

Taking Advantage of a Fantastic Fire Season: Ocala Longleaf Pine Local Implementation Team

By Cheryl Millett, *The Nature Conservancy*



The Nature Conservancy's Northeast Florida Ecosystem Restoration Team member monitors a controlled burn in longleaf pine habitat. Photo by Cheryl Millett

The Ocala Longleaf Pine Local Implementation Team (OLIT) continued focusing on implementing work on the ground on public lands, beginning work on private lands in the region, and coordinating and communicating.

The timing was perfect to begin work on the ground. The 2014 fire season in central Florida provided many great controlled burning days and The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Northeast Florida Ecosystem Restoration Team (ERT) took full advantage of the opportunity. The ERT set a goal of delivering 7,050 acres of controlled burning with support from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Longleaf Stewardship Fund. The ERT overachieved, delivering a total of 8,173 acres of controlled burning on 19 properties managed by federal, state, local or private agencies or organizations. They also conducted non-native invasive plant treatment and hardwood control on the few days without prescribed fire.

The Florida Forest Service is implementing the bulk of longleaf work on private lands, through an incentive program offering restoration, maintenance and technical assistance. There are contracts in place with 25 private landowners to conduct longleaf planting, native understory establishment, prescribed burning, timber stand improvement, and nonnative invasive control projects.

On the coordinating and communicating front, the OLIT email list is growing and several emails have been sent out with information about accomplishments, workshops, incentive programs, resources, and other upcoming events. We worked with TNC and NRCS in Florida to get stories out on social media, radio, and print news to promote the value of longleaf pine. We participated in the annual Florida Forestry Association meeting to gain a better understanding of private landowner needs, and in the biennial Longleaf Conference and Eastern Native Grass Symposium, presented a poster about the key ingredients for a LIT as seen through the eyes of OLIT.

Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership Update

By Jimmy Lisenby, *Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership* By Kent Evans, *Texas Longleaf Implementation Team*



LIT Coordinator Jimmy Lisenby collects wiregrass seed using a Prairie Habitats Seed harvester. Photo by Susan Griggs.

The Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership (SLPCP) has begun native longleaf understory seed collection efforts with its newly acquired Prairie Habitats seed harvester. Lyne Askins and Mark Parker with the Carolina Sandhills Wildlife Refuge were very helpful in locating suitable collections sites on the refuge. Collection efforts were focused on wiregrass stands in open longleaf forests with a history of fire and a large diversity of native understory species. In a little less than 10 hours over two days we were able to collect about 40 pounds of seed. This seed will be used

to reestablish understory on private lands within the focus area. Plans are to continue collecting seed until we have enough to satisfy the needs of interested landowners.

On Saturday October 4th 2014 the SLPCP sponsored a booth in the heart of our focus area at the Carolina Festival in Chesterfield, SC. The booth looked amazing thanks to Sue Griggs and Heather Rivers. The display showed how the Chesterfield Soil and Water Conservation District, Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service work together to serve the landowners in the Chesterfield County area. Many visitors to the booth took home a longleaf pine seedling courtesy of the SC Forestry Commission's Taylor Nursery as well as a few other educational items. This was a great opportunity to educate landowners about the network of support that exists for longleaf restoration. Many kids were drawn in by the pictures of burning and found it astonishing that fire could be used as a tool to create a healthy forest.



Potential future landowners learn about the longleaf pine ecosystem. Photo by Susan Griggs.