THE LONGLEAF LEADER

FIRE *in* TRANSITION

Discussing the critical need for conducting prescribed burns year round.

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SPRING 2014

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COVER Growing season burn in the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership landscape. Photo by The Longleaf Alliance

By Robert Abernethy

President's Message

The wildflowers are blooming, the turkeys are gobbling and the piney woods that were blackened by prescribed fire just a few weeks or even days ago are greening with a new carpet of native grasses and forbs. Spring has returned to the longleaf woods.

If you are like many of us, the dormant season burning has been completed and you have started on your growing season burns as you work hard to grab every single burning day you can. You have broken your property into manageable burn units that can be burned when you get the proper conditions. You know that you can burn the block down by the swamp with a north or west wind but you have to wait for an east wind to burn up by the pasture to keep the smoke off your neighbor's house. Prescribed fire is being used more and more often to achieve landowners' objectives but we still need to treat more acres on private lands.

In February, the Longleaf Partnership Council published the 2013 Range-wide Accomplishment Report for America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative (http://americaslongleaf.org/) and it is an impressive report.

New grass growth following prescribed burn.
Photo by Carol Denhof

Collecting data from all 9 state coordinating committees, the following accomplishments were recorded for 2013.

- 15 implementation teams have been established across the region
- 1.1 million acres were prescribed burned, 87% on public land
- 156,000 acres of longleaf were planted, 86% on private land
- 113,241,000 longleaf seedlings were produced
- $77 million was spent on establishment and management, 34% from private funds

It is an impressive accomplishment report and I encourage you to read the summary article in this edition of the Longleaf Leader written by Glen Gaines & Clay Ware or go to our website, www.longleafalliance.org to view the entire report. We have come far in the past year, but we still have much to do.

While the majority of the longleaf plantings occurred on private lands, the majority of the prescribed fire occurred on the national forests and military installations. As we continue to plant stands of young longleaf on private land, we must work hard to maintain fire in the ecosystem and increase the private land acreage being managed with prescribed burning. If you are a private landowner and are actively burning, congratulations and keep up the good work! If you are not prescribed burning your property, I encourage you to take the Certified Prescribed Fire courses offered in your state by your State Forestry Commission and get out and burn with a certified and experienced neighbor or friend. When you can interpret the fire weather forecasts on the State Forestry Commission website and when you have a little experience, put your knowledge into action on your own property. Call a couple friends to help, establish your fire lines and start small and burn carefully. You will be amazed at how quickly the plants and wildlife respond to properly applied prescribed fire. Have a wonderful Spring!

SPRING MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST

- Assess winter tree plantings for early mortality from freeze damage or other factors.
- Uncover and/or lift viable longleaf seedlings that were planted too deep. Order seedlings for future plantings.
- Spray or mow to control herbaceous competition on former agricultural sites.
- Fall herbicide site preparation treatments may be effective, if early spring timber harvests allow sufficient time for resprouting of hardwoods and shrubs.
- Burn young longleaf stands that have been invaded by short needle pines that are too large to control with winter burns.
- Using growing season fire in wiregrass stands will promote viable wiregrass seed and more fall color from wildflowers like blazing star.
- Spring brings: turkey season, dewberries, blackberries, blueberries, shadbush, morel mushrooms, wood sorrel, wild onions, and greenbrier tips – among a host of other wild edibles.

UPCOMING EVENTS

2014

11th Annual NFWF-Southern Company Stewardship Partners Meeting
April 8-10, 2014
Biloxi, MS

Ecological Forestry Workshop
April 28-May 1, 2014
J.W. Jones Ecological Research Center at Ichauway
gallery.mailchimp.com/3cfb3d80b9b46c3d01a8eeaa1/files/EFW_brochure_2014_Apr.pdf

Conference on Ecological and Ecosystem Restoration
July 28-August 1, 2014
New Orleans, Louisiana
www.conference.ifas.ufl.edu/CEER2014/index.html

Understory 201 Academy
September 30-October 2, 2014
Location to be determined

10th Regional Longleaf Conference & 9th Eastern Native Grass Symposium
October 21-24, 2014
Mobile, AL

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GREEN SIDE UP

By Mark Hainds, The Longleaf Alliance

Advice from Mark

Longleaf in Georgia during 2014 snowstorm. Photo by Bryan Pike.

Freeze damage is a perennial concern when planting longleaf pine seedlings. If a cold front with hard, dry winds with temperatures in the 20's passes through a given area soon after planting, needles of newly planted seedlings typically turn yellow, and then brown. Discolored needles alone are not cause for alarm. If however, temperatures drop to the teens or single digits, there is an increased chance of dead or damaged seedlings. Very low temperatures freeze cells in the cambium, disrupting cell walls and essentially girdling the seedling.

Check for freeze damage by scraping away the thin layer of bark on the taproot with a thumbnail. This will expose the cambium of the seedling. If the cambium is white or cream colored, that is a good indicator of little or no freeze damage. If the cambium is tan or brown in color, those are good indicators of severe freeze damage.

Seedlings that have been killed by freeze damage will quickly become brown, dry, and brittle. In the spring months after planting, another quick method to check for mortality is to push the terminal bud with your finger. If the seedling is alive, the terminal bud will be green and flexible. If the seedling is dead, the terminal bud will easily break off.

The Longleaf Alliance has a 45 minute DVD on the subject of "Container Grown Longleaf Pine Seedling Quality". This DVD covers a host of seedling quality issues, including recognition of freeze-damaged seedlings. It is available for $10.00 from the main office in Andalusia.

Bill Pickins, a forester with the NC Forest Service, reported freeze damage from newly planted, container-grown longleaf pine seedlings this winter. Bill reported that "More exposed seedlings from shallow planting seem to be most severely damaged." This is consistent with freeze damage The Longleaf Alliance witnessed at the Geneva State Forest following a 200-acre planting of container-grown longleaf pine.

Additional factors that may predispose longleaf to increased freeze damage are:

1: Late plantings that occur shortly before extreme cold weather.
2: Smaller root collar diameter (RCD) seedlings.
3: Shallow planting
4: Open, exposed planting sites where seedlings are not sheltered from desiccating winds.

To minimize the risk of freeze, we recommend planting as early in the fall as possible - given adequate soil moisture. Seedlings that are already well established and growing seem more resilient in severe weather. To further minimize risk of freeze damage, plant good quality seedlings with large RCDs.

On heavier soils and at the northern edge of longleaf's natural range, it may also be wise to plant with the bud just above the soil surface. In our numerous planting depth studies, longleaf seedlings appear to profit from shallow planting with the bud and the plug exposed. However, these benefits may disappear in the face of extreme cold fronts experienced soon after planting.

Snow on newly planted longleaf field. Photo by Mark Hainds.

Prescribed burn in young longleaf stand. Photo by Mark Hainds.

BURNING YOUNG LONGLEAF

Mark,

I would like to conduct an early burn and spot replant on 3 acres of young LL, some are still in the grass stage with some 1 to 2 feet in height.

We have had two frosts and should get a couple more frosts before Thanksgiving. I would like to burn, weather permitting during the Thanksgiving holiday.

Please advise to any do's and don'ts or if it would be better to burn in January and replant then.

Thanks in advance,
Darin, MS

We often use prescribed fire with our young longleaf, even in this supposedly most vulnerable stage, when seedlings are one-to-four feet tall. So far, at the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center, we have not had a fire with excessive mortality of planted or naturally regenerated longleaf seedlings.

January and February are months to introduce fire to young longleaf. Cooler weather, low humidity, and good winds allow us to push fire quickly through young longleaf, minimizing fire residence time.

Robust seedlings are hard to kill, while unhealthy, stressed seedlings will perish at much higher rates. Disease and/or competition issues may lead to higher mortality with a prescribed fire, but there is a good chance that many of these seedlings would perish even if they were not exposed to prescribed fire.

Our biggest reason for using prescribed fire early is to reduce stocking of other naturally regenerated pine seedlings such as loblolly & slash pine. In other parts of the range, landowners burn to reduce competition from Virginia, shortleaf, and sand pine seedlings. In some portions of the longleaf range, burning to reduce brownspot needleblight is a common management practice.

If the other short-needled pines have grown to several feet in height, it may be time to use more aggressive burning strategies. Loblolly and slash pine are surprisingly resistant to dormant season burns once they are head high to an average forester. In these cases, we have used spring or summer burns to dramatically reduce stocking of the short-needle pines.

An excellent source of information on this subject is Longleaf Note #13: The Pine that Fire Built – Burning Young Longleaf. Request a free copy from The Longleaf Alliance if you are considering burning your young longleaf pine stand.

The Next Onslaught of Large Flower Partridge Pea

Mark,

Yesterday, I looked at a client's tract near Albany, Georgia. We planted 100 acres there 3 years ago with containerized longleaf and had excellent first year survival. The tract is now virtually 99+% dead apparently caused by the mid-western partridge pea that was required to be planted in compliance with the federal reforestation program. This whole scenario is new to me since I have, for the most part, been retired for the past 3 or 4 years.

I need to bring myself up to speed on this problem immediately, and collect all of the intelligence available to do so. Therefore, if the Longleaf Alliance has anything in print available to the public on this problem I would very much like to get copies.

Many Thanks,
Rich, GA

Unfortunately, hundreds of acres of longleaf pine in the Conservation Reserve Program were sown with an aggressive large flower-partridge pea cultivar called "Lark." In many cases, this form of partridge pea dominated sites, leading to excessive mortality of planted longleaf pine seedlings from the fungus *Rhizoctonia*. The Longleaf Alliance visited many afflicted sites in Georgia and Alabama, and we recently received a call on this subject from NRCS personnel in South Carolina.

Alliance personnel conducted an herbicide trial over planted longleaf with partridge peas in Geneva County, Alabama. We summarized the findings and the issues in a free Webinar titled: Large Flower Partridge Pea in Longleaf Pine Plantings: The Plant, The Issues, The Answers. A link is available at: www.longleafalliance.org/archives/webinars-1.

While visiting a landholding in southwest Georgia, the landowner, Mr. John Izard, showed us an alternative method to herbicides for controlling large flower partridge pea. On several old field longleaf plantings, they mowed every other row of

Large Flower Partridge Pea in Longleaf Pine Plantings: The Plant, The Issues, The Answers. A link is available through The Longleaf Alliance website at: www.longleafalliance.org/archives/webinars-1.

Mowed path through a sea of partridge pea. Photo by Mark Hainds.

their longleaf stands so that one side of each planted row was exposed to sunlight and air flow. When the mowed side grew to the height of their seedlings, they mowed the alternate rows. This practice dramatically reduced mortality from the *Rhizoctonia* fungus. Mr. Izard reports that they killed much of their partridge pea by mowing it after it had grown 1-2' tall.

