



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

# Longleaf Pine Initiative

Conservation Beyond Boundaries **LLPI**



## The Need

Longleaf pine forests represent some of the world's most unique biologically diverse ecosystems. This ecosystem contains more than 900 plant species that provide critical habitat for 29 threatened and endangered species. At one time, longleaf pine forest covered 90 million acres in the southeastern U.S.

However, more than 96 percent of those acres have been lost because the longleaf pine trees have not regenerated well after logging. One main reason—the suppression of fire, which is crucial for the longleaf pine life cycle.

Now only 3.4 million acres of longleaf pine forest remain. By increasing the use of management practices such as prescribed burning and forest stand improvement, forest landowners can make many of these acres more functional and viable for regeneration.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) established the Longleaf Pine Initiative (LLPI) in Fiscal Year 2010. NRCS developed LLPI as part of a collaborative effort of federal agencies including the Department of Agriculture, Department of Interior, and Department of Defense. These agencies formed the Federal Coordinating Committee of the public/private America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative. NRCS and its conservation partners are using a targeted approach through LLPI to help forest landowners in nine states improve the sustainability and profitability of longleaf pine forests on private lands.

**From Alabama**  
**"I want to leave this place better than I found it and give back to the ecosystem. Meanwhile, I want to enjoy it along the way."**

Dr. Salem Saloom  
Forest Landowner

## Results/Outcomes

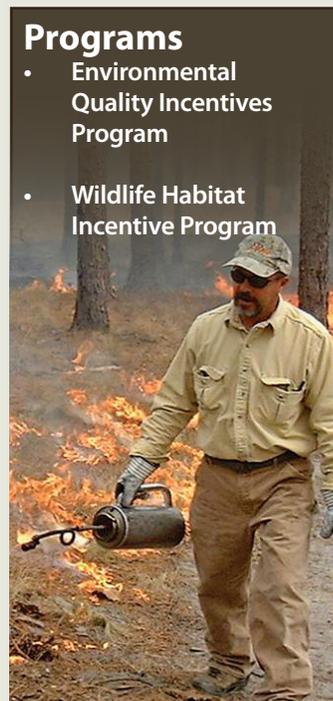
NRCS has dedicated about \$25 million to assist nearly 1,800 forest landowners plant or restore about 145,000 acres of longleaf pine forests in the three years since the initiative began. In fiscal year 2012, NRCS invested more than \$6 million to fund 450 contracts covering more than 38,000 acres. Forest landowners used this financial assistance to plant new trees and to implement conservation practices such as prescribed burning on existing longleaf pine acreage.

These forests are now providing habitat for diverse threatened and endangered species such as the red-cockaded woodpecker, gopher tortoise, and northern bobwhite quail. However, forest landowners sign up for LLPI because restoring and planting longleaf pine can offer economic as well as environmental benefits. This resilient pine can withstand a hurricane's devastating winds much

better than other species grown for their timber and is more resistant to disease, insect infestation and fire. Longleaf pine produces high-quality timber that can command a higher market price compared to other species. Also, there is a growing market for longleaf pine straw for landscaping. Restoring longleaf benefits the environment and the rural economy of southeastern states.

## Programs

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program



**Goals**

NRCS is contributing toward the overall goal of restoring and maintaining this unique ecosystem. Specifically, the federal partners are seeking to do the following:

- Increase the acreage of longleaf pine to 8 million.
- Improve the health of existing longleaf pine forests that may not be fully functioning longleaf pine ecosystems. For example, some areas may have longleaf pine trees present, but lack sufficient numbers for natural regeneration.

NRCS is working with forest landowners to achieve a portion of this restoration goal on private lands.

**Feature Story**

**Alabama Forest Landowner Sees Economic Benefit of Longleaf Pine**

Dr. Salem Saloom and his family are not first-timers when it comes to growing trees. Over the years, his forestry work has taught him the benefits—both economic and environmental—of longleaf pines.

Saloom has learned from his nearly 1,800-acre forest that longleaf pines grow stronger than loblolly pine, allowing them to better withstand high winds, helping minimize the damage from hurricanes. The wood they produce is also valued higher than other pines.

