

AMERICA'S LONGLEAF RESTORATION INITIATIVE

# 2019 RANGE-WIDE ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT

Longleaf Restoration Accomplishments  
Reported for Fiscal Year 2019



Gary Burger, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources  
2019 Longleaf Partnership Council Chair

# NOTES FROM THE CHAIR



Gary Burger pictured with Burner Bob®  
Photo Credit LLA

Welcome, and thank you for your interest in the annual America’s Longleaf Restoration Initiative (ALRI) Accomplishment Report. This year marks the 10-year anniversary of ALRI. There is much to be celebrated with one of the most successful landscape scale initiatives in North America.

Public land partners, including Federal and State Agencies, private landowners, non-governmental organizations, forest industry, and even individual longleaf enthusiasts are collaborating and endeavoring to reach our 15-year goal of 8 million acres of longleaf pine habitat on the landscape by 2025. While there is still much to do, this report continues to highlight substantial gains towards our goal every year.

Indeed, the 2025 target date, established in the original ALRI Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine, is quickly approaching, but that will certainly not be the end of our initiative. We are all very pleased that the longleaf community and ALRI have never been stronger, and we hope that you will see that expressed in this report. If you are not already a longleaf supporter, please join us in this truly important endeavor. If you are - Thank You! - and keep up the good work, it does not go unnoticed.

## RESTORATION IMPACTS

Over the past 10 years, more than 1.3 million acres of new longleaf stands have been established, substantially increasing the acres of longleaf habitat across the landscape from a historic low of 3.2 million acres to 4.7 million acres. Equally impressive is the nearly 12 million acres of longleaf habitat where effective prescribed burn measures have been taken to achieve desired forest management outcomes.

## PUBLIC LANDS INITIATIVES

Impressively, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) is already well on its way to putting 1 million longleaf acres on the path to restoration by 2025. The Public Lands Task Force of ALRI is working with other Federal and State partners to evaluate their lands to submit similar 2025 restoration goals to ALRI.

## PRIVATE LANDS INITIATIVES

There are not words to truly recognize the constant efforts of our private landowners who continue to post the majority of longleaf accomplishments each year. Many of these landowners are led and supported by technical assistance and incentive and grant programs provided by multiple ALRI partners such as the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF).

## STRENGTHENING THE PARTNERSHIP

Range-wide mapping of longleaf ecosystems is well underway with the Longleaf Ecosystem Occurrence Database (LEO), initial funding for growth and yield modeling for planted longleaf has been secured, and updates and revisions to the Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine are already being discussed.

# RESTORATION IMPACTS

This report highlights ALRI’s achievements for FY 2019 (October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019) compiled from partners across the longleaf range. Annual accomplishment reporting is a vital tool for assessing the scale of on-the-ground work and measuring progress towards meeting the goals and priorities identified by the Longleaf Partnership Council and Range-wide Conservation Plan. It is a reflection on the collective efforts made by public and private partners to restore this iconic forest and highlight the benefits of longleaf to our Southeastern communities.

In 2019, we celebrated more than 1.7 million acres of accomplishments on public and private lands. This number is more than just a measurement – it represents the many positive impacts to rural economies, national defense, imperiled species, recreation, and forest resiliency. Planting rates for longleaf remain steady across the range, with a slight increase compared to the previous year. We saw a big jump in recorded maintenance activities

including forest treatments, invasive species control, and native understory planting thanks to refined reporting methods. Conversion of existing stands to longleaf-dominant acres through silvicultural treatments is recognized as a “game-changer” for ALRI, and improvements in reporting and awareness have yielded a rise in new longleaf-dominant acres. Reports indicate a decline in prescribed burning activities by 13% compared to 2018, with damage and delays in land management attributed to Hurricanes Florence and Michael.

Finally, protection of existing or potential longleaf pine habitat through acquisitions and easements almost doubled compared to the previous year. Long-term protection of lands represents an invaluable opportunity to preserve open space and rural character, conserve habitat for wildlife, buffer military installations from incompatible development, and create recreational opportunities for future generations to come.

## KEY 2019 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



144,311 ACRES OF LONGLEAF ESTABLISHED



39,727 ACRES OF LAND PROTECTED



1,414,761 ACRES OF PRESCRIBED BURNS ON LONGLEAF LANDS

# PUBLIC LANDS INITIATIVES

Our nation's landscapes and natural resources, including longleaf forests, directly impact the health and well-being of our citizens, the strength of our economy, and the effectiveness of our national defense operations and military installations. Secretary Perdue of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has made "Shared Stewardship" a priority within the Department and called for stronger collaborative decision-making with states and partners to achieve better outcomes at scale.