If landowners have access to mowing equipment, they can decide which option is cheaper for their situation: spraying herbicides (Transline worked best in our study) or mowing repeatedly. In some cases, a combination of mowing and herbicide applications may be the best remedy.

Remember, large flower partridge pea germinates later than many herbaceous competitors. Mowing or herbicide applications will not be effective until the plants are actively growing. Across much of the longleaf range, partridge pea shows up towards the end of April or the first week in May.

FIRE *in* TRANSITION

By Kevin Hiers and David Grimm, Eglin Air Force Base

Prescribed fire at Blackwater River State Forest. Photo by Beth Maynor Young.

The critical need for conducting prescribed burns year round to meet a variety of objectives is now universally accepted across the longleaf pine belt. Many longleaf enthusiasts get sidelined while debating artificially precise definitions for terms like "growing season." Instead, these managers should focus on objectives and conditions that vary from year to year. The late Bob Mitchell used to laugh at the idea of a hard and fast definition of the growing season—saying the growing season was 364 days a year with January 1st being dormant on general principle. Nonetheless, he recognized the fascinating dynamics of transition season burning from late winter into the spring, but more so in the variability of fire behavior and vegetative response. In practice, it is the seasonal transition that makes burning for many different objectives possible.

To Bob's point, there is no hard and fast end to the winter (think Punxsutawney Phil each February 2), and the year-to-year variation in weather is critical to fire effects in the transitional months from winter through spring. March first is not the same each year, and because of the tremendous difference in potential temperature and humidity from one day to the next, weather in transition months allows for a wide range of fire behaviors to meet objectives. The cold fronts, which still dominate much of the southeast in Late February through early May, produce some of the most productive burn days in the region.

Longer days and big swings in temperature may produce the year's lowest relative humidity (RH). These low humidities can dip into the teens after cold fronts, representing both opportunities and hazards. Some wetland features, hardwood encroached forests, and lighter fuels, may burn extremely well under these dry conditions creating both an opportunity for fire to spread into hard-to-burn areas, but also producing potentially devastating results in heavier forested areas. Since RH is the hardest weather variable to accurately predict, burners should monitor it carefully rather than trusting forecasts. Days with strong directional winds and low RH represent great opportunities to push fire through light fuels on game lands that are burned annually.

The inherent variability of spring offers many opportunities to accomplish burning objectives in a variety of wetland communities associated with longleaf pine forests. Early in the transitional period, many evergreen shrubs, such as titi, reach seasonally low leaf moisture and burn readily. This low fuel moisture combined with potentially low humidity allows managers to reclaim shrub-dominated wetlands, but it also creates the potential for escaped prescribed burns and dramatic fire behavior. As winter transitions to spring, increased

Wild turkeys in south Georgia field. Photo by Beth Maynor Young.

evapotranspiration rapidly dries areas that are normally too wet to burn. This creates opportunities to push fire through ecotones and wetlands.

Longleaf pines are among the most fire tolerant trees in North America, but this time of year they are certainly not fire proof. Spring fire practitioners must take care to avoid damaging longleaf regeneration when large, white, terminal buds have extended beyond their protective sheath of foliage. Typically in late March to early May, these buds can be quite vulnerable to heat, and will droop depressingly when exposed to hot fire. Some managers can carefully use this response to prune lower branches in older limby longleaf plantations in order to improve stand quality. However, managers should be cautious not to damage timber or significantly reduce growth if your objectives include economic return.

Green-up of understory vegetation is one of the most critical elements to meeting objectives for burning in the transitional months of spring. In the understory, lush new growth during these transitional months moderates fire behavior with its high moisture content, but the timing of green-up can be highly variable depending on the weather. Bud break of understory oaks and other hardwoods can also moderate fire behavior, acting as a heat sink. Fire during this early period of leaf out can be used effectively to topkill midstory hardwoods. Additionally, burning just after green-up may enhance aesthetics by synchronizing a spring flowering response that produces a late-spring floral display.

Late freezes and early warm spells can have dramatic effects on hardwood leaf out, longleaf bud break, and green up of understory vegetation. In 2013, a warm February led to longleaf bud extension very early, but a series of late frosts in March delayed bud growth well into April, leaving managers as confused as the trees about whether those longleaf buds were vulnerable to fire or not. Particularly cold winters, like the one we just experienced, may totally topkill understory grasses

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and forbs. This creates a highly flammable fuel bed, which may in turn yield thorough burns and unexpectedly dramatic fire behavior.

Rapid green-up of understory vegetation after fire in these transition months is perhaps most critical to meeting wildlife objectives--something that quail managers in the longleaf pine belt have known since the early research of Herbert Stoddard. While winter burns may reduce food and cover for wildlife species for an extended period of time, spring burns are followed by rapid vegetative re-growth and habitat restoration. The rapid growth of grasses and forbs produce cover not only for gamebirds, but also for small mammals which are important components of longleaf ecosystem foodwebs. Research from the Jones Research Center has shown the impacts of large burned areas on the predation of many species following fire. Alternatively, turkeys are attracted to freshly burned areas, finding ample food and easy access in the absence of vegetation. Turkeys (and thus many turkey hunters) are often seen foraging in burned areas during these transitional months.

The variability of weather and vegetation interact to make the transition months of late winter and early spring one of the most interesting and important opportunities to meet management objectives with prescribed burning. The nuance of vegetation recovery and wildlife response gives managers an immediate opportunity to measure the success of their burning. Of course, the diversity and complexity of longleaf pine forests cannot be summarized in a 1000 word essay. Management for rare wildlife, such as flatwoods salamanders, gopher frogs, or unique wetlands features like seepage slopes and depressional wetlands, require an even keener eye for fire effects and natural history to meet those conservation objectives. We hope that you have many safe and effective prescribed burning opportunities this spring and meet your land management objectives.

Terminal bud of longleaf pine following a prescribed burn. Photo by Beth Maynor Young.

By Carol Denhof, The Longleaf Alliance

PLANT SPOTLIGHT

{ MOUNTAIN LAUREL *KALMIA LATIFOLIA* L. }

Closeup of mountain laurel flowers. Photo by Carol Denhof

Distribution map for Mountain Laurel. PLANTS Database.

Longleaf and mountain laurel growing on Chalk Cliffs at Hitchcock Woods. Photo by Carol Denhof.

What?? Mountain laurel growing with longleaf?? A couple of years ago I was visiting Hitchcock Woods in Aiken, SC and found these two species growing together in a most spectacular setting. In this urban forest in the sandhills of South Carolina, the mountain laurel, along with other disjunct mountain species, grows in an area called the Chalk Cliffs. These cliffs are found on hard clay domes known as Vaucluse-Udorthent slopes. This habitat with its 100+ year old longleaf trees is yet another example of the diversity found within the longleaf ecosystem. A truly unique place to visit if you are ever in the Aiken area.

Description

Mountain laurel is a perennial evergreen shrub that is a member of the Blueberry family. This shrub can reach up to 10 feet tall with stems up to 4 inches thick. It has alternately arranged leaves that are smooth and elliptical in shape. This plant produces showy clusters of pinkish tinged white flowers from April to May.

Distribution & Habitat

Mountain laurel is normally found on cool slopes or streamside bluffs. However, it can sometimes be found growing on clay slopes with longleaf in the sandhills region where the coastal plain meets the piedmont. The overall distribution ranges from southern Maine to Indiana south to north Florida and southeastern Louisiana.

Wildlife Uses

Mountain laurel, along with Fringe Tree and Ash, are host plants for the laurel sphinx moth (*Sphinx kalmiae* J.E. Smith). In addition, this shrub provides good cover for many different species of wildlife and the flowers are attractive to pollinators in the spring.

Other common species

There are several other species of *Kalmia* that occur in the southeastern US. These include sheep laurel (*Kalmia angustifolia*), white wicky (*K. cuneata*), and hairy wicky (*K. hirsuta*). Among other morphological differences, the main difference between these species and mountain laurel is the overall size of the plants. These species are much smaller in stature than the mountain laurel.

Commercial Availability

Mountain laurel is widely available in the nursery industry. In addition to the species, a multitude of cultivars can be purchased from growers across the US.

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A TIME TO PLANT

By John Seymour, Roundstone Native Seed

Spring is here and with it warm weather, a new year's growth, and farmers planting conventional crops.

Native legume seed produced at Lolly Creek in southwest Georgia. Photo by Carol Denhof.

Farmers plant in the spring not because it better suits their business models, nor does it better suit paper work for their fiscal year. They do it as a result of eons of learned knowledge of our Earth, its seasons, and how the good Lord made things to work since we were hunter gatherers. The planting of native understory plants should be no different. We learn from Mother Nature and do our best to minimize failures, taking into consideration variables such as introduced weeds and a means to make seed have contact with the soil.

The first step is to create a mix of native plants that will best suit the environment in which you plan on planting. Is it wet? Is it dry? Is there shade or is it full sun? Next, what are your goals: quail habitat, capacity of the plants to carry fire, pollinator habitat, or are you looking to recreate the understory with its abundance of diversity that benefits all of these things?

Don't let figuring out what species to plant and planting at what rates be daunting to you. There are several native seed companies out there that have science based mixes tailored to specific habitats, or they can talk with you and design a custom mix for your site. You can also talk with your local NRCS or Fish & Wildlife biologists to steer you in the right direction. Now that you have decided what to plant, we have to make sure that the right site preparation is performed.

There are basically two main reasons that planting natives in the understory fail. The first is inadequate site preparation which leads to weed competition. Some sites may be old fields with newly planted pines. If this is the case, the use of herbicides before we plant will greatly increase chances for success. Normally, two applications of glyphosate will kill many problem weeds. If Bermuda grass and/or Bahia are an issue, herbicides such as Arsenal or Chopper will need to be used. There are differences in application rates and timing of herbicides for different sites. To determine what your site will need, you can refer to our establishment guide "Six Basic Elements, For a Successful Native Grass and Forb

Native seed being planted with a warm season grass drill. Photo courtesy of Roundstone Native Seed.

Indiangrass plant resulting from seeding with native species in a CRP planting. Photo by Carol Denhof.

Establishment" that can be found on our website (www.roundstoneseed.com) or contact your local NCRS office for exact details. In situations where the soil has been scraped or an area has been clear cut, weed competition is not going to be a big issue. In these instances we can go ahead and plant providing the ground isn't too rough.

