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## Deadline March 30 for Landowners Wanting Assistance in Planting Longleaf

JACKSON, Miss., March 8, 2012 – Mississippi landowners wanting to create or restore longleaf pine stands can apply for cost-share assistance with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The deadline to apply is March 30.

Farm Bill programs provide cost-share assistance for several practices, including the planting and managing of longleaf pine stands.

Longleaf pine offers landowners the greatest opportunity to practice multiple use management. Longleaf pines provide valuable forest products, pine straw production, scenic beauty, good wildlife habitat and harbor many threatened and endangered species. Longleaf pine is also the best tree species to use in a silvopasture system. These forests are home to some of the most diverse plant communities in the South..

Landowners in Mississippi have realized the economic value of a pole size longleaf pine stand. The price the landowners are receiving for their high-quality, straight-grained dimensional lumber and their long straight poles and pilings is attracting more people to plant longleaf pines. Timber buyers recognize the quality of these trees and are paying top prices for the products.

Recent nursery and silvicultural improvements have improved the quality of longleaf seedlings and reduced the amount of time it takes to get the seedlings up and out of the grass stage. These improvements allow the longleaf pine to compete with the early growth rates of other Southern pines.

Longleaf pine is more resistant to insect and disease pests such as Southern pine beetles and fusiform rust than other Southern pines. Longleaf pine is also more resistant to fire than other Southern pines and can be burned at an early age maintaining early successional habitat, benefitting many wildlife species like bobwhite quail.

Because of the tree's smaller crown density and deep root system, longleaf pine is not as susceptible to wind damage as other southern pines. The longleaf pine stands withstood Hurricane Katrina's wind 48 percent better than the loblolly pine stands, according to one study.

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The longleaf pines produce longer needles that are preferred landscape mulch, and the sale of pine straw provides a steady source of income from these stands. Longleaf pine needles are longer and easier to bale, last longer than other mulches and have a distinguished red color that enhances the landscape.

Some landowners report they are making more money from selling pine straw than selling timber. This could also provide an additional source of income for a small forest landowner.

Finally, longleaf pine is the best species to use in a silvopasture system due to the smaller crown density, which allows more sunlight to filter through the tree crown canopy to the grass below.

For additional information about the Longleaf Pine Initiative, visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>. To find your local NRCS office, visit <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=MS&agency=NRCS>.

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