The USFS's Million Acre Challenge (Challenge) and the work that has resulted on National Forest System (NFS) lands is a true success story. In addition to the 850,000+ acres of dominant longleaf the USFS currently manages, an additional 457,000 acres of NFS lands are now "on the path" to longleaf dominance. More than 325,000 additional acres are planned for FY20/21, which will put USFS on pace to complete the Challenge by 2025.

The Public Lands Task Force, assembled at the request of the Longleaf Partnership Council, is also working in a similar fashion with US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), Department of Defense (DoD), and state agencies to explore additional longleaf restoration opportunities and solidify as many public lands commitments as possible.

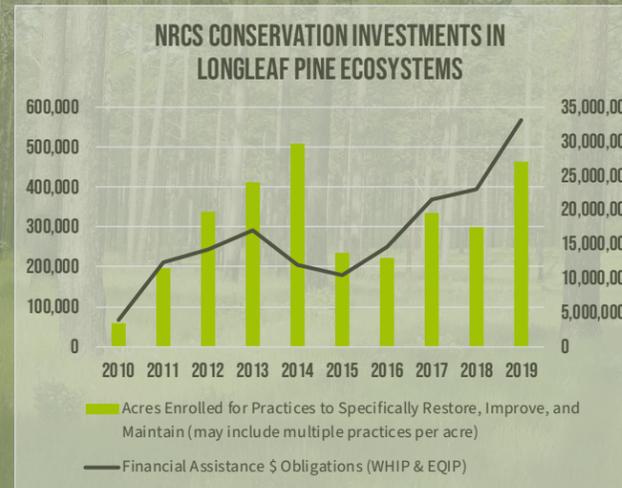


# PRIVATE LANDS INITIATIVES

Private lands are a vital component to achieving the 8-million-acre goal by 2025. Prioritizing our commitment to supporting landowners in their longleaf management, retention and expansion for their 2019 portfolios provided opportunities for long-term longleaf establishment and new acreage gains, connected habitats throughout the region and a way to demonstrate economical, ecological and recreational models of success.

This past year resulted in a significant uptick of landowner peer-to-peer groups and community organization, as landowners within Prescribed Burn Associations (PBAs) joined together to collectively make larger impacts by creating social, educational and working opportunities amongst themselves. Subsequently, a record number of "Learn and Burn" field days and Fire Festivals occurred, which created cultural, educational and training opportunities to elevate the message of prescribed fire as a tool for landowners.

Landowners invested their time and resources, as well as utilized financial and technical assistance available from the NRCS and



through initiatives such as the Longleaf Pine Initiative and Working Lands for Wildlife - Gopher Tortoise, to plant, burn, and manage longleaf pine ecosystems. ALRI worked to address the landowner challenges related to forest health and natural disasters. Following Hurricane Michael, many partners worked with landowners to assess damage, determine next steps, and facilitate a course of action. ALRI released its first document in a series of Longleaf Resiliency topics, "Insects & Pests", to serve as a tool to provide landowners with understandable and scientifically-backed information on longleaf's resiliency.

Photo credit Carol Denhof

## STRENGTHENING NATIONAL DEFENSE



Photo credit Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Rex Nelson

In September 2019, Naval Submarine Base (NSB) Kings Bay in Georgia was named a recipient of a Challenge award from the Department of Defense Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program. The 2019 REPI Challenge focused on promoting coastal resilience and proactively protecting at-risk species to relieve environmental restrictions on military testing, training, or operations outlined in the National Defense Strategy. The NSB Kings Bay project leverages \$8 million in REPI Challenge funds and \$32.3 million in partner contributions to protect more than 11,000 acres of unprotected coast. This project promotes compatible development around NSB Kings Bay, while simultaneously improving fire management, enhancing installation resilience along the coast, protecting critical gopher tortoise and longleaf habitat, and mitigating maritime and airspace operational conflicts.