The second main reason for failure of most understory plantings is planting too deep. As a rule of thumb, when planting native species, anything deeper than ¼ inch just won't come up. When we plant we like to see about 1/3 of the seed on top of the ground. If the ground is level enough to facilitate it, we prefer to use warm season seed drills to ensure our seed mix stays blended and does not settle out. The drills also allow us to dictate seed depth through the use of the depth bands which are built onto the machine. If drills aren't available, or your ground won't allow for their use due to stumps, stick debris, etc., seed can be broadcast onto bare soil. Native seeds by nature are often "fluffy" due to awns, beards, and appendages and will not flow through a broadcast seeder. If this is the case, the seeds can be mixed with kitty litter or clay bentonite to make them flow.

At this point, just like the conventional farmer, we have our seed in the ground hopefully by late spring or early summer. Here is where we differ though. Commercial crops such as soybeans, corn, or peanuts have been bred over time to spread very quickly to get moisture after they are planted. Natives on the other hand can have up to a 70 day germination window and some seeds can remain dormant for several years. This is nature's way of making sure seeds and plants will sprout and endure no matter what the seasons may bring. Also be mindful that we aren't planting quick growing crops. Natives will put most of their energy into growing roots the first year and will mature over the next several years.

What you have planted is primarily a perennial community of plants that will persist for decades. The next time you walk through a longleaf forest and you look up and enjoy the beauty and the grandeur of the trees, look down and realize that the trees are only a part of the system. Understand that you are standing in the middle of one of the most diverse ecosystems on the planet and although many times when we focus on just one species in an area, that area can have as many as ninety species in a square meter. It is very easy to miss the miracle. Don't miss the understory for the trees.

by Paul Langford

GROWING A LEGACY

As a boy I spent many summer nights in the swing on my grandfather's front porch, listening to stories about his life in the "piney woods" in south Alabama.

Those evenings were magical with the sounds of bobwhites, whippoorwills, crickets, cicadas, frogs, and owls flavoring stories about mules, buggies, gophers, syrup-soppin', well digging, hog killing, house fires, and anything involving our family roots, already grown deep into the soil of Covington County. On a few really special nights his dogs would be tracking a raccoon or an occasional fox, and I would impatiently watch for him to lean forward, spit into the bushes, and listen intently for the indication that we could go across the dirt road, past still-standing cotton houses and a favorite fish pond and into the night to join the end of the hunt along the closest stream. Those memories come rushing back as I walk on timberland that was the final destination of several of those memorable nights from long ago.

Two generations later, I am only now beginning to appreciate what makes such rich memories. Families with a tie to land and a love for it have a different perspective than those who do not. Childhood memories are special, but a family heritage with a bedrock faith and a hard-working family focus is priceless. My grandparents bought 80 acres of mostly cutover timberland from the Miller-Brent Lumber Company in 1913. Walter B. Langford built a house, barn, and smokehouse; dug a well; put up fences; and finished clearing the land sufficiently to plant cotton, corn, vegetables, sugar cane, sweet potatoes, peach trees, pecan trees and oak trees around the house the next spring. They raised seven children through the depression with a hard-working, God-fearing, stay out of debt mentality that served them well. They all graduated from high school and college with four graduate degrees, all five brothers served in World War II and returned, and all had successful careers away from the family farm…but they just couldn't stay away.

My father, Jordan W. Langford, didn't play golf or fish or hunt, but he loved and understood the land, acquiring and managing about two thousand acres the old fashioned way before his death in 1997. Weekends walking through the woods with him taught me that trees are special, and wood is good. More importantly, I learned that if you were willing to work at it, these acres could be made more productive with advice and assistance from various professionals.

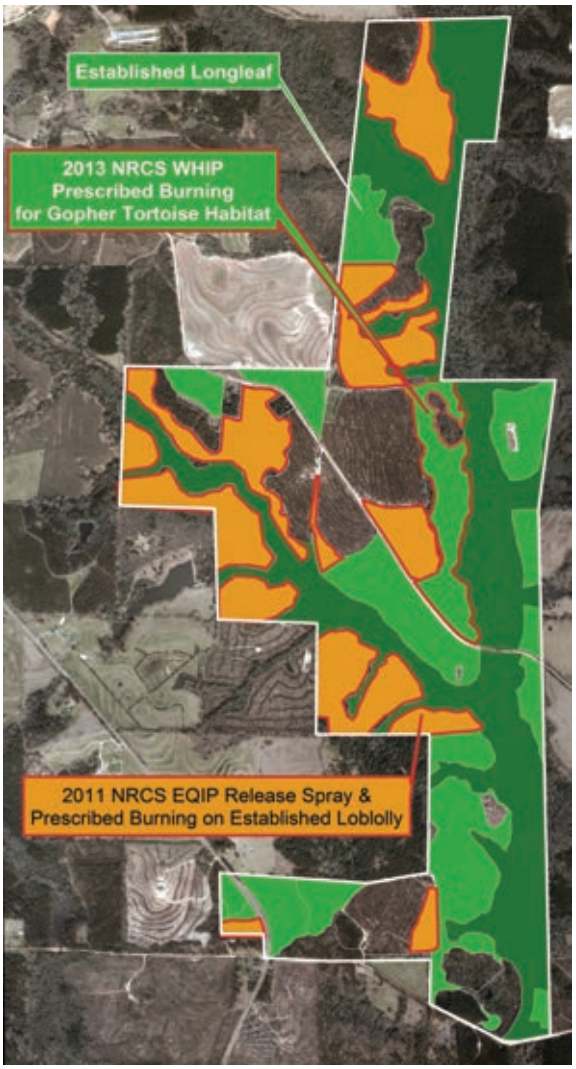
When we weren't walking, I often sat in a 53 Chevrolet outside the Soil Conservation Service Offices (now NRCS) in three counties, wondering what could be so interesting to my father inside. Recently, I returned with my brother Bill to

one of the tracts that the Crenshaw County SCS/NRCS had helped my father restore. What had been a devastated landscape following iron ore mining is now a vibrant mixed use forest, punctuated by towering longleaf pines.

I completed my engineering career about the time of my father's passing, and began to manage the family timberland during my mother's illness. I developed my own relationship with his consulting forester, took every training opportunity, and joined every organization available to private forest landowners. Basically, I sought help wherever it could be found. I was surprised to discover that Alabama had so many organizations working together to help landowners. The local Covington County Forestry Committee (CCFC) even welcomed a somewhat naive engineer. The NRCS, FSA, AFC, USFS, and Solon Dixon personnel were not only helpful, but it made them happy to help me. There is an added benefit that accrues from a family heritage of lives well-lived. People that I did not know were more than willing to help me because they had known my father or his brothers. Uncle John introduced me to the advantages of longleaf and using prescribed fire in a mentoring relationship that kept me going, and his larger impact on the people and land of Covington County cannot be overstated.

My land is in one 652 acre block as shown on the adjacent map. Poley Creek and tributaries create 223 acres of SMZ (dark green) leaving many smaller loblolly, longleaf, and mixed natural stands. Much of the loblolly (~90 acres) has been thinned and burned multiple times and can be harvested when economic conditions are right. The remaining loblolly (~150 acres shown as orange on the map) is 10-18 years old. It is in good condition following a helicopter release spray and understory burning conducted as part of an NRCS Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP) in 2011. This one program improved forest health and wildlife habitat more than all prior cumulative burns and thinning, but it had been cost prohibitive prior to the availability of generic imazapyr and NRCS funding.

There are currently 175 acres of longleaf up to 15 years old shown in lighter green on the map, and they are burned on a 2-3 year cycle. The NRCS is also supporting this objective via a Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) contract on 30 acres intended to improve gopher tortoise habitat. Gopher tortoises are not nearly endangered on my land, but the WHIP contract makes me, the NRCS, and the gophers happier.



Map of Langford Property.

Before I joined The Longleaf Alliance in 2002, my land had already achieved Treasure Forest, Tree Farm, and Stewardship Forest Certifications. But the audacity of the organization that Rhett Johnson and Dean Gjerstad started - The Longleaf Alliance, with the intent of halting the decline, and possibly beginning the restoration of the once dominant ecosystem in the southern coastal plain, struck a chord that resonated in ways I could not ignore. The added wildlife benefits and reduced risk of casualty losses due to fire, insects, disease, or extreme weather were well documented. The economics supported longleaf in longer term rotations on land I already owned, especially when considering longleaf incentive programs from NRCS. However, a more subjective rationale became increasingly important. The sense of grandeur of an ecosystem nearly lost and the childhood stories about the "piney woods" became palpable companions. The added strength and character of old longleaf pine that I wanted for furniture projects was just another motivation.

As a first-year Baby Boomer I recognize that any significant retirement benefits that arise from my timberland will come from already established stands. What I plant from now on will likely accrue to either my wife's or our children's benefit. I sincerely believe that working towards a thriving multi-aged longleaf pine forest will not only maximize that benefit in practical ways, but will also align with their desire to achieve the highest aesthetic and environmental goals possible for our land. Achieving such goals will require a multi-generational focus, but I can be the first to walk in the direction of that dream. We can maximize the possibility of returning this small piece of land to "piney woods" as part of the grander Longleaf Alliance vision. Therefore, I intend to plant containerized longleaf pine seedlings as each of the currently existing

{continued on page 14}

Ten year old longleaf reaching for the sky. Photo by Paul Langford.

loblolly stands reach maturity and continue to support the objectives of The Longleaf Alliance with a renewed emphasis on understory restoration. I attended the October 2013 Understory Academy and am already excited about seeing both near and long-term benefits. I am especially appreciative of the continuing support from Carol and Mark, who provided a sample of native grass seeds obtained from the Solon Dixon Center and nearby forests: they have already been distributed on recently planted land.

I am honored to be part of a family legacy most recently passed from my Uncle John. His legacy continues to inspire when I see longleaf thriving in stands all over the county. It is especially meaningful to know that I have planted 67 acres of longleaf with the last batch of seedlings that he nurtured from seed in a once small nursery behind his home. In a larger sense I am aware of how blessed I have been to benefit from both a rich family heritage and to join in a grand vision. We will restore some of the lost grandeur to ground where virgin longleaf once stood.

Before my grandfather planted this cutover land to cotton, my father's first paying job was to dig, burn, and remove remnants of the longleaf pine stumps. He was paid 10 cents per stump. When I sit in the swing on that same porch where I sat enthralled 60 years ago I see ten-year old longleaf reclaiming part of a heritage.

Why would an old man plant trees he will never see to maturity? How will he convince a young man to follow that same vision? Only time can answer those difficult questions, but for now, longleaf reaches for the sky, and the legacy is still growing.

