporting Team USDA Forest Service Tall Timbers Longleaf Alliance NBQI EGCPJV State Coordination Teams Local Implementation Teams SERPPAS Prescribed Burning Team</p>	<p>2013</p>

Action	Lead Agency/Organization/Team	Timeline
<p><b>4.4</b> Continue efforts to maintain support and visibility of the Initiative through the specific engagement of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal Agency and Administration Leadership</li> <li>• Organizational Leadership</li> <li>• Private Corporations</li> </ul> <p>A communication plan will be developed to capture the needed work for this action</p>	<p>Federal Coordinating Committee                      Longleaf Partnership Council members                      Longleaf Partnership Council members                      National Fish and Wildlife Foundation                      Communication Team</p>	<p>2013                      (ongoing)</p>
<p><b>4.5</b> Promote longleaf successes and awareness in the broader community of private landowners, conservation organizations, and State/Federal agencies in order to maintain momentum (i.e. events like the Biennial Longleaf Alliance Conference; North American Reception)</p>	<p>Longleaf Partnership Council members                      Longleaf Alliance                        Communication Team</p>	<p>2015                      (ongoing)</p>
<p><b>4.6</b> Coordinate with the Partnership for Southern Forestlands Conservation to incorporate longleaf conservation goals into their efforts to conserve working forests and take full advantage of land acquisition/conservation easement opportunities, with focus on large corporate land investments located in significant geographic areas.</p>	<p>Federal Coordinating Committee members                      Department of Defense                      USDA Forest Service                      U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service                      Partnership for Southern                      Forestland Conservation                      State Foresters                      State Wildlife Agencies                      NGOs</p>	<p>2013</p>

## Conclusion

The purpose of this three-year implementation document is to maintain and build upon the substantial momentum for longleaf pine conservation that has developed since establishment of the America’s Longleaf Restoration Initiative by identifying the priority actions that need to be implemented in order to reach the long-term goals identified in the Conservation Plan. This blueprint for priorities and actions provides a basis to leverage existing cooperative efforts within the Longleaf Partnership Council as well as a platform for the development of new collaborative relationships. Focusing on the action items identified above not only increases the overall acreage of longleaf pine and improves the condition of existing longleaf pine ecosystems, it also lays the groundwork to make even greater advances toward our goal through outreach, coordination of on-the-ground restoration activities, and expansion of the resource base in order to broaden the scope and efficiency of our activities. Continued effective communication, engagement of policy-makers, and demonstrated success in restoring longleaf pine are crucial elements required for the Initiative to maintain its momentum and reach our restoration goals.

## Appendices

The copies of referenced appendices are available in a separate volume or can be found on [www.americaslongleaf.org](http://www.americaslongleaf.org).

- Appendix A: Partner References
- Appendix B: Accomplishments to Date
- Appendix C: Longleaf Partnership Framework
- Appendix D. Longleaf Partnership Council Charter and Membership
- Appendix E. Technical Team Summaries
- Appendix F. Local Implementation Team Summaries
- Appendix G. State Longleaf Assessment and Restoration Projections
- Appendix H: Glossary

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# Longleaf Partnership Council



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