



For Immediate Release

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BEAUMONT, Texas — A conservation easement in Jasper County, recently acquired by Texas A&M Forest Service for \$2.7 million, will permanently protect nearly 5,500 acres of sustainably managed timberland in East Texas.

The easement is located north of Jasper in the area known as Longleaf Ridge, a line of hills which supports some of the only remaining longleaf pine forest in Texas and is home to the region's best spring-fed creeks, waterfalls and thriving wildlife populations. Protection of this tract is part of an ambitious conservation effort to connect the Angelina and Sabine National Forests.

Funding for the purchase was provided through the Forest Legacy Program and funded in part by grants from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Texas Farm and Ranch Land Conservation Program, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation through Walmart's Acres for America Program and The Nature Conservancy.

"TPWD has long recognized the ecological significance of the forests, streams, and special habitats that make up Longleaf Ridge, and considers their protection to be a high conservation priority for Texas," said Carter Smith, Executive Director of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. "This project epitomizes what can be accomplished when the public and private sector work together to accomplish lofty conservation goals."

Longleaf Ridge lies within the historic longleaf pine ecosystem that once covered 90 million acres of the United States. Less than 3 percent remains, making this easement a priority for America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative, a national effort focusing public and private resources on restoring and protecting longleaf pine forests.

"This working lands easement is a wonderful example of the conservation that the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), through Walmart's Acres for America Program, supports," said Jeff Trandahl, executive director and CEO, NFWF. "Not only is it important for wildlife, but Longleaf Ridge provides exceptional value as it lies in a priority area under the America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative, a partnership working to bring back the native forest iconic to much of the southeastern United States."

The conservation easement was purchased from Crown Pine Timber LP, a limited partnership managed by Campbell Global, a timber investment and management firm based in Portland, Oregon. The easement will prohibit subdivision and extensive development of the tract, while allowing timber harvest to continue. The easement is called Longleaf Ridge Phase II as it is the second tract protected in the area; a nearby 4,785-acre easement was purchased in 2014.

The Forest Legacy Program is a federal program funded by the Land and Water Conservation Fund and administered by the USDA Forest Service. It encourages the voluntary protection of privately owned forestland primarily through the acquisition of conservation easements. These easements are legally binding agreements transferring development rights from one party to another without removing the property from private ownership.

“Texas lands are owned and managed primarily by private owners,” said Tom Boggus, Texas State Forester. “They are critical in conserving and protecting our state’s trees, forests and related natural resources.”

This type of conservation – often called a working forest conservation easement – keeps forestlands in private ownership while conserving the land for future generations. Landowners and local communities continue to realize economic gain from timber management while the forest provides other benefits such as watershed protection, wildlife habitat, recreation and scenic values.

“This easement contains many of the most important features that we want to conserve in East Texas, including rare plants and more than 2,000 acres of longleaf pine forest which has been restored by Campbell Global and Temple-Inland before them,” said David Bezanson, The Nature Conservancy’s protection and easement manager.

Much of the property will continue to be managed for longleaf pine with timber harvest allowed according to a forest stewardship plan.

Learn more about the Longleaf Ridge Phase II conservation easement and the Forest Legacy Program by visiting <http://texasforests.tamu.edu/ForestLegacy/>.

Read the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Acres for America news release by visiting <http://www.nfwf.org/whoweare/mediacenter/pr/Pages/acres-for-america-supports-land-conservation-projects-in-eight-states-2017-1115.aspx>

View images at <https://flic.kr/s/aHskANmkfh>.

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Contact

Gretchen Riley, Texas A&M Forest Service Forest Legacy Coordinator, 979-458-7373, [griley@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:griley@tfs.tamu.edu)

Texas A&M Forest Service Communications, 979-458-6606, [newsmedia@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:newsmedia@tfs.tamu.edu)