Longleaf Alliance staff and Longleaf Academy attendees at Weymouth Woods, NC. Photo by LLA.

a new Farm Bill

By Ad Platt, The Longleaf Alliance

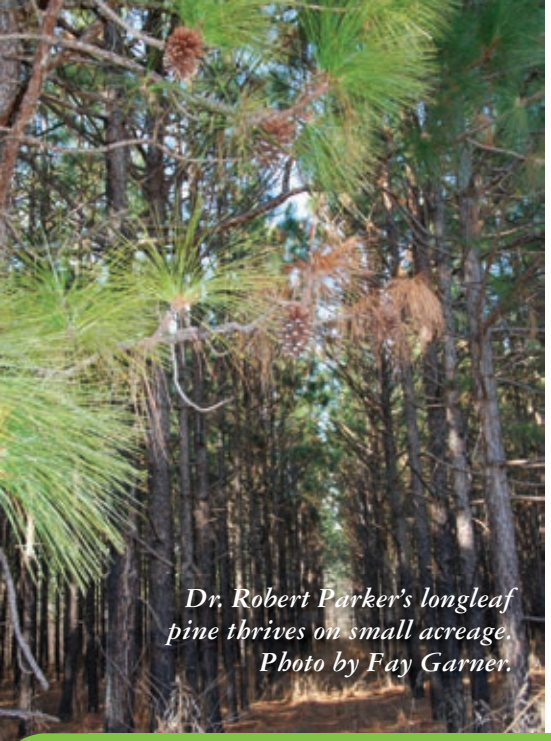
Technical assistance to landowners has always been one of the most important functions of The Longleaf Alliance. Part of that assistance is pointing to the opportunities for financial incentives, sometimes called cost share, that may be available for landowners. These differ between states and even within parts of states, but can significantly improve the economics of a longleaf decision, and often expand the access to other forms of technical assistance as well.

In the last week of January, House and Senate negotiators finally came to a bipartisan agreement on the next Farm Bill, which represents the largest single federal investment in private-lands conservation. The Farm Bill funds many programs that provide important benefits to all Americans. These programs have been especially important for promoting more longleaf restoration, primarily due to the greater potential for wildlife habitat improvements. The new 2014 Farm Bill was signed into law on February 7, and has much to offer for longleaf restoration. Important provisions of the new legislation include an extension of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), but with acreage gradually decreasing over the next five years. Specific forest management practices allowable under CRP include thinning, harvesting pine straw, and prescribed fire. Additionally, CRP will provide incentive payments for thinning where markets are inadequate to support it otherwise. Within Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs, WHIP will be merged into EQIP going forward. Stewardship Contracting on National Forest lands has been permanently authorized instead of expiring at the end of 2013. With a new focus on landscape management, the new legislation will also improve the opportunity to support longleaf restoration efforts within those Significant Geographic Areas (SGA's) identified in America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative.

SOME OF THE MORE POPULAR INCENTIVE PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:	ADMINISTERED BY:	CONTACT:
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)	Your County FSA office
Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW)	USDA NRCS(Natural Resources Conservation Service)	Your County USDA NRCS District Conservationist
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	USDA NRCS(Natural Resources Conservation Service)	Your County USDA NRCS District Conservationist
Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW)	US Fish and Wildlife Service	www.fws.gov/southeast/partners

There are often other kinds of assistance for those choosing longleaf. Your State Forestry, Wildlife, or Conservation agency may offer their own incentives to encourage private landowners to reforest, or improve stands and wildlife habitats. Non-governmental organizations, including The Longleaf Alliance, also sponsor landowner incentive programs on a frequent basis. In the last two years, the Alliance has been able to offer grant funded cost share in certain locations of Alabama, Florida, South Carolina, and Georgia.



Dr. Robert Parker's longleaf pine thrives on small acreage. Photo by Fay Garner.

Dr. Parker's longleaf pine stand will be burned again this year. Photo by Fay Garner.

LONGLEAF

• Thrives on Small Acreage •

By Fay Garner, Natural Resources Conservation Service

In 1997, Dr. Robert Parker had 10 acres with sandy soil on his 500 acre tree farm in Elmore County, Alabama. He said it seemed like this area would not grow anything. He had heard about the hardiness of longleaf pine, so he planted about 500 bare root longleaf seedlings per acre in the distressed area. He was surprised at the results. He had a 90 percent survival rate.

Dr. Parker said that his site prep was different for the longleaf than for his other pine stands. "You think that it would be easy to plant trees in an old cotton field," said Dr. Parker, "but that is not necessarily the case. The grass always comes in." He sprayed the trees with *Velpar for two years. "The trees did not stay in the grass stage hardly any," he said. He indicated that it may not be recommended to spray the herbicide the second year, but it worked for him. His longleaf are growing fast and are very healthy.

Most of Dr. Parker's farm is planted to loblolly with some slash and shortleaf pines, and hardwoods. He said that he knows his 10 acres of longleaf are not enough to retire on, but he said the trees give him a lot of pleasure. "I just love to look at longleaf," he said. "There is nothing much prettier than the clean, semi-open area of a well-managed longleaf pine stand."

Prescribed burning is very important for the success of pine stands. Dr. Parker became certified and conducts prescribed burns annually on his property. He said. "I burn half of my pines in one year, and the rest the next year."

Dr. Parker's longleaf pines are healthy green sentinels testifying to good tree management. He said that longleaf pines are now his favorite trees and he wished he had planted all of his pine stands to longleaf.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers financial assistance to establish longleaf pine. Practices include tree/shrub establishment on as little as 5 acres, prescribed burning, forest stand improvement, and others. Visit your local NRCS office for more information or visit www.al.nrcs.usda.gov.

* Disclaimer: Trade names are used solely to provide specific information. Mention of a trade name does not constitute a guarantee of the product by the U.S. Department of Agriculture nor does it imply endorsement by the Department or the Natural Resources Conservation Service over comparable products that are not named

By Mike Black, National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative

News from the Longleaf Partnership Council

I do my best thinking while I am in the woods… and on a recent trip my mind went to longleaf pine and the entire infrastructure that supports the restoration effort. I could spend a few moments talking about accomplishments in the recent months and years, but instead I am going to pass along some needed thanks and recognition.

Ecosystem Support Team Burn Boss Bob Wilken leading GCPEP team in partner prescribed burn. Photo by The Longleaf Alliance.

Picture for a moment the entire America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative (ALRI), as a machine with interconnected gears. This was only a vision years ago, but it now runs smoothly, effectively and with increasing productivity. Many facets could be considered individual gears – the funders that provide the dollars to make it all happen. Another gear is the Federal Coordinating Committee who has provided excellent oversight and advice. Another significant interlocking gear is the Longleaf Partnership Council that is actually composed of over 30 smaller gears representing partners from federal and state agencies, NGO's, academia and the private sector. All these gears work in conjunction with one another to advance the restoration, development and maintenance of the longleaf resource. Take one gear out and the whole machine grinds to a halt.

Visualize for a moment one significant gear locked into the Longleaf Partnership Council portion of the machine. This gear represents the Implementation Teams and it is unique because this is a special gear. This one is truly "where the rubber meets the road."

Implementation teams are now in every Significant Geographic Area (SGA). They are large and small, old and new and each has a unique character and partner support based on the local culture, needs and their individual organic development. Some of the individuals on the teams are wholly or partially funded to support longleaf implementation, but the vast majority of individuals are not. They are part of the ALRI effort through personal interest and dedication as well as the support of their respective agencies or organizations. Often work on longleaf and related projects are an addition to their already full job description.

I have attended many local and state implementation team meetings to provide support and also learn how each operates as a team. I have been very impressed. All work in unique ways to match the needs of their objectives and within available financial and staff resources. These are the teams that plan, coordinate and implement the work on the ground. Many work with boots on the ground and a drip torch in their hand.

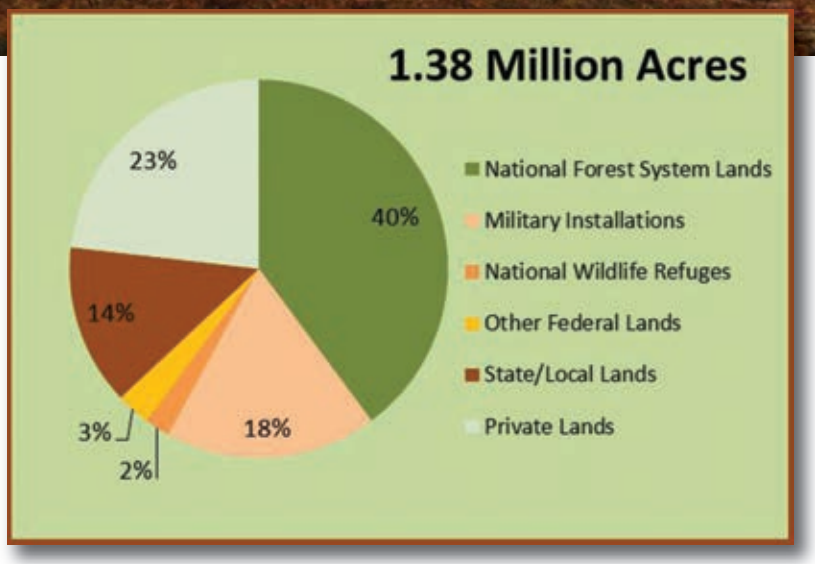
All gears in the ALRI effort are mission critical, but I want to take the time to thank these teams, their members, and the agencies and organizations that support them for the work they do every single day with longleaf. They receive our support, but deserve our recognition.

Thank you!

1.38 Million Acres of Longleaf Restoration Work in 2013

By Glen Gaines, U.S. Forest Service & Clay Ware, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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. Photo by The Longleaf Alliance.



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

The public and private partners involved in the America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative (ALRI) accomplished an impressive 1.38 million acres of longleaf restoration work in 2013 according to a report recently released by the Longleaf Partnership Council. The 2013 Range-wide Accomplishment Report provides the first comprehensive look at the annual work that is occurring to bring back longleaf pine to the southern landscape.

"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 in longleaf pine", says Vernon Compton of The Longleaf Alliance and 2013 Chair of the Longleaf Partnership Council. Over the past decade (2000-2010) trends in longleaf pine acreage increased by about 8 percent. "Maintaining this momentum requires a tremendous effort from all the involved partners in order to annually sustain the extraordinary levels of on-the-ground work needed to achieve our overall range-wide restoration goals" says Compton.

In 2013, the collaborative partnership continued to grow as the number of local implementation teams (LITs) increased to 15 and now cover all the identified significant geographic areas (SGAs) across the range. Around 70% of all the reported accomplishments occurred within these SGAs, primarily due to the work on public lands that anchor these landscapes. The Longleaf Stewardship Fund, administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, has provided much-needed resources contributing to the startup and on-going activities of the LITs, while The Longleaf Alliance and The Nature Conservancy are providing leadership to network their efforts. Expanding the numbers and capabilities of these teams provides the prospect of generating even greater longleaf restoration results in the future, especially on private lands.