## ENGAGING PRIVATE LANDOWNERS

Ellen Hahn has always had a tie to the land. Her father, Bob Hahn, bought the farm in the early 1960's for farming and hunting. He always leased the property to area farmers and then used the farm for outdoor activities with his family. As a little girl, Ellen remembers picking wild plums and blackberries with her parents. Her father taught her to hunt and every weekend possible was spent in the pursuit of quail, dove, deer and turkey. As the farm passed to Ellen from her father, she envisioned the following, "Dad loved this farm. Out of respect to him, I want it to be a beautiful stand of longleaf so that I can say I left it better than I found it. Thanks to John Curtis and Bruce Boswell, that is happening. I am so grateful to these two gentleman for their guidance in the project."

With assistance through NRCS Farm Bill Programs, Ms. Hahn has changed the landscape. Mr. Hahn enrolled all the open land in the Conservation Reserve Program years ago and planted longleaf. In recent years through Environmental Quality Incentives Program, two clear-cuts have been planted to longleaf pine. Now through a Conservation Stewardship Program contract, the land can be managed by burning to promote the growth of the longleaf ecosystem.

The longleaf ecosystem which once dominated the Coastal Plain of South Alabama is slowly returning. Through the assistance of NRCS, willing landowners are playing a major part in the return of these native ecosystems. The beneficiaries are the landowners as well as many species of wildlife that call these ecosystems home. In many instances, we may not know what the future holds, but for longleaf pine on a former cattle farm in southeastern Alabama, the future looks very bright.

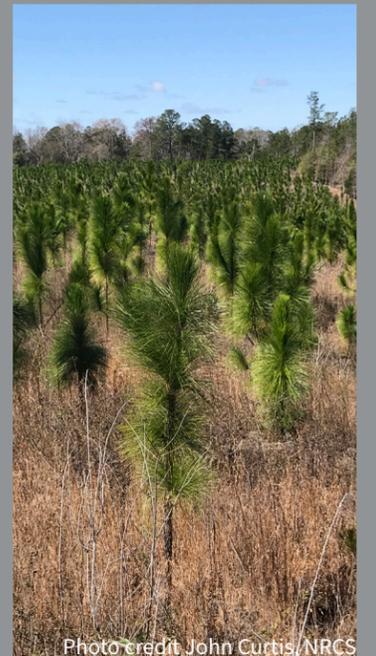


Photo credit John Curtis/NRCS

# LONGLEAF SCORECARD

## FISCAL YEAR 2019 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

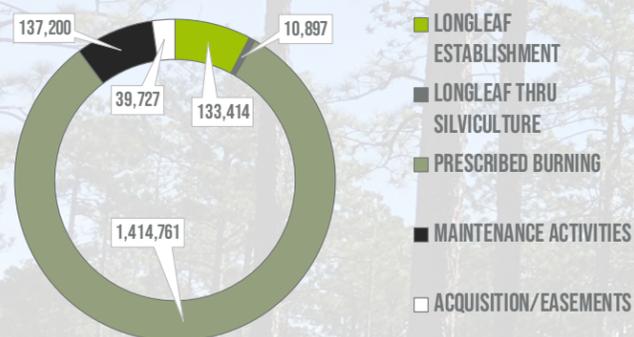


### CREATING RESILIENT SOUTHERN FORESTS

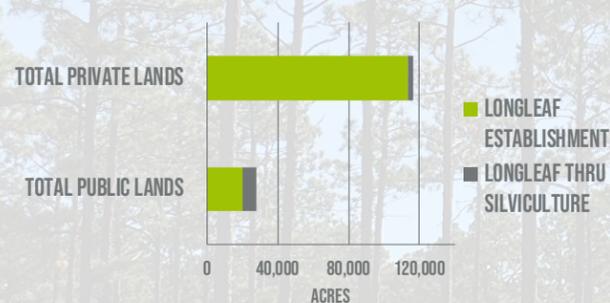
In addition to acres planted, ALRI is measuring longleaf pine gained through silvicultural manipulation. This category was identified by the Longleaf Partnership Council as a "Game Changer" in 2016 and first tracked in the 2017 Accomplishment Report. The intent is to shift existing stands where longleaf represents a

minor component to longleaf dominant by applying silvicultural management practices to appropriate stands. This can be accomplished through thinning operations that remove off site pine or hardwoods, through herbicide applications that target hardwoods, or through prescribed fire applications over time.

#### TOTAL ACCOMPLISHMENT ACRES IN 2019



#### INCREASING LONGLEAF ACRES IN 2019



### REACHING THE NEXT GENERATION

The need for extensive prescribed fire outreach and education for the general public has become increasingly important as more people are living and working in the wildland/urban interface. In the face of wildfires that continue to threaten areas in the United States, teaching the public about the benefits of "Good Fires" can have a significant impact on the landscapes around us.

