Longleaf pine forests once encompassed more than 90 million acres across the Southeast, stretching from eastern Texas to southern Virginia. These forests represent some of the world’s most biologically diverse ecosystems and are home to nearly 600 plant and animal species. But over the past two centuries, development, timbering and fire suppression reduced the ecosystem’s range substantially.

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) established the Longleaf Pine Initiative (LLPI) in fiscal year 2010 to provide an avenue for NRCS to support the goals of America’s Longleaf Restoration Initiative (ALRI), a collaboration working to restore and maintain this unique ecosystem. Through ALRI, NRCS and its partners, have aided in the rebirth of the native forest.

NRCS and Longleaf Pine Forests
Through LLPI, NRCS works with producers on private lands in nine states to improve the sustainability and profitability of longleaf pine forest ecosystems. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to producers, helping them restore and better manage longleaf forests. Prescribed burning is a key management practice supported through LLPI and helps suppress competition to young longleaf pines while creating a desirable understory for wildlife.

NRCS delivers LLPI in priority areas where longleaf pine restoration will provide the most significant benefits. These priority areas are aligned with significant geographic areas identified through ALRI, and are generally chosen because they contain large existing blocks of longleaf forest. These existing forests are often on military installations, national and state forests, national wildlife refuges, and heritage reserves. Targeting funds for private lands restoration in these areas helps to build more extensive and functional areas of this valuable landscape.

Outcomes and Impacts
LLPI enables producers to make conservation improvements on their forestlands with NRCS providing technical and financial help. A healthier longleaf pine forest translates into more valuable timber and wildlife habitat and a more efficient operation through the use of forest management and prescribed burning systems.

Longleaf pine forests provide habitat for diverse threatened and endangered species such as the red-cockaded woodpecker, gopher tortoise and northern bobwhite. In addition to the environmental benefits of restoring and planting longleaf pine, landowners are recognizing the economic benefits of producing high-quality timber and the growing market for pine straw. In addition, a healthier longleaf pine forest provides ample recreational opportunities such as hunting and birding.
NRCS GOALS

Through LLPI, NRCS works with producers and conservation partners to restore longleaf pine forests. ALRI’s Range-Wide Conservation Plan for Wildlife has a goal of protecting, restoring and enhancing an additional 4.6 million acres of longleaf by 2015. To help ALRI meet this goal, NRCS is working with producers to restore longleaf forests with at least 50 percent of these efforts occurring in priority counties per ALRI’s plan.

Overall Summary

- **Total NRCS Investment**
  - FY10-14: $44,080,504
  - FY15: $8,421,754

- **Number of Contracts**
  - FY10-14: 3,135
  - FY15: 557

- **Total Acres Contracted**
  - FY10-14: 240,000
  - FY15: 52,553

Milestone:
NRCS aims to exceed the ALRI goal that restoration activities take place in priority counties.

- **Amount of Conservation in Priority Counties**
  - FY10: 81%
  - FY11: 73%
  - FY12: 66%
  - FY13: 77%
  - FY14: 79%
  - FY15: 82%

**ALRI GOAL 50%**