Critical to the success of the range-wide effort is the need to maintain and improve existing longleaf pine ecosystems. This involves the expanded use of prescribed burning, especially on private lands, and incorporating other treatments to improve the over-story, mid-story, and understory conditions. In 2013, a remarkable 1.1 million acres of prescribed burning in longleaf pine ecosystems was reported across all ownerships. Approximately 87% of the prescribed burning occurred on

public lands, primarily on National Forest System lands and military installations. An additional 75,000 acres of mechanical and chemical treatments were implemented to improve habitat conditions in longleaf forests, with 68% of these activities occurring on public lands.

The report estimates that 156,000 acres of longleaf pine were established in 2013, with 86% of these future forests established on private lands. USDA Farm Bill programs on private lands contributed to 26% of the overall accomplishments, while around 46% of longleaf establishment totals are projected to be occurring on private lands without the assistance of publically funded incentive programs.

The report points to the need to explore additional opportunities to work with private landowners (both small and large) to increase prescribed burning and other activities on private lands, which make up over 60% of the existing range-wide longleaf pine acreage. All the findings and recommendations of the full report can be found on the ALRI partnership website americaslongleaf.org and The Longleaf Alliance website www.longleafalliance.org.

Longleaf Pine Mapping Effort and Stand Level Database Moving Forward

By John Gilbert, Auburn University

The Longleaf Alliance, Inc. and the Longleaf Pine Stand Dynamics Lab (LPSDL) have been working together for the past few years with numerous partners on an effort to develop a GIS database of existing longleaf pine stand level data. Through support from an anonymous donation, a product from the database will now be completed for public release. We are working to merge the collected data and datasets into a working GIS database for existing spatial data for longleaf pine stands that includes public and private lands within the historic range of longleaf pine. Please see the websites below for more information, deadlines for data submissions, and a release date:

http://www.auburn.edu/academic/forestry_wildlife/lpsdl/mappingandinventory.html
http://www.longleafalliance.org/restoring-and-managing/mapping-longleaf-pine
Please also contact John Gilbert at gilbejo@auburn.edu (334-329-0236) for more information.

The Chattahoochee Fall Line Conservation Partnership (CFLCP) Expands Habitat

By Michele Elmore, The Nature Conservancy

Sandpine removal with the promise of a longleaf revival on Partnership lands. Photo by Wade Harrison.

During the 2014 winter, the CFLCP planted longleaf on over 400 acres and sandpine was harvested from 140 acres of prime sandhill habitat to make room for future longleaf pine plantings. The CFLCP also hired a seasonal fire team for a third season and has set a prescribed fire goal of 8,000 acres burned within the CFLCP Significant Geographic Area.

In partnership with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, over 6,000 acres on the Fall Line have been surveyed for gopher tortoises (*Gopherus polyphemus*). These surveys have revealed significant tortoise populations in the Sandhills near Fort Benning with excellent potential to improve additional habitat to promote the tortoise population. In addition, many commensal species were identified including numerous diamondback rattlesnakes (*Crotalus adamanteus*) and the first gopher frog (*Rana capito*) observed on property protected by Fort Benning's buffer program. Juvenile and adult tiger salamanders (*Ambystoma tigrinum*) have been observed from the same area.

Ft. Stewart/Altamaha Longleaf Restoration Partnership a Haven for the Gopher Tortoise

By Randy Tate, The Longleaf Alliance & Matt Elliott, Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Juvenile gopher tortoise. Photo by Matt Elliott

Progress continues on the establishment of the new Ft. Stewart/Altamaha Longleaf Restoration Partnership. All 12 signatories to the Partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) have now signed the MOU and a Steering Committee is in place. The importance of this particular geographic area to the recovery and survival of the gopher tortoise has been demonstrated again recently by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR.)

A team of GA DNR biologists recently completed another survey of gopher tortoises on state and private lands. Surveys conducted by Ft. Stewart staff indicate a population of over 2,600 adult tortoises on the installation. A population of over 800 tortoises was found on Townsend Wildlife Management Area in Long/McIntosh counties. In addition, Moody Forest Natural Area (Appling County) and Penholoway WMA (Wayne County) have seen somewhat of a "baby boom", with percentages of juveniles in the population of 26.3% and 29.3%, respectively. Elsewhere, this percentage is more typically in the 10-15% range.

Apalachicola (ARSA) LIT Puts Pines in the Ground

By Brian Pelc, The Nature Conservancy

V-Blade planting of 96,000 longleaf tubelings at Tyndall Air Force Base in Bay County, FL. Carefully supervised V-blade planting clears a pathway through recently chopped shrubby undergrowth while leaving the topsoil intact. Photo by H. Peterson.

ARSA members rang in the New Year by wrapping up site prep on 640 acres in Washington and Bay counties (Florida Panhandle), readying two sites for longleaf pine planting. Both sites received funding from ARSA'S Apalachicola Longleaf Initiative (ALI), a project funded by National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to increase restoration efforts in the Apalachicola River region. Tyndall Air Force Base received nearly 100,000 containerized longleaf seedlings and contracted V-blade machine planting on 140 acres prepped by the base's Natural Resources staff. Econfina Creek Wildlife Management Area also received trees from ALI. These 363,000 longleaf pines are being hand planted on 500 acres as part of a larger longleaf restoration project. This Econfina Creek project also received funds from The National Wild Turkey Federation that defrayed restoration costs on the remaining 900 project acres. ARSA members will continue to monitor these projects throughout the year while site prep work begins on 200 acres of sandhill restoration at Torreya State Park, Liberty County and 300 acres of flatwoods restoration at Box-R Wildlife Management Area, Franklin County. The Longleaf Alliance also secured funds from American Forests for 133,200 longleaf seedlings to be planted next fall.

ARSA members are also coordinating a new series of private landowner workshops to be held in 2014 and 2015 in various locations across the ARSA region. The first workshop is tentatively set for May 8th in Washington County, FL.

North Carolina's Longleaf Workshop a Huge Success

By Bill Pickens, NC Forest Service

NC Longleaf Coalition and NC Prescribed Fire Council combined efforts to sponsor a workshop titled "Working Together for Longleaf and Prescribed Fire". Over 175 natural resource professionals and prescribed burners attended the event in Wilmington, NC. The keynote speaker, Robert Abernethy of The Longleaf Alliance, started off a day filled with interesting and informative talks. Representatives of America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative, the Southern Fire Exchange, SERPPAS, NC Forest Service Seedling Nursery, NC Prescribed Fire Council, and the NC Longleaf Coalition provided updates to complete a busy day. The next day participants visited the longleaf forests of historic Orton Plantation, an 8400 acre southern plantation along the Cape Fear River just outside of Wilmington.

The North Carolina Longleaf Coalition awarded its first "Illustris Palustris Award" to Susan Miller, Wildlife Biologist with the US Fish & Wildlife Service, during the joint meeting. The annual award is given "In recognition of outstanding contributions to promote the maintenance and restoration of North Carolina's ecosystem". Four prescribed burners were also recognized for their outstanding efforts and accomplishments promoting and applying fire to North Carolina's forests. The NC Prescribed Fire Council recognized Angie Carl of the Nature Conservancy as their Prescribed Burner of the Year. The NC Forest Service recognized Dare County Ranger, Rob Shackleford, as this year's State Forester Prescribed Burning Recipient. Chris Baranski and Brandon Minor received the NC Wildlife Resource Commission Prescribed Burner of the Year Award.

Cape Fear Arch Conservation Collaboration Boosts Longleaf Efforts

By Dan Ryan, The Nature Conservancy

Watching the fire line. Photo by Dan Ryan.

The Cape Fear Arch Local Implementation Team has begun to implement the recently awarded NFWF Longleaf Stewardship Fund project to improve and restore longleaf pine across the southeast coastal plain of North Carolina. The grant covers burning 5,200 acres of longleaf forest, planting 1,200 acres of longleaf seedlings, restoring 1,900 acres of wiregrass, and removing shrubs and other undesirable vegetation from 1,000 acres. The grant-funded work will take place over a two-year period. In addition to The Nature Conservancy, other project partners include the North Carolina Forest Service, the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation, the North Carolina Plant Conservation Program, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, and private landowners including Orton Plantation.

NC Sandhills Conservation Partnership Exceeding Goals

By Ryan Elting, The Nature Conservancy

The Sandhills Longleaf Task Force conducting a dormant-season burn on TNC's Calloway Forest Preserve. Photo by Ryan Elting.

The NC Sandhills Conservation Partnership (NC Sandhills LIT) has begun the second season of its 2012 NFWF Longleaf Stewardship Fund award, with the 6-member Sandhills Longleaf Task Force that is leading and assisting prescribed burns and restoration on conservation partner lands and private lands across the SGA. In 2013, the Task Force burned over 5,300 acres and planted 305 acres of longleaf pines. In addition to prescribed fire and establishment, the grant contributed to a Sandhills Longleaf Landowner Workshop held on December, 13, 2013 in Raeford, NC that attracted 150 private landowner and professional participants, highlighting the critical role of fire, and driving home many other longleaf pine best management practices on an afternoon field trip to private lands..

Onslow Bight LIT Protects 3,900 Acres

By Hervey McIver, The Nature Conservancy

Tract of land within conservation corridor that links Camp Lejeune, Croatan National Forest and Hofmann Forest. Photo by Hervey McIver.

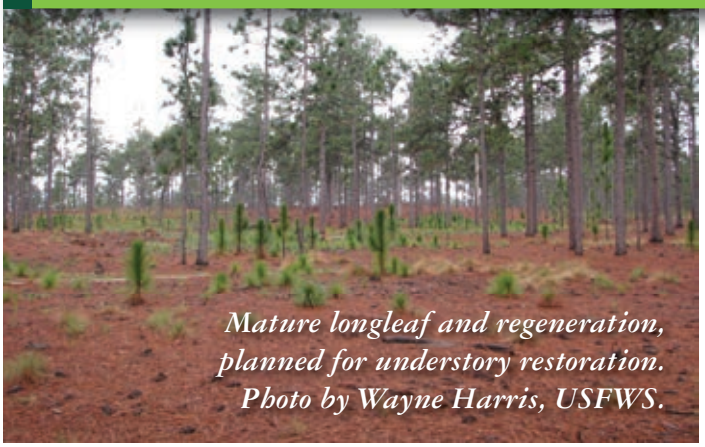
The partners of the Onslow Bight Conservation Forum (OBCF) continue their work to conserve the area's resources with much emphasis placed on the longleaf pine ecosystem.