To help spread the word about Good Fires, the prescribed fire community now has an Ambassador in the form of a Bobwhite Quail named Burner Bob®. Created by Georgia private landowner Reese Thompson, Burner Bob® devotes his life to explaining to people that the longleaf forest, with its many plants and animals, has evolved over time to being burned on a regular basis.

The Burner Bob® outreach activities are managed by The Longleaf Alliance (LLA) and include appearances at public prescribed fire-related events, a Burner Bob® Facebook page, website resources via LLA, coloring books for school-aged children, and online videos. Since 2017, a total of 22,000 coloring books have been printed and distributed to children across the southeastern US.



Photo credit: Gretchen Coll



### SPREADING THE FLAME - IMPROVING ECOSYSTEMS & REDUCING WILDFIRE RISK

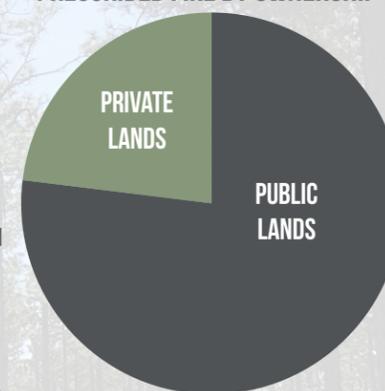
23% of 2019 reported prescribed fire acres occurred on private lands

61% of total longleaf acres are found on private lands

13% decrease in reported acres of prescribed fire in 2019

1,414,761 total reported acres of prescribed fire on longleaf lands in 2019

#### PRESCRIBED FIRE BY OWNERSHIP



### INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF LONGLEAF

LONGTERM PROTECTION THROUGH LAND ACQUISITION & CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

39,727 ACRES

### PROTECTING SPECIES

The gopher tortoise, *Gopherus polyphemus*, inhabits sandy, open pinelands, and is the only tortoise found in the Eastern United States. It's protected in all states within its range and federally listed west of the Mobile River. It's currently being considered for federal listing in all parts of its range. "Headstarting" is one technique that's being used as a proactive approach to species recovery. For many small populations, habitat management alone isn't sufficient for recovering a population. The goal of headstarting is to augment small or depleted populations with animals that have greater survivorship than natural born hatchlings, which puts more individuals on the road to maturity each year, and improves the chances of achieving the goal of self-sustaining viable populations. Typically, headstarting involves collecting eggs before they hatch, taking them back to a lab to rear for 1-2 years, and then releasing them into suitable habitat, usually with an existing population that needs bolstering. Throughout the range, there are several gopher tortoise headstarting programs including Mississippi, Georgia, and South Carolina.



Photo credit: Matt Aresco

# STRENGTHENING THE PARTNERSHIP



Photo credit Ryan Bollinger

## LIT SUMMIT

In August 2019, Local Implementation Team (LIT) leaders and longleaf partners came together in St. Simons Island, GA for a joint LIT Summit and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Longleaf All Hands Meeting to discuss progress and solutions for longleaf protection, management, and restoration. The summit was co-facilitated by Ryan Bollinger (LLA), and Colette DeGarady (TNC). The gathering brought a better awareness of current work occurring across the range, increased understanding of priority strategies for ALRI, and provided a space for fellowship and enhanced relationships for partners to tackle current challenges of restoration and management.

## THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

Since 2012, the Longleaf Stewardship Fund (Fund) has awarded more than \$37 million in grants to longleaf pine restoration, enhancement and protection across the historical longleaf pine range. These grants have generated \$44 million in non-federal match from grantees, for a total conservation impact of more than \$81 million.

In addition to supporting the establishment of more than 100,000 acres of new longleaf forests, the Fund has helped enhance or maintain more than 1.7 million acres of longleaf habitat, including 1.6 million acres of prescribed burning.

Combining the technical and financial resources of nine federal and non-federal partners enables the Fund to invest in a broad suite of longleaf restoration and enhancement strategies, including efforts to scale up prescribed burning through prescribed burn associations, seasonal burn teams, and fire festivals, among other strategies.



