



**Natural Resources
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USDA Helps Restore, Manage Longleaf Pine Forests on Private Lands

Longleaf Provides Critical Wildlife Habitat, Valuable Timber

AUBURN, Nov. 10, 2015 – USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) today announced \$10.6 million in funding available to aid forest managers working to restore longleaf ecosystems on private lands in nine states. Alabama will receive \$2.6 million in funding to aid forest managers in restoring longleaf ecosystems across the state. Longleaf pine forests nearly vanished, but a coordinated conservation effort, led by USDA and other conservation partners, is helping this unique ecosystem of the Southeast recover.

“USDA is committed to working with land managers to help restore and expand this critical ecosystem, and together we have restored nearly a quarter of a million acres since 2009,” said Ben Malone, NRCS state conservationist in Alabama. “Longleaf forests provide vital habitat to a variety of species as well as valuable timber. We look forward to seeing what we can accomplish together in this next round of the initiative.”

During the past two centuries, development, timbering and fire suppression reduced the ecosystem’s range by almost 97 percent. Longleaf forests once dominated the coastal plains of the Southeast, and 29 threatened and endangered species – including the [gopher tortoise](#) and black pine snake – depend on these forests for survival.

NRCS’ [Longleaf Pine Initiative](#) (LLPI), now in its sixth year, has helped restore more than 240,000 acres of longleaf forests. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to help landowners and land managers plant longleaf as well as manage longleaf forests through practices like prescribed burning.

Longleaf trees are resistant to fire, and prescribed burning mimics a natural process that once enabled them to thrive. Additionally, fire gives life to a fresh understory of plants that provides food for wildlife.

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Longleaf forests benefit both wildlife and land managers. Longleaf pine trees, while slower growing than other pines like loblolly, provide highly valuable timber. Longleaf pine straw has also become a popular landscaping material.

Assistance is available to land managers in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia. Interested landowners are encouraged to contact their [local USDA service center](#).

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