Land trusts, cooperating with public partners, were able to protect 3,900 acres in 5 new land or easement projects since last summer. All these lands are in priority areas with one lying in the important conservation corridor that links Camp Lejeune, Croatan National Forest and Hofmann Forest. An OBCF objective is to restore the longleaf pine ecosystem within this corridor to connect different red-cockaded woodpecker sub-populations.

Longleaf restoration and prescribed burning continues to move forward supported by a NFWF Longleaf Stewardship grant and a USFWS Partners for Fish & Wildlife grant. Over 100 acres of longleaf is being restored on The Nature Conservancy or NC Coastal Land Trust preserves and 925 acres burned. As part of the current Longleaf Stewardship grant the partners are identifying priority areas outside of existing conservation lands within which to focus private landowner outreach and technical assistance.

The Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership Continues Landscape Level Longleaf Restoration in South Carolina

By Wayne Harris, USFWS



Mature longleaf and regeneration, planned for understory restoration. Photo by Wayne Harris, USFWS.

The Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership (Partnership) made great strides in longleaf restoration this past year. Highlights from 2013 include development of 35 new landowner contracts to site prepare and plant longleaf pines on 1,450 acres of private land, completion of 2 landowner workshops and training related to prescribed fire, development, printing, and distribution of 50 Partnership recognition signs, a joint meeting with the North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership, numerous prescribed burns and timber stand improvement activities, and reception of a 2013 NFWF Longleaf Stewardship Fund grant.

Several events were held in the first quarter of 2014. These included a prescribed fire field day for landowners, a Longleaf 101 course conducted by The Longleaf Alliance at Cheraw State Park, and a 75th Anniversary celebration for Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge held at the Refuge's Lake Bee Recreation Area. In addition to these activities, Jimmy Lisenby started work April 1 as the new Partnership Coordinator. For additional Partnership information, please visit our website www.chesterfieldswcd.com/longleaf.html or email Wayne Harris (billy_harris@fws.gov).

Texas-Louisiana Longleaf Taskforce Making Great Strides

By Todd Nightingale, Texas A&M Forest Service

Landowners learn from presenters in a beautiful Longleaf Forest during the Texas field tour. Photo by Texas/Louisiana Longleaf Pine Taskforce.

The Texas-Louisiana Longleaf Taskforce continues to make great strides in restoration and outreach efforts focused around the West Central Louisiana Ecosystem Conservation Project, Big Thicket National Preserve and Longleaf Ridge in Texas. Significant education and outreach efforts continue to engage landowners about the opportunity to restore their properties to longleaf. Recent events garnered attendance of over 250 attendees, most of whom were private landowners. The taskforce also hosted a Longleaf Alliance Workshop where 27 professionals were trained to guide landowners on proper restoration management. These efforts are paying off with 4,674 acres in Louisiana and 2,922 acres in Texas being planted in longleaf and 129,677 acres and 45,175 acres respectively being prescribed burned in the states.

Forestry consultant shares planning for success so private landowners can achieve restoration on their properties. Photo by Texas/Louisiana Longleaf Pine Taskforce.

The taskforce is also happy to announce that Kent Evans has recently been hired as the Longleaf Pine Implementation Team Coordinator for Texas. Kent 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.

Incentives available in GCPEP Landscape

By Ad Platt, The Longleaf Alliance

Map of GCPEP Landscape.

Thanks to a new project award from the Longleaf Stewardship Fund provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Southern Company, the Longleaf Alliance has cost share assistance available for longleaf pine restoration for private forest landowners within the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP) landscape. This new program offers assistance for restoration and maintenance of longleaf in key areas. The goal is to increase the acreage of healthy longleaf pine ecosystems in western Florida and/or southern Alabama by assisting private forest landowners with establishment or management of longleaf pine.

Established by Congress in 1984, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) sustains, restores and enhances the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats. Working with federal, corporate and individual partners, NFWF has funded more than 4,000 organizations and committed more than $2.1 billion to conservation projects. Learn more at www.nfwf.org.

Eligible practices include, but are not limited to prescribed burning, mechanical or chemical site preparation, purchasing longleaf pine trees, planting longleaf pine, and herbaceous weed control. Cost share involves a contribution made from the landowner, either by monetary means and/or in-kind services, which can include labor by an individual to the project, contribution of supplies, or personal equipment use. Eligible landowners include those in the GCPEP area (Florida counties of Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Holmes, Washington, and Bay counties; and Alabama counties of Covington, Conecuh, Escambia, and Baldwin counties) whose land is capable of being restored to a viable ecosystem.

The sign-up period for this opportunity begins May 5, 2014. Enrollment runs continuously until the acreage goal is met, with a contract period of 15 years. As part of the agreement, The Longleaf Alliance will provide technical assistance to private landowners. Other basic details apply, but for more information, please contact Ad Platt at: Ad@longleafalliance.org.

Pinestraw production is just one of many economic advantages for growing longleaf. Photo courtesy of LLA.

A Focus on the ECONOMICS OF LONGLEAF

By Rhett Johnson, Co-Founder, The Longleaf Alliance

As we embark on our new magazine format, we are still in the early stages of developing appropriate and informative content. A number of you have suggested that a recurring series of articles on the various aspects of the economics of longleaf would be of interest to you. I'm not an economist (although I have spent the night in a Holiday Inn Express), nor do I intend to become the Economics Editor, but I will try to solicit input from knowledgeable sources on related topics in the future. Potential topics will include current markets for longleaf wood products and challenges for the future, efforts to develop robust models to predict growth and product yields from longleaf plantations and multi-aged stands, pine straw potential and management, carbon storage and marketing, wildlife leases, the value of conservation easements, potential marketing of ecosystem services, the value of risk aversion, and more. The Alliance has developed two publications on the Economics of Longleaf that are available by contacting the Alliance office. In collaboration with the Regional Forestry Extension staff at the University of Georgia, we have also developed a self-taught course in longleaf economics available for free on the Web. It contains a spreadsheet that calculates economic metrics like Net Present Value and Internal Rate of Return from longleaf investments. These spreadsheets can be manipulated by the user, offering the opportunity to alter costs, returns, and timing of management and harvests at the user's will. The macros embedded in the spreadsheets automatically recalculate the "bottom line" and allow comparisons of different management regimes and market fluctuations. The course and spreadsheets can be accessed at http://lleconomics.sref.info or for Continuing Education Credit at http://cfegroup.org.

Box baler used to bale longleaf pinestraw. Photo by Mark Hainds.

Bales of pinestraw in longleaf plantation. Photo by Mark Hainds.

By Mark Hainds, The Longleaf Alliance

PINESTRAW WORKSHOP

{in Geneva County, Alabama}

Geneva County, Alabama is a unique case in the world of longleaf pine. Geneva County, by all accounts, not only leads the State of Alabama in acreage planted to longleaf pine, but in all likelihood, leads the nation as the single county with the most acres planted to longleaf pine. Most of the acres planted in Geneva County were marginal farm ground that was converted to longleaf pine plantations through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Many thousands of acres of longleaf pine are nearing the end of their enrollment, or these acres have completed their initial 15-year contracts. As these acres are released from their CRP restrictions, landowners are faced with decisions that require them to rank their management objectives. If economics are the primary driver, many of these landowners will start selling pinestraw. If aesthetics, ecosystem restoration, and wildlife habitat are primary drivers, these landowners may moderate their pinestraw operations, or potentially avoid pinestraw altogether.

In order to provide more information on pinestraw production to interested landowners, a one-day workshop was held on January 11th, 2014 at the Geneva Farm Center in Geneva County, Alabama. Bobby Light, the Alabama Forestry Commission County Forester for Geneva County, organized the meeting. There were approximately 80 people in attendance.

MARKETPLACE

The Longleaf Alliance offers some great longleaf related merchandise for purchase through our Store.
Visit our website (www.longleafalliance.org) to see what is available.

By Anne Rilling, The Longleaf Alliance

While you're in the grass stage. . .

"While You're in the Grass Stage" is a section just for kids and/or kids-at-heart. Longleaf forest management is a long-term endeavor and in order to keep the longleaf pine ecosystem in longleaf, the next generation must get engaged or else all of the hard work, restoration, and protection currently going on will be for naught. We hope you share this activity with your "next generation" longleaf enthusiast.

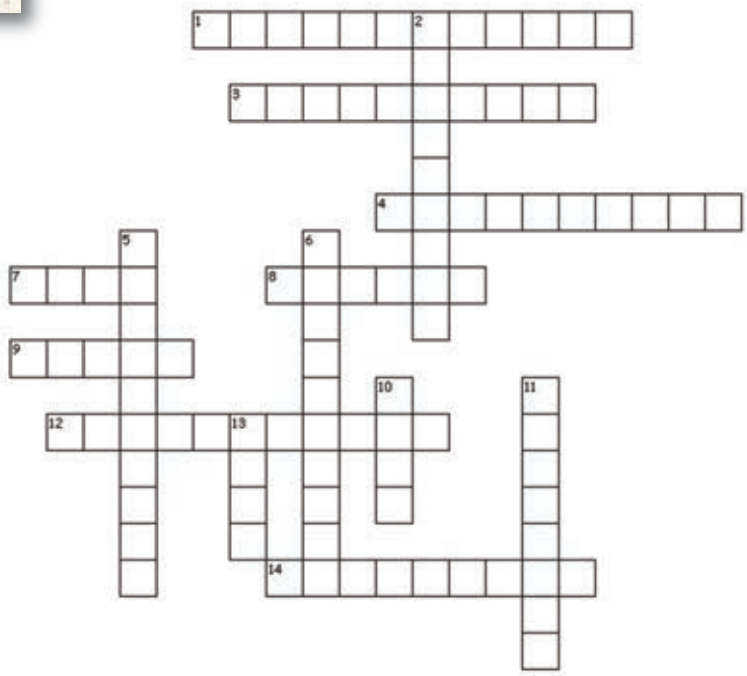
Lesson Eleven: Southeastern Indians Purposely Burned the Longleaf Pine Forest. Similar to forest managers of today, Indians of the longleaf pine forests purposely burned areas for centuries to create habitat for important plants and animals they needed for survival. Use Lesson Eleven found on our website (www.longleafalliance.org/nextgeneration) to fill in the blanks and find the answers in the crossword puzzle. Answers can be found below the puzzle.