When Hurricane Ivan roared through his property in 2004, he discovered that the longleaf pines had weathered the storm better than loblolly pines. One study in Mississippi found that after Hurricane Katrina, 84 percent of loblolly pines were damaged by wind versus 36 percent of longleaf pines.

He expects a greater return on his investment through the demand for longleaf pine straw and better lumber.

With the help of NRCS, Saloom planted about 450 acres of longleaf pine trees. In addition to the economic benefits, he appreciates the environmental benefits, too. For example, longleaf pine forests are home to

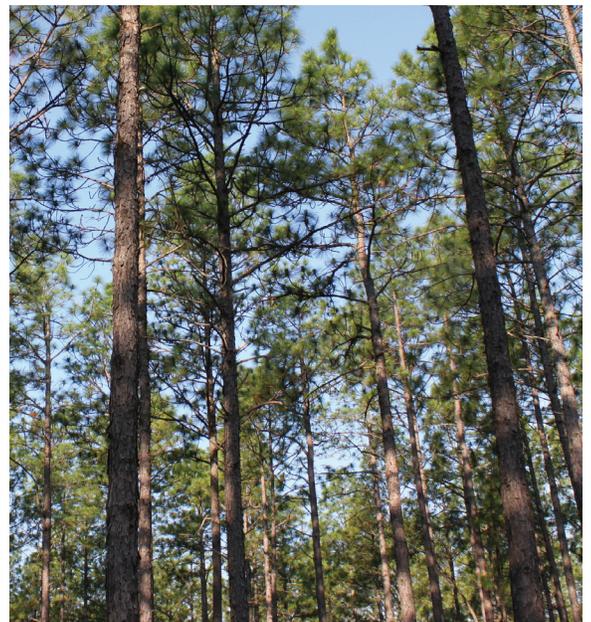
a number of threatened and endangered species, including the gopher tortoise. His property is home to a number of gopher tortoise burrows, showing how his conservation work is achieving results in helping an array of wildlife.

In addition, because of the long lifespan of longleaf pine trees, longleaf pine ecosystems offer long-term opportunities to sequester carbon. They also help recharge groundwater aquifers that provide important water sources during dry periods. One acre of forest absorbs six tons of carbon dioxide and puts out four tons of oxygen. This is enough to meet the annual oxygen needs of 18 people.



