



NFWF

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NFWF Announces \$3.38 Million in Grants to Further Restore Longleaf Ecosystem America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative Celebrates Five Years of Success

Washington, DC—July 22—The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) today announced \$3.38 million in grants to further restore the longleaf pine ecosystem as part of a five-year anniversary celebration for America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative (ALRI). Fifteen projects across eight states have been selected to receive this funding for projects that will ultimately restore more than 11,800 acres and enhance over 116,000 additional acres of longleaf pine habitat, while leveraging over \$3.8 million in additional funds from grant partners.

The grants are administered by NFWF's Longleaf Stewardship Fund, a landmark public-private partnership supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Department of Defense (DoD), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and private funding from Southern Company and International Paper's Forestland Stewards Initiative. The fund, in its third year, combines the financial and technical resources of the partnership members to support accelerated restoration of the longleaf pine ecosystem and implementation of ALRI's *Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine*.

"Today we are celebrating the power of partnership to bring resources, vision and commitment together to achieve substantial conservation impacts for this important forest ecosystem," said David O'Neill, Vice President of Conservation Programs at NFWF. "The \$3.38 million in Longleaf Stewardship Fund grants announced today will continue the significant progress we have made toward the recovery of the longleaf pine ecosystem and its multitude of benefits in strategic areas across the Southeast."

The longleaf pine ecosystem once encompassed more than 90 million acres, spanning from Virginia to Texas. Unique to the Southeastern United States, it contains a stunning diversity of plants and animals -- including rare and endangered wildlife such as the red-cockaded woodpecker, bobwhite quail and gopher tortoise—and provides a range of additional benefits, including supporting forest dependent economies and military readiness. With many agencies, non-profits, private landowners and businesses committing to longleaf pine restoration in recent years, the acreage of longleaf pine forest has seen a net increase of eight percent over the past decade to an estimated 4.4 million acres, halting and reversing a century-long decline across the South.

Senior officials from USDA, DoD, FWS, Southern Company and International Paper gathered today at the USDA Jamie L. Whitten Building for the grant announcement and anniversary celebration. ALRI's five-year anniversary celebration honored the successful, coalition-driven implementation of the *Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine*. This milestone was achieved through the collaborative effort of multiple public and private-sector partners and through on-the-ground work, including the grants supported by the Longleaf Stewardship Fund.

“Conserving America’s longleaf forests is a team effort,” said Robert Bonnie, USDA’s Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment. “We are proud of the many restoration efforts on public and private lands, and we encourage landowners and land managers to take advantage of USDA conservation programs that assist in planting and managing these forests.”

“Southern Company is pleased to continue our longstanding partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and other federal agencies to support these important restoration projects,” said Southern Company Chief Environmental Officer Dr. Larry S. Monroe. “The unprecedented level of cooperation across public agencies, nonprofits, businesses and private landowners is making huge conservation gains and is a shining example of collaboration and innovation.”

“International Paper is proud to be a part of the Longleaf Stewardship Fund through our Forestland Stewards initiative,” said Teri Shanahan, Vice President of Sustainability for International Paper. “By keeping working forests working, we can protect and enhance important forest ecosystems, provide economic value for landowners and communities and ensure a sustainable supply of wood to make our products.”

"DoD supports longleaf stewardship because it helps maintain important buffers around our bases and affords us greater flexibility to carry out critical military training. In other words, when we protect and restore longleaf pine forests near our bases, we enhance military readiness," said John Conger, Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Installations & Environment. "This year, DoD funds will be leveraged 8 to 1 and result in more than 92,000 acres of restored or enhanced longleaf pine habitat. I appreciate the contributions of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to this important national security requirement and am happy to partner with them to preserve and restore longleaf pine forests around our bases."

“The longleaf pine forests of the Southeast represent one of the most unique and ecologically diverse ecosystems on the planet, providing a home to 29 threatened and endangered species and nearly 900 plant species found nowhere else,” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe. “As a proud partner of ALRI and a sponsor of NFWF’s Longleaf Stewardship Fund, the Fish and Wildlife Service strongly supports the projects funded by these grants – projects that will play key roles in achieving the goals in the range-wide longleaf conservation plan and securing the future of this irreplaceable landscape.”

Since 2012, the Longleaf Stewardship Fund has invested more than \$9 million in projects that will restore more than 35,000 acres and improve over 380,000 additional acres of longleaf pine habitat. These latest grants awarded by the Longleaf Stewardship Fund continue to build on the success of this public-private partnership and the ALRI, further expanding the restoration of the longleaf pine ecosystem through collaborative and results-oriented actions.

About NFWF

Chartered by Congress in 1984, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) protects and restores the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats. Working with federal, corporate and individual partners, NFWF has funded more than 4,000 organizations and committed more than \$2.3 billion to conservation projects. Learn more at www.nfwf.org.