



Natural Resources Conservation Service
United States Department of Agriculture

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PRESS RELEASE

NRCS Longleaf Pine Initiative Available to Private Landowners

Jackson, MS, December 13, 2010 - Longleaf pine forests once covered millions of acres throughout the Southeastern United States. Today, only a few thousand acres of this vital habitat remains. To help sustain, enhance and restore longleaf pine forests, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Chief Dave White today announced the availability of more than \$12 million to help private landowners in 9 States restore and manage longleaf pine.

"The longleaf pine is one of our key native species; providing a home to hundreds of plant and animal species as well as being a tremendous economic resource," White said. "Restoring and expanding this species is only made possible through voluntary partnerships with conservation-minded landowners who share our goal of healthy forests."

Longleaf pine habitat can contain as many as 300 different species of groundcover plants per acre, and approximately 60 percent of the amphibian and reptile species found in the Southeast. Additionally, this forested habitat is home to at least 122 endangered or threatened plant and animal species including the fox squirrel, northern bobwhite, red-cockaded woodpecker and gopher tortoise.

"We've taken great steps toward conserving longleaf pine forests in Mississippi," said Dr. Homer L. Wilkes. "Through this initiative, and the great works of our landowners, we will be able to enhance and protect more of this essential habitat."

The Longleaf Pine Initiative will incorporate both technical and financial assistance providing \$1,000,000 to help landowners in Mississippi improve habitat on agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest and Tribal land.

Nine states are included in the Longleaf Pine Initiative: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia.

Approved participants will receive financial assistance for implementing conservation practices including planting longleaf pine, installing firebreaks, conducting prescribed burning and controlling invasive plants.

Additional information on the Longleaf Pine Initiative, NRCS and our programs is available on our Website at www.ms.nrcs.usda.gov or at your local USDA NRCS office. The deadline for application is March 1, 2011.

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