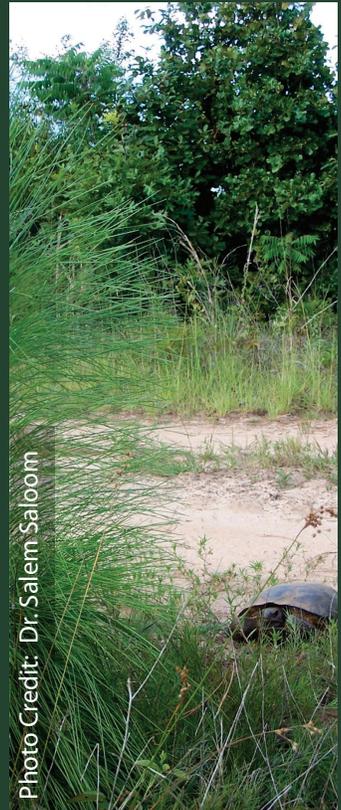
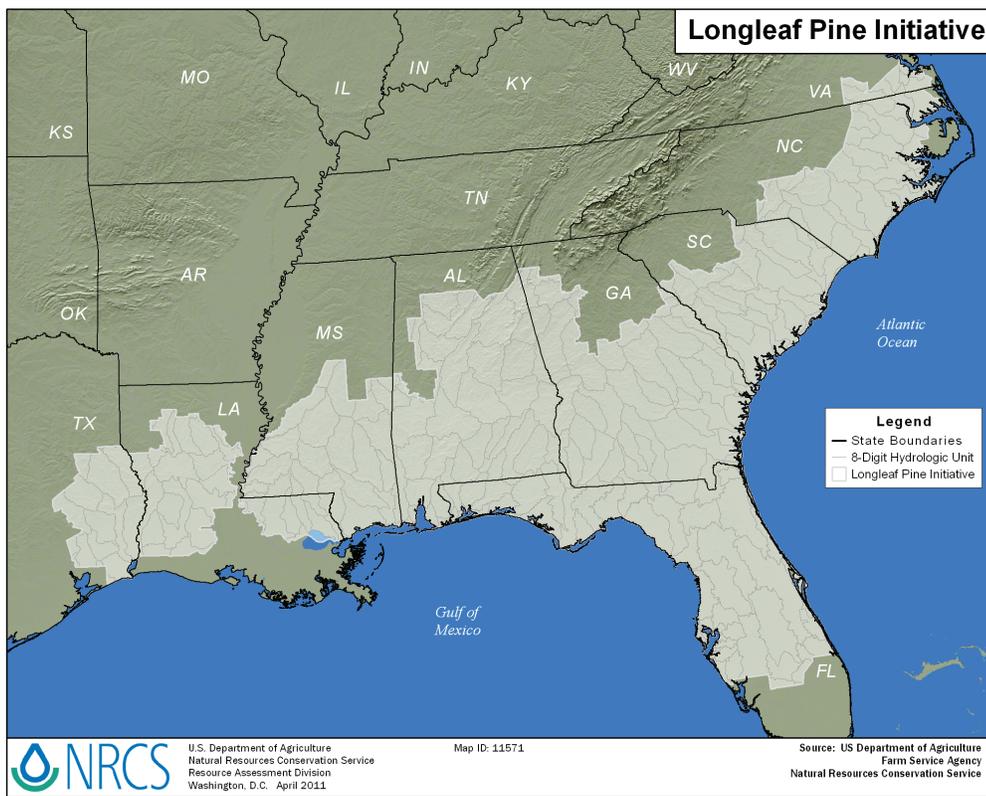
**Fiscal Year 2012 Longleaf Pine Initiative  
NRCS Financial Assistance (FA) and Active and Completed Contracts**

State	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)		
	Number of Contracts	FA Contract Obligations	Contract Acres
Alabama	161	\$2,122,412	13,944
Florida	2	\$83,557	2,467
Georgia	95	\$1,475,360	5,163
Louisiana	13	\$387,229	2,838
Mississippi	22	\$244,082	1,735
North Carolina	85	\$1,153,570	5,856
South Carolina	69	\$1,067,741	5,642
Texas	7	\$89,418	767
Virginia	2	\$27,283	51
<b>Totals</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>\$6,650,652</b>	<b>38,462</b>



Statistical source: Protracts for new enrollment, October 4, 2012.

Helping People  
Help the Land



# Results

## Mississippi

Conservation programs to restore longleaf pine forests are showing private landowners that growing longleaf is affordable and offers long-term benefits. About 22,000 acres of longleaf pine forests in Mississippi have been restored through conservation programs, partially because landowners see the economic benefits of these forests. Longleaf pine lumber gains higher prices, and harvesting pine straw is a growing industry. These economic benefits occur simultaneously with environmental benefits, such as wildlife habitat, cleaner air and water and protection of threatened and endangered species.

## Texas

Longleaf pine forests are America's unique southern forests, and NRCS is partnering with private landowners to ensure future generations can appreciate and value the forests' beauty and heritage. NRCS is working with the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, whose members historically worked with longleaf pine's treasured needles to craft handmade baskets. This tradition dates back to the 1700s, and it faded as longleaf pine disappeared from eastern Texas. Now, longleaf pine forests are growing again in that region. The tribe has planted 400 acres of longleaf pine, and they continue to nurture those forests with NRCS' assistance.

## Longleaf Pine Initiative

**Conservation practices such as forest stand improvement, prescribed burning, restoration and management of rare or declining habitats, and tree/shrub establishment improve the forests' health.**

**Restoration of longleaf pine forests are leading to high quality habitat for wildlife, cleaner water and air and better protection for wildlife.**