ACROSS

1. Longleaf pine is _____.
3. It is alleged that the smoke of "pitch-pine" can do this to the eyes.
4. Describes cultures, such as the Native Americans.
7. A round piece of wood that was once the branch of a tree.
8. Tales passed down from generation to generation, often exaggerated.
9. The type of fire the moves across the ground without damaging the longleaf tree.
12. The name given to fire out of respect by southeastern tribes.
14. How many years did Indians burn longleaf pine forests?

DOWN

2. In the southeast, this causes many summer fires.
5. Lightning – ignited fires can be unreliable or have this type of character.
6. Indians used fire to _____ many of the desired plants and animals in the forest.
10. In ancient times, the Alibamo Creek Indians believed Fire belonged to what animal.
11. The pine forest was a significant source of food, medicine, tools, housing materials and clothing.
13. Creates habitat for important plants and animals.



Answers

1. fire tolerant 2. lightning 3. strengthen 4. indigenous 5. stochastic 6. perpetuate 7. knot 8. legend 9. quick 10. bear 11. longleaf 12. grandfather 13. fire 14. centuries

LITERARY REVIEW

By Mark Hainds, The Longleaf Alliance

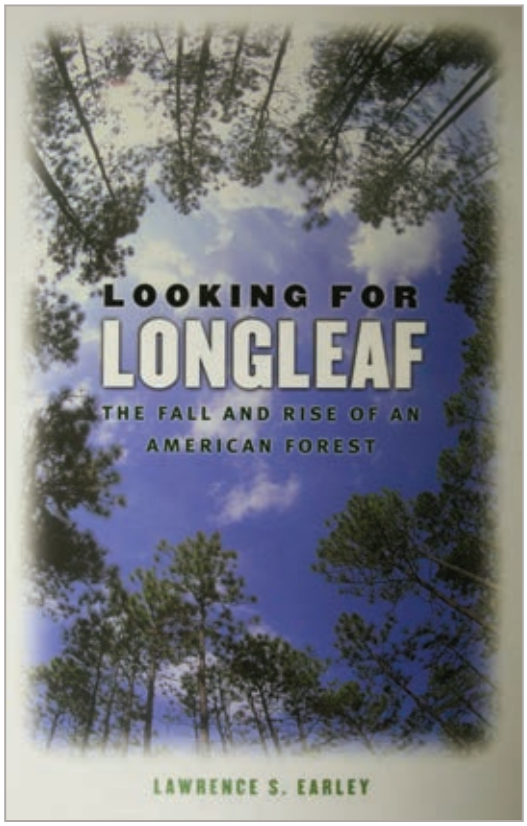
Looking for Longleaf

FALL AND RISE

of an American Forest

There are but a handful of published books that focus on longleaf pine. One of these books should be in everyone's library - Larry Earley's *Looking for Longleaf*.

The Longleaf Alliance covered *Looking for Longleaf* in our newsletter when the University of North Carolina Press published it in 2004. Later, Larry was a speaker at our first Longleaf in the Literature and Arts Session at the 2010 Longleaf Alliance Biennial Regional Conference in Columbia, South Carolina. Now, for this, the first issue of the Longleaf Leader as a magazine, it is fitting that Mr. Earley will contribute an article while we include a review of *Looking for Longleaf* for those of our contributors who have yet to read or secure their own copy.



The back cover of *Looking for Longleaf* has a good summary of Mr. Earley's book:

"Covering 92 million acres from Virginia to Texas, the longleaf pine ecosystem was, in its prime, one of the most extensive and biologically diverse ecosystems in North America. Today, these magnificent forests have declined to a fraction of their original extent, threatening such species as the gopher tortoise, the red-cockaded woodpecker, and the Venus fly-trap. Lawrence S. Earley explores the history of these forests and the astonishing biodiversity with them, drawing on extensive research and telling the story through first-person travel accounts and interviews with foresters, ecologists, biologists, botanists, and landowners. The compelling story Earley tells here offers hope that with continued human commitment, the longleaf pine might not just survive, but once again thrive."

While composing *Year of the Pig* (my first book), I hoped to expose readers to some of the significant works of literature that shaped my views of the natural world. *Looking for Longleaf* was one of those select few books from which I selected an epigraph: "At the core of this idea, (ecosystem management) is the belief that the best forest management maintains the full diversity of an ecosystem's organisms – trees, grasses, herbs, fungi, wildlife, as well as their multiple and complex interactions." This concept and its implications are more important today than I could have previously imagined. More and more landowners are planting longleaf with the hopes of restoring the ecosystem to its prior glory.

Lawrence S. Earley is not only a gifted author, but also a skilled photographer. His second book: *The Workboats of Core Sound: Stories and Photographs of a Changing World*, was published by the University of North Carolina Press on Oct 14th, 2013. Mr. Earley, former editor of Wildlife in North Carolina magazine, is a writer and photographer living in Raleigh, North Carolina.

By Randy Tate, The Longleaf Alliance

LONGLEAF ART SPOTLIGHT

fire tree shredded
oil/yupo paper, 56 x 44", 2010.
Betsy Cain

fire tree
oil/yupo paper, 56 x 40", 2010.
Betsy Cain

These two paintings of longleaf pine by the Savannah, GA artist, Betsy Cain, were inspired by finding longleaf saplings on Ossabaw Island, Georgia. The paintings are on a special laminate paper, called yupo that allows the artist to pull up a layer of paint giving the impression of longleaf needles. Betsy uses wood working tools to create this effect.

New Outreach and Technical Assistance Coordinator Ryan Mitchell. Photo courtesy of Ryan Mitchel.

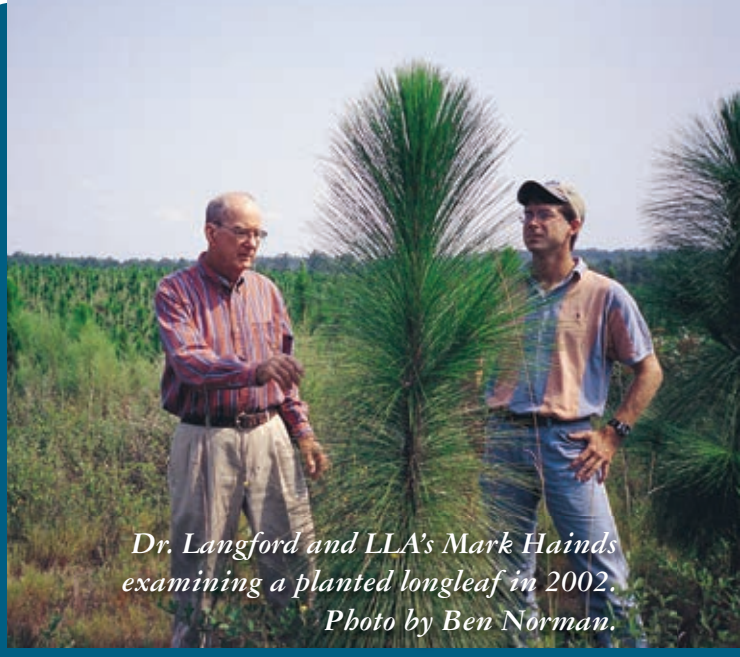
THE ALLIANCE HIRES NEW OUTREACH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COORDINATOR

By Ad Platt, The Longleaf Alliance

We are delighted to announce the hiring of Ryan Mitchell as the new Outreach and Technical Assistance Coordinator for The Longleaf Alliance. Ryan officially started in this role on February 15th.

Ryan Mitchell grew up in North Alabama where he developed a love for the abundant natural resources of the state. He received his B.S. in Wildlife Science from Auburn University in 2011. While pursuing his undergraduate degree, he began working on research studies at Ft. Benning and Horseshoe Bend National Military Park where he took an interest in the longleaf pine ecosystem. This interest drove him to take courses that specialized in longleaf pine and provided him with a clear understanding of the technical aspects of longleaf ecology, restoration, management, and fire ecology. He comes to The Longleaf Alliance from the Alabama Wildlife Federation where he was tasked with providing longleaf technical assistance to landowners. Currently, Ryan is the President of the Alabama Prescribed Fire Council Board and he is an active member of The Wildlife Society. Ryan is also certified as an Associate Wildlife Biologist® by The Wildlife Society and a Certified Prescribed Burn Manager. Ryan and his wife Kathryn, live in south Alabama with their two dogs, Buckwheat and Max. They spend time managing their family's timber, including natural longleaf.

Ryan will contribute immediately in our Academy program, workshops and field days, and technical assistance to landowners. He will be based at the Dixon Center office. You can reach him at (334) 427-1029, or by email at Ryan@longleafalliance.org.


Dr. Langford and LLA's Mark Hainds examining a planted longleaf in 2002. Photo by Ben Norman.

