

## Appendix D

### Final Communications Plan for the Texas Longleaf Implementation Team

4/12/2019

#### Background, Vision and Mission Statements

The Texas Longleaf Implementation Team (TLIT) was formed in 2014 (by more than 200 conservation-minded Texans) to accelerate the restoration of the longleaf pine ecosystem on both private and public forestlands. TLIT is comprised of partner organizations as part of the larger, range-wide America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative (ALRI), whose purpose is to increase longleaf pine acreage from 3.4 to 8.0 million acres by 2025. The range-wide conservation plan for longleaf pine identified two significant geographic areas (SGAs) in East Texas, the "Big Thicket" SGA and the Angelina and Sabine National Forests-anchored "Longleaf Ridge" SGA, to target priority landholdings for longleaf pine ecosystem restoration and enhancement.

The vision of the TLIT is to re-establish the abundantly biodiverse and wildlife sustaining habitat of the longleaf pine ecosystem in east Texas. The mission of this partnership is to promote conservation of the longleaf pine ecosystem and associated ecosystems on private and public lands through a transparent, collaborative, and coordinated network of diverse stakeholders. A Declaration of Partnership was created to describe the TLIT vision and mission as a framework for future accomplishments through (1) providing technical guidance and cost-assistance for longleaf pine restoration and enhancement, (2) increasing educational opportunities for professionals and landowners, and (3) improving collaboration/partnerships within the conservation community.

This document will serve as a guideline and a reference for communications efforts serving the TLIT. The goals of the Communication Team as described in this plan are to support the TLIT by:

- Securing the necessary engagement and support from a range of key external and internal decision-makers and allies;

- Enabling communication and coordination within the partnership at regional, state, and local levels;
- Supporting the individual partners in achieving their agency/ organizational/individual goals for longleaf restoration;
- Demonstrating the success of our work and partners' efforts through various channels;
- Influencing/inspiring/changing behaviors and perceptions; and
- Ensuring stakeholders and individuals understand who we are and what we do.

## **Target Audiences**

### **Decision-makers and Allies – National**

- Federal agency leadership including U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA); U.S. Forest Service (USFS); USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Farm Services Agency (FSA); Department of Interior (DOI) and Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS); and National Park Service (NPS).
- Members of Congress, their staff, and key committees
- National Association of State Foresters
- Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)

Note: Communications with Congress and other targets may occur in response to information requests or otherwise be undertaken by partners in compliance with applicable lobbying laws and regulations.

### **Decision-makers and Allies – Regional**

- ALRI Federal Coordinating Committee and Longleaf Partnership Council
- NRCS Southern Regional Conservationist
- Southern Group of State Foresters
- Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
- Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils
- Southern Regional Extension Forestry
- Oil, Gas, and Mineral Interests
- Utility and Transportation Providers
- Water Governing Bodies/Providers/Distributors

## Decision-makers and Implementers – Significant Geographic Areas

- Current and future generations of landowners
- Texas A&M Forest Service - leadership
- Texas Parks & Wildlife Department - leadership
- USFS Forest Supervisors, Staff Officers, and District Rangers where applicable (Angelina, Sabine, Davy Crockett, and Sam Houston National Forests)
- USFWS - leadership
- Texas NRCS - leadership (State Conservationists, program staff, and State Technical Committees)
- Texas Forestry Association
- Texas Farm Bureau leadership
- Governors' offices (Chief of Staff and staff leadership on economics and natural resources)
- State economic development offices (relative to forest products markets, both traditional and emerging, e.g. energy) and Tourism Boards (nature/eco-tourism)
- East Texas regional economic development offices such as Texas Forest Country
- Local governments and institutions, as applicable
- Prescribed fire councils
- Native American tribal councils (Alabama-Coushatta)
- Non-government organizations (NGOs - including but not limited to those serving on the TLIT)
- Landowner organizations including state and national forest owners' associations
- Timber investment management organizations (TIMOs) and real estate investment trusts (REITs)
- Consulting foresters, prescribed burn vendors, and other service providers
- Vendor of products, equipment, and supplies
- Academic institutions
- County extension agencies
- Conservationists
- General public

## Communications Objectives

The objectives of this Communications Plan are to:

- Build awareness that technical and cost-share assistance is available to East Texas land managers to restore or maintain longleaf pine;
- Make new connections within the forestry, natural resource management, and conservation communities to educate diverse audiences on the importance of the