Photo credit Alachua Conservation Trust



# LOOKING FORWARD OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES



Photo credit: Francesca Erickson

On June 28, 2010, the Departments of Defense, Agriculture, and the Interior made a bold move that would forever change the landscape of the Southeast. Fueled by a mutual interest to secure the full spectrum of ecological, economic, national defense, and social values offered by restoration of the longleaf pine system, these agencies entered into a landmark 15-year Memorandum of Understanding to provide the federal leadership and support to fulfill the goals of the Range-Wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine released in 2009. This was an instrumental key step in solidifying the public-private partnerships that would ultimately lead to over 14 million acres of on-the-ground management activities advancing longleaf on public and private lands over the past decade.

## SHARED STEWARDSHIP

ALRI exemplifies the “power of partnerships” and the principles of Shared Stewardship. Looking ahead, we need to remind ourselves of the unprecedented opportunity before us to work together in an integrated way to make decisions and take actions on the land to restore this vital ecosystem.

## UNDERSTANDING THE LONGLEAF RESOURCE

The LEO database project, which began in 2018, is working to provide a comprehensive view of existing longleaf within the 17 designated LIT landscapes by compiling available data and conducting field surveys. The first iteration of the database is scheduled to be available in 2020 for surveyed LITs, with all 17 landscapes completed by 2021.

## OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

While great strides have been made over the last decade, our Nation’s communities, landscapes, and natural resources are facing a range of escalating and urgent challenges including catastrophic wildfires, epidemics of insects and disease, degraded watersheds and their inability to provide fresh water, loss of scenic and recreational opportunities, loss of critical fish and wildlife habitat, and loss of forest and rangeland productivity. Because of these challenges, the full resources and commitment of the broad coalition of businesses, nonprofits and State & Federal agencies are needed more so than ever as we work together over the next five years to finish what started almost a decade ago.



Photo credit: Gretchen Coll

## LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

The Longleaf Community will gather in October 2020 for the 13th Biennial Longleaf Conference in Wilmington, North Carolina. Sponsored by LLA, the regional conference is focused on the restoration, stewardship, and conservation of the longleaf pine ecosystem. The conference provides the opportunity for people from all over the Southeast to gather, share, learn, and celebrate longleaf. It also serves as a rallying place for the Longleaf Partnership Council and other organizations and agencies seeking to stage additional events in order to better collaborate on the conference topics.

**13<sup>th</sup> Biennial Longleaf Conference**  
*Longleaf: The Resilient Landscape*



# BY THE NUMBERS: FY 2019 ALRI ACCOMPLISHMENT DATA SUMMARIES

## ALRI Accomplishment Report Summary by Ownership

Category Data Source (Team Member)	Performance Measures					TOTAL Acres
	Longleaf Establishment Acres	Longleaf thru Silviculture Acres	Prescribed Burning Acres	Maintenance Activities Acres	Acquisition/Easements Acres	
<b>Public Lands</b>						
National Forest System (USDA Forest Service)	4,880	4,765	249,768	18,697	0	<b>278,110</b>
Savannah River Site (USDA Forest Service)	519	200	9,125	1,800	0	<b>11,644</b>
National Wildlife Refuges (USFWS)	336	912	40,574	1,506	1,600	<b>44,556</b>
Military Installations (DoD)	5,809	0	361,102	21,324	16,912	<b>405,147</b>
US Army Corps of Engineers (DoD)	510	56	1,496	0	0	<b>2,062</b>
National Parks/Preserves (NPS)	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
State Forests (State Foresters)	2,298	679	223,316	17,336	1,252	<b>244,881</b>
WMAs (State WL Directors)	2,668	606	72,813	21,775	1,248	<b>99,110</b>
Other State/Local Lands	2,959	942	132,554	5,041	1,305	<b>142,801</b>
<b>Total Public Lands</b>	<b>19,979</b>	<b>8,160</b>	<b>1,090,748</b>	<b>87,479</b>	<b>22,317</b>	<b>1,228,311</b>
<b>Private Lands</b>						
State Forestry Agencies (State Foresters)	3,047	0	1,075	109	0	<b>4,231</b>
State Wildlife Agencies (State Wildlife Directors)	0	0	473	0	0	<b>473</b>
NRCS Programs	49,341	0	92,503	29,375	7,400	<b>178,619</b>
Conservation Reserve Program (Farm Service Agency)	4,820	12	13,083	1,365	0	<b>19,280</b>
Emergency Forest Restoration Program (Farm Service Agency)	733	0	0	552	0	<b>1,285</b>
Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (USFWS)	1,782	0	3,019	922	0	<b>5,723</b>
Corporate Lands - (other funds)	3,335	25	10,111	198	0	<b>13,669</b>
NGO Lands (other funds)	1,207	1,327	27,788	14,050	5,371	<b>49,743</b>
Non-Industrial Private Lands (other funds)	4,380	1,373	175,961	3,150	4,639	<b>189,503</b>
Private Landowners - Additional Acres	44,790					<b>44,790</b>
<b>Total Private Lands</b>	<b>113,435</b>	<b>2,737</b>	<b>324,013</b>	<b>49,721</b>	<b>17,410</b>	<b>507,316</b>
<b>Grand Total - All Lands</b>	<b>133,414</b>	<b>10,897</b>	<b>1,414,761</b>	<b>137,200</b>	<b>39,727</b>	<b>1,735,627</b>