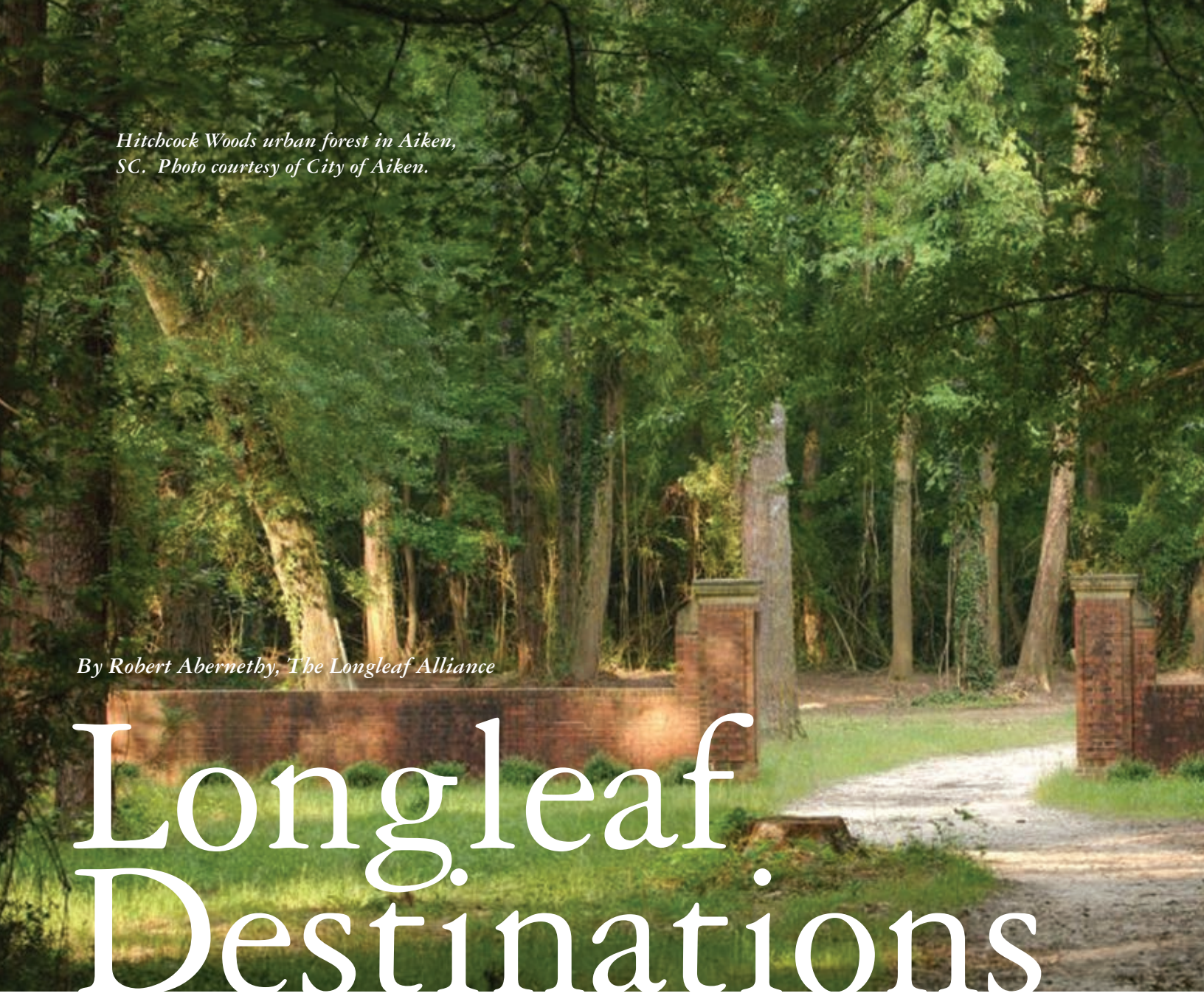
IN MEMORY OF DR. JOHN LANGFORD

By The Langford Family

The Alabama longleaf restoration community recently lost a true friend with the passing of John Reuben Langford. He was born Aug. 23, 1926, on a small farm just a walk through the woods from the home where he spent his latter years. After serving in World War II on a carrier in the Pacific, he graduated from Auburn University School of Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Langford established one of the first veterinary clinics in Daytona Beach.

Upon retirement, he moved to Dozier, AL with wife Rebecca and began a second career in forestry. After attending the forestry school at Lurleen B. Wallace Community College, he spent hours cruising his red Lincoln Towncar through the forests he cultivated in loblolly and longleaf pines. As with veterinary practice, his dedication led to excellence. He chaired the Covington County Forestry Committee, earned the Covington County Outstanding Treasure Forest Award (the only landowner to do so twice), won the Southeast Regional Helene Mosley Treasure Forest Award, was honored as the Statewide Outstanding Tree Farmer, and Outstanding Landowner.

Dr. Langford was a powerful advocate and a patient mentor for private landowners, longleaf pine, and prescribed fire. He hosted and led landowner workshops and field days numerous times on his property, and constructed his own containerized nursery to grow the longleaf seedlings for his lands. A dedicated church member, he spent most of his adult life teaching Sunday school. He went home to the Lord Dec. 10, 2013.



Hitchcock Woods urban forest in Aiken, SC. Photo courtesy of City of Aiken.

By Robert Abernethy, The Longleaf Alliance

Longleaf Destinations

Well groomed, wide sandy trails winding through mature longleaf pine forests define Hitchcock Woods in Aiken, SC. Established in 1939 by the Hitchcock Family as a gift to the people of Aiken, this 2,100 acre urban forest contains over 70 miles of trails open to horseback riding, hiking, running or just walking your dog. The trails wind through mature longleaf forests managed with prescribed fire and sloping hillside forests of giant hickories and white and red oaks draped in Spanish moss (www.hitchcockwoods.org).

The Hitchcock Family first acquired this property in the late 1800's as a winter fox hunting and horseback riding retreat from the bitter winters of New England. However, Hitchcock Woods quickly attracted the attention of horse lovers throughout the northeast and a "Winter Colony" of affluent northern businessmen and their families was born in Aiken. Traditions influenced by their love of horses, fox hunting, horse racing and fine dining continue to this day.

There are many opportunities throughout the year to experience the horse and hunting culture of Aiken. Visitors can watch horse training most winter mornings at the Aiken Training Track, the home of the Aiken Trials held each March. For information on other activities and events visit the Aiken Visitor's Center website www.visitaikensc.com.

Downtown Aiken lies less than a half mile from 3 of the 7 entrances to Hitchcock Woods. Restaurants in this charming historic district serve every taste. I recommend Tako Sushi (www.tako-sushi.com) if you want Mexican and sushi and Malia's (www.maliasrestaurant.com) for fine dining. Head to Casa Bella's (www.casabellasitalianrestaurant.com) for Italian and Betsy's On The Corner (159 Laurens St. NW) if you want to grab a quick hot lunch after a run in the Woods. For pizza, try the Pizza Joint (www.thepizzajoint.net). Stop in at the Track Kitchen, (420 Mead Avenue) for the best breakfast in Aiken.

Wilcox Inn in Aiken, SC.
Photo by Robert Abernethy.

Downtown Aiken welcome sign.
Photo by Robert Abernethy.

Close out your Saturday night with a performance of "To Kill A Mockingbird" (April 2014) at the Aiken Community Playhouse, (126 Newberry St. SW) where you will be entertained by friends and neighbors on stage.

Aiken has numerous hotels and bed and breakfasts for you to stay in and the most famous is The Wilcox, 100 Colleton Ave. SW (www.thewilcox.com). Built in the late 1800's as the Winter Colony was expanding; The Wilcox hosted lavish dances as well as extraordinary picnics in Hitchcock Woods. Do not miss the Sunday Brunch while you are in town.

So, if you are looking for longleaf but also want great food and wonderful hotels when you come out of the woods; visit Hitchcock Woods in downtown Aiken, SC for your next Longleaf Destination.

{continued on page 34}

Longleaf Destinations

THANK YOU FOR BEING OUR CHAMPION

By Tom Livers
The Longleaf Alliance

Thanks to each of you for your response to the end of the year Rocket stage letter. Many new supporters were enrolled, but we have not yet reached our goal of 1,000 supporters for 2014. I need your help to enroll more supporters. The stronger our supporter base, the better chance we have to secure more grants and corporate funding for projects throughout the nine-state longleaf range.

Please remember the Alliance when you are seeking to honor someone or memorialize a family member or friend, or just want to surprise a hunting/fishing buddy, employee or employer, new landowner/neighbor with a special gift of the Longleaf Leader which is mailed to all supporters.

Mark your calendars and hold the dates of October 21-24, 2014 when the 10th Biennial Regional Conference held jointly with the Eastern Native Grass Symposium will convene in Mobile Alabama. We are meeting at the Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel in historic downtown Mobile to celebrate almost 20 years of accomplishments and honor those partners who have made it all possible. We are pleased to be hosting this year's conference in conjunction with the Eastern Native Grass Symposium. For details on the conference please visit our website www.longleafalliance.org.

We are seeking sponsors to help underwrite the conference. We are anticipating approximately 350 attendees. Levels of sponsorship and benefits vary from Old Growth level starting at $10,000; Pole Stage at $5,000; Rocket Stage at $2,500, Grass Stage at $1,500; and Seedling Stage at $1,000. All sponsors will be recognized in the conference program as well as on the Alliance website and in the Longleaf Leader magazine. If you want to find out more or wish to become a sponsor, please phone me at 334-427-1029 or email me at tom@longleafalliance.org.

By Lawrence S. Earley

CELEBRATING LONGLEAF'S *success*

"I'd be a fool to plant longleaf," I overheard one man say to another in a Florida café in 1994. "Why would I plant longleaf when I can thin loblolly and slash pine in fifteen years and make some real money?"

This was the prevailing wisdom among southern forest growers for many decades of the 20th century. Loblolly pine and slash pine were the species on which the U.S. Forest Service and the commercial paper mills had pinned the future of Southern forests. By the late 1970s, Forest Service administrators had told veteran longleaf researcher Bill Boyer in Alabama that longleaf pine had no future. And indeed, forest surveys throughout the twentieth century showed a seemingly unstoppable hemorrhage of longleaf across the South.

So thick was the pessimism in the 1980s that when I began my research on Looking for Longleaf: The Fall and Rise of an American Forest (2004), the story that I seemed destined to write was all about the decline, even the disappearance, of longleaf pine.

Spring forward two decades, to the latest Forest Service statistics showing an additional half million acres of longleaf pine! Against the tens of millions of acres lost, a half million acres in the plus column may not sound like much, but an uptick in longleaf pine has never happened before! There are many reasons for that increase, including the work

"As the sequence progressed, the pine forest gradually began to emerge until the final slide revealed an open longleaf savanna with a groundcover of rippling grasses".

of The Longleaf Alliance and other agencies and individuals in convincing landowners that growing longleaf could be profitable. And, certainly, the emergence of longleaf pine straw as a money making garden mulch has had a lot—perhaps too much—to do with it.

I remember when I first sensed there might be a brighter outcome to the story of longleaf pine than was being told. It was at the Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve in Southern Pines, N.C., in the late 1980s, at one of the many conferences on longleaf management that I was attending at the time. These were gatherings, much like The Longleaf Alliance biennial conferences, of foresters, botanists, ecologists and landowners to discuss the challenges and rewards of growing longleaf pine. One of the speakers on this morning was a courtly man named Jim Stephenson, the director of the Florida State Parks. The theme of his slide show was the transformative effects of frequent fire on the longleaf landscapes of his parks.

He showed a sequence of slides photographed from the same spot over a period of many years. The first slide was an all-too familiar photograph of a longleaf pine stand smothered in thickets of oaks and other hardwoods. The next picture, taken a couple of years later, after a series of annual and then growing-season fires, showed the forest opening up. As the sequence progressed, the pine forest gradually began to emerge until the final slide revealed an open longleaf savanna with a groundcover of rippling grasses.

There was a buzz in the room as the last slide was shown. I realize now that it was probably the first time that many of the people present had ever seen a beautiful longleaf pine forest. So this was what longleaf pine could look like!

Years later, several landowners present at that conference told me that that single slide sequence did more good than the forest management booklets they studied. It had provided them with a goal, a visual image of what they were striving for. With fire and proper management techniques, they learned, they too could shape their own forests to be both beautiful and profitable. Like athletes who constantly visualize success, they had a vision that would sustain them through the years to come.

Longleaf forest at Ft. Bragg, NC.
Poto by Beth Maynor Young.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The Longleaf Alliance
"Ensuring a Sustainable Future for the Longleaf Ecosystem"