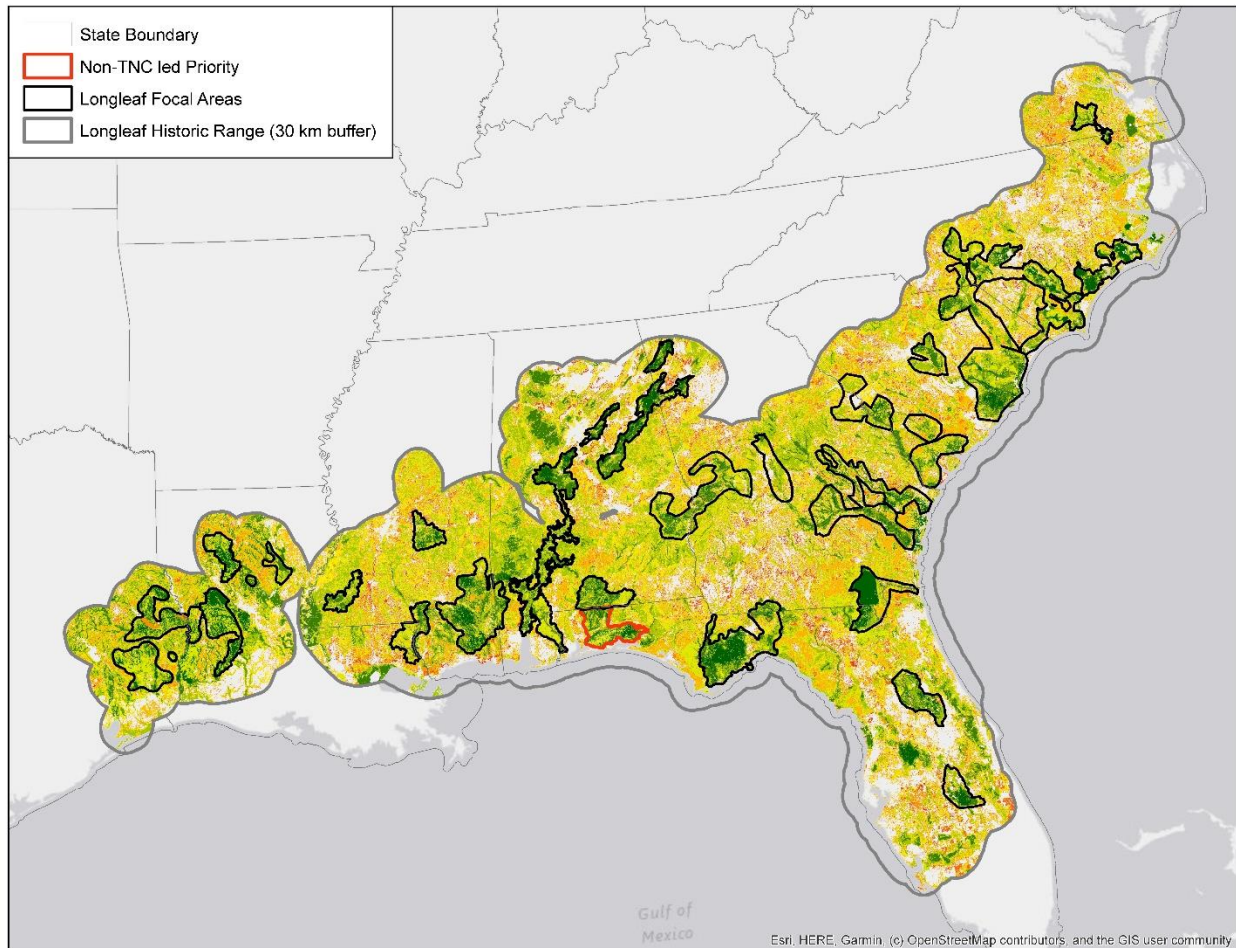


## Advocacy Plan Longleaf Whole System

January 2024



The Longleaf Pine Whole System (LLPWS) began in 2010 with a vision to support the regionwide partnership effort, America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative, in accomplishing the goal to restore eight million acres of longleaf pine forest across the historic range. Today, the work to restore longleaf continues to be prioritized among partners and within The Nature Conservancy (TNC).

The original 90-million-acre historic extent of the native longleaf pine forest reached from east Texas to Southern Virginia bringing diversity and resilience across a landscape that was fire maintained. The diversity of unique plants and animals found in longleaf systems are unparalleled anywhere outside of the tropics.

Unlike many pine species native to the Southeast, longleaf is sustained by low-intensity, slow burning fire that reduces fallen wood, dead grass and other debris in the forest making way for new growth and is the most effective deterrent of a different sort of fire - intense, unpredictable wildfires.

Now more than ever, it is important that we double down on longleaf restoration. A changing climate means more hurricanes and other strong storms. The dual threats of climate change and biodiversity loss are impacting both people and nature on a large scale. With a changing climate comes periods of drought and accompanying wildfires. Nature can play a role in making the region more resilient to these impacts. Longleaf pine thrives in harsh variable climates and provides habitat for many threatened and endangered species—making it the perfect tree for our time.

### **Goal**

The Nature Conservancy will conserve a network of appropriately scaled and representative longleaf forests containing biodiversity, healthy fire management, and natural resilience allowing species to adapt to climate impacts and thrive.

### Why longleaf forests are important:

- Resilient
- Wildlife and Plant Diversity
- Recreational Opportunities (hunting)
- Reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires.
- National defense benefits
- Clean Water

### Who cares about longleaf forests?

- Recreational hunters
- Department of Defense
- USFWS
- USFS
- Conservation minded private landowners.
- Landowners wishing to diversify their timber portfolio.
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
  - USFS, NRCS, FWS, DOD, Southern Company, Bezos Earth Fund, One Tree Planted, International Paper, Altria Group and The Orton Foundation fund annual grants via NFWF to support longleaf restoration.

### Actions Needed

- Increase the amount of permanently protected longleaf and other associated forest and wetland types supporting conservation of the Resilient and Connected Network through easement or fee acquisition.
- Maintain, Improve, and establish new longleaf forests on private and public lands providing biodiversity and climate benefits, adequate incentives/income for private landowners.
- Advance the science on climate and longleaf pine forests.

## Protection

- Leverage existing funding sources.
- Expanded and new funding opportunities.
- Industrial forest landowner relationships.
- Internal Federal and State partner coordination.

## Improved Forest Management

- Maintain local implementation teams and TNC coordinators.
- Fire training and implementation.
- Expand nontraditional partners and minority landowner opportunities via the Working Group, Longleaf for All.
- Engage in and influence range-wide Forest collaboratives like America's Longleaf, SERPPAS, and Keeping Forests to improve biodiversity and climate goals.

## Advancing Science on Climate and Longleaf Pine

- Coordination with TNC North America Climate team.
- Economic, policy and public opinion research/feasibility studies.
- Consistent internal and external messaging.

## Government Relations Action

- Lead America's Longleaf Policy Working Group and build champions in Congress.
- Maintain coordination with TNC Southern Division and US Forest Policy team.
- Maintain representation on the Longleaf Partnership Council.
- Build relationships with state entities and Southern Group of State Foresters.
- Capacity building within our State and Federal agencies:
  - Easing grant administration.
  - More foresters and fire practitioners on the ground.
- Prioritizing Region 8 for allocation of Forest Legacy funding.
- Grow Southern Group State Forester relationships.
- Make longleaf forests better known among the public and policy circles including their climate resilient and biodiverse attributes
- Identifying champions for support.