Florida Forest Service Provides Private Landowner Assistance to Enhance Longleaf Pine Acreages
Bonnie Stine, Florida Forest Service

The Florida Forest Service (FFS) has been successful in securing competitive funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to provide technical assistance and incentives for private non-industrial forest landowners to increase or enhance existing longleaf acreages across the state. FFS received funding from the Longleaf Legacy and Longleaf Stewardship Fund programs sponsored by NFWF with funding from the USDA Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Southern Company and The Nature Conservancy. FFS County Foresters provided technical direction and needs certifications for qualified applicants to this program. A total of 124 landowners are currently participating in the program within the 37 eligible counties in the state. To date, 624 acres of longleaf have been planted with an additional 2,806 scheduled to be planted this winter. Other practices, including 1,842 acres of prescribed burning have occurred with an additional 1,955 acres planned to be burned before June of 2015. Native understory treatments have occurred on 20 acres and an additional 128 acres have planned understory establishment practices for the winter of 2014-15.

A long range, multi-organization committee, America’s Longleaf, through its Range-Wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine plan has as one of its goals to increase the extent of longleaf acreages range wide to 8 million by 2025. The plan may be found at: [http://www.americaslongleaf.org/resources/conservation-plan/](http://www.americaslongleaf.org/resources/conservation-plan/).

The Florida Forest Service has also partnered with the Florida Natural Areas Inventory to develop a first look at longleaf acreage condition within the state. The Longleaf Pine Geodatabase project seeks to provide information on the existence and condition of longleaf stands. This information will be cross-walked with existing Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) data to potentially further refine longleaf stand information range-wide.


Conservation Service and the USDA Forest Service National Forests in Florida have created four successful Local Implementation Teams (LITs) in the state. These teams are centered around significant geographic areas as identified in the Range-Wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf. Florida’s LITs include the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership, the Apalachicola Regional Stewardship Alliance, the Okefenokee/ Osceola (O₂) LIT, and the Ocala LIT. Information regarding activities that Florida’s and all teams have been conducting can be found at: [http://www.americaslongleaf.org/media/13207/Longleaf-Rangewide-Teams.pdf](http://www.americaslongleaf.org/media/13207/Longleaf-Rangewide-Teams.pdf).

These teams provide sharing of resources to complete on the ground practices in an efficient, economical manner. Additionally, these teams are providing increased outreach to private landowners regarding all aspects of longleaf pine ecosystem management.
Recent Research

Genetic Considerations in the Restoration of Small Forest Populations: Perspectives From Fish and Wildlife Genetics

ABSTRACT: The evolutionary forces that drive recent population genetic changes include migration, mating strategy, genetic drift, and selection. However, the strength of these forces varies depending on population size. The purpose of this article is to review genetic issues associated with small forest populations and to provide perspectives from fish and wildlife genetics through case studies. Small populations are often fragmented, potentially preventing migration. In forest trees, long-distance pollen dispersal and highly mobile, generalist pollinators can help maintain connectivity. A landscape and community approach to understanding connectivity is critical (case study: mussels). Outbreeding depression can also be a concern in forest restoration. This becomes a greater risk when mixing populations that are highly diverged and when the species is polyploid. Management units should be designated that mimic natural gene flow (case study: lake sturgeon). At the other extreme, inbreeding depression can result in reduced fitness. When inbreeding depression is a concern, genetic rescue may be necessary (case study: Florida panther). Loss of diversity through genetic drift can occur with small effective population sizes (Ne) and a small number of founders (case study: salmonids). Selection is most likely to occur through adaptation to captivity or introduction of resistant/tolerant strains (case study: amphibians).

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Evaluating Ecological Restoration Success: A Review of the Literature

ABSTRACT: Assessing the success of ecological restoration projects is critical to justify the use of restoration in natural resource management and to improve best practice. Although there are extensive discussions surrounding the characteristics that define and measure successful restoration, monitoring or evaluation of projects in practice is widely thought to have lagged behind. We conducted a literature review to determine trends in evaluations of restoration projects and identify key knowledge gaps that need to be addressed. We searched the Web of Knowledge plus two additional restoration journals not found in the database for empirical papers that assessed restoration projects post-implementation. We quantified the extent that key attributes of success, including ecological (vegetation structure, species diversity and abundance, and ecosystem functioning) and socioeconomic, were addressed by these papers along with trends in publication and restoration characteristics. Encouragingly, we found the number of empirical evaluations has grown substantially in recent years. The increased age of restoration projects and number of papers that assessed ecological functions since previous reviews of the literature is also a positive development. Research is still heavily skewed toward United States and Australia, however, and identifying an appropriate reference site needs further investigation. Of particular concern is the dearth of papers identified in the literature search that included any measure of socioeconomic attributes. Focusing future empirical research on quantifying ecosystem services and other socioeconomic outcomes is essential for understanding the full benefits and costs of ecological restoration and to support its use in natural resource management.

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To develop and disseminate knowledge needed to conserve and manage Florida’s forest as a healthy, working ecosystem that provides social, ecological and economic benefits on a sustainable basis.

Upcoming Events

- **2015 Conference on Laurel Wilt Disease and Natural Ecosystems: Impacts, Mitigation and the Future.** June 16-18, 2015. This conference provides a timely opportunity to learn the most recent state of knowledge regarding laurel wilt, its biology, impacts in native ecosystems and efforts to mitigate for its devastating effects. Coral Springs Marriott, 11775 Heron Bay Blvd. Coral Springs, FL. Contact: Beth Miller-Tipton at bmt@ufl.edu or call 352-392-5930. [http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/LaurelWilt/](http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/LaurelWilt/)


- **Fire in Eastern Oak Forests Conference.** The 5th Fire in Eastern Oak Forests Conference will be held 27-29 May 2015 at the Bryant Conference Center on the University of Alabama campus in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The goal of the Fire in Eastern Oak Forests Conference is to improve land stewardship through transfer of knowledge and technology of fire as a management tool and its role in a historical context. The conference brings together noted experts in research and management to present state-of-the-art information, perspectives, and syntheses on key issues and provides learning and networking opportunities to over 300 participants. [http://easternfire.as.ua.edu/](http://easternfire.as.ua.edu/)