

Why Longleaf?

Ecology:

•**Native species:** Well-managed longleaf pine forests provide quality habitat for a variety of desirable plant and animal species. For example, bobwhite quail populations thrive in frequently burned longleaf pine stands, which typically support high legume populations. Fox squirrels, wild turkeys, whitetail deer, countless varieties of songbirds and many native butterflies flourish in longleaf pine forests as well. Reptiles and amphibians are frequent inhabitants of these forests, many found nowhere else. In addition, in both the spring and fall, wildflowers bring the forest to life with a myriad of colors.

•**Site Adaptations:** Longleaf pine can be regenerated across a wide variety of site conditions. Though typically thought of as a sandhill species, longleaf pine was once covered about 2/3 of the southeast; being found on all but the wettest soils.

•**Reduced Risk of Loss to Natural Causes:** Longleaf pine is highly resistant to pine beetles and fusiform rust, tolerant of wildfire and ice, and generally windfirm. In fact, one common agent of destruction for many southern forests, fire, is an essential tool in longleaf management. The only significant disease threatening longleaf pine, brownspot needle rust, is easily controlled by prescribed fire.

•**Biodiversity:** A longleaf pine stand maintained by fire is among the most biologically diverse ecotypes in North America. At a landscape level longleaf pine forests cover a variety of different habitat types (mountains, rolling hills, sandhills and flatwoods) and have innumerable embedded microhabitats, e.g., picture plant bogs, seepage slopes, etc.

•**Aesthetics:** For visual effect, few forests can compare with longleaf pine forests. Mature longleaf forests are frequently referred to as "park-like". Some people find young longleaf plantations attractive.

•**Carbon Sink:** Because longleaf pine is longer lived than other southern pines and has the ability to sustain growth at older ages (150 years +), it has the ability to tie up stored carbon for long periods of time. Longleaf is also better able to sustain growth at older ages (150 years +).

•**Cultural:** For those whose roots go far back into the history of the southeastern U.S., chances are that longleaf pine forests played a role in the livelihood of their ancestors. Longleaf was literally the tree that built the South. Aside from lumber that was used to build homes, businesses, ships, etc., longleaf pine forests provided fare for the dinner table, medicines, a place to graze cattle, extract resin to refine turpentine or simply as a place to go out and listen to the "whispering of the pines". Today, many people are planting longleaf pine simply because they "remember it fondly from their childhood".

Dollars and cents:

•**Products:** In today's market, the products derived from longleaf pine can be much more valuable than those of other southern pines. The very traits that made longleaf pine attractive to early lumbermen still make it attractive today. That is, longleaf pine produces straight, dense, rot resistant wood.

With the current slump in the value of pulpwood (mostly used for paper products), growing trees specifically for that market is a less attractive investment for private non-industrial landowners. Similarly, the market for timber (lumber and other solid wood products) has also declined in recent years. However, most analysts feel this slump in the “timber market” is short term in nature. In contrast, one market that has not fluctuated significantly in recent years is the utility pole market. This is significant because longleaf yields an uncommonly high percentage of poles. One recent study has shown that in a 39 year old loblolly forest, only 8% of the stand was of sufficient quality to make poles. Slash pines in the same study produced slightly more poles than loblolly at 11.5%. In this study, an amazing 72% of the longleaf pine in the study would produce utility poles. When an additional 60% of the trees in your forest are worth 50% more money as poles than they would be as sawtimber, that's a powerful financial incentive.

•**Market Flexibility:** Longleaf gives landowners great market flexibility. These forests yield a variety of products and continue to grow throughout their lives, responding to thinning even at greatly advanced ages. In fact, many landowners today generate more income selling longleaf pine straw than the wood itself! Because of the variety of products yielded and the persistent long-term growth, longleaf owners should seldom if ever be forced to sell into a poor market unless all markets are down and time demands on money are pressing.

•**Investment Security:** As an investment, longleaf provides a real measure of security. It guards against catastrophic loss better than other southern pines. The value to the owner of reducing the risk of catastrophic loss is difficult to calculate, but we are all familiar with the cost of insurance, which is essentially does the same thing, i.e. protect against catastrophic loss. Also, the historic low volatility of the pole market is analogous to the low volatility of investments in bonds. Reduced price or value swings lower investment risk.

Source

http://www.auburn.edu/academic/forestry_wildlife/longleafalliance/landowners/whylongleaf.htm