## ALRI Accomplishment Report Summary by State

Category	Performance Measures					TOTAL Acres
	Longleaf Establishment Acres	Longleaf thru Silviculture Acres	Prescribed Burning Acres	Maintenance Activities Acres	Acquisition/Easements Acres	
<b>Public Lands</b>						
Texas	442	0	19,319	530	0	<b>20,291</b>
Louisiana	1,116	0	53,716	9,135	100	<b>64,067</b>
Mississippi	984	1,871	52,941	3,505	2,484	<b>61,785</b>
Alabama	1,209	2,956	141,054	7,788	0	<b>153,007</b>
Florida	11,573	1,899	529,086	58,330	11,394	<b>612,282</b>
Georgia	1,671	356	133,019	503	1,202	<b>136,751</b>
South Carolina	1,800	658	64,276	5,170	0	<b>71,532</b>
North Carolina	856	0	94,818	2,508	7,137	<b>105,319</b>
Virginia	328	420	2,519	10	0	<b>3,277</b>
<b>Total Public Lands</b>	<b>19,979</b>	<b>8,160</b>	<b>1,090,748</b>	<b>87,479</b>	<b>22,317</b>	<b>1,228,311</b>
<b>Private Lands</b>						
Texas	3,258	0	2,592	455	0	<b>6,305</b>
Louisiana	1,661	150	13,522	1,963	0	<b>17,296</b>
Mississippi	5,533	0	17,401	1,310	0	<b>24,244</b>
Alabama	17,498	0	198,744	8,786	0	<b>225,028</b>
Florida	7,363	1,223	12,789	7,598	5,464	<b>34,437</b>
Georgia	19,043	25	39,269	22,260	7,400	<b>87,997</b>
South Carolina	9,848	0	23,419	3,679	3,119	<b>40,065</b>
North Carolina	3,899	1,339	13,589	3,535	1,260	<b>23,622</b>
Virginia	542	0	2,688	135	167	<b>3,532</b>
Additional Acres	44,790					<b>44,790</b>
<b>Total Private Lands</b>	<b>113,435</b>	<b>2,737</b>	<b>324,013</b>	<b>49,721</b>	<b>17,410</b>	<b>507,316</b>
<b>Grand Total - All Lands</b>	<b>133,414</b>	<b>10,897</b>	<b>1,414,761</b>	<b>137,200</b>	<b>39,727</b>	<b>1,735,627</b>

## RESTORING THE GULF OF MEXICO

### COASTAL RESILIENCY & THE LONGLEAF PINE ECOSYSTEM

Projects to restore the Gulf of Mexico following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill are directly benefitting the longleaf pine ecosystem in Mississippi. The USFWS's Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge and the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources' Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve are working together to protect and restore coastal longleaf pine savannas and wetlands on the Mississippi coast. To date, Gulf restoration projects funded by NFWF and the Mississippi Trustee Implementation Group have resulted in approximately 2,600 acres of habitat restored and an additional 1,500 acres protected through land acquisition. The partnership's goal is to restore this landscape to its native longleaf pine habitat and cypress strands. Since 2017, the partnership has reduced the number of invasive plant species, such as Chinese tallowtree, Japanese climbing fern, and cogongrass, on more than 400 acres. This successful federal/state partnership has led to the reintroduction of fire in approximately 1,300 acres. Vegetation monitoring has shown that these restoration practices have increased the abundance and diversity of native plant species such as wiregrass, toothache grass, orchids, pitcher plants, and butterworts.

# LONGLEAF PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL 2019 MEMBERS AND PARTNERS



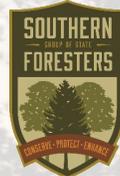
American Forest Foundation



OSCEOLA/OKEFENOKE  
LONGLEAF  
IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

OCALA LOCAL  
IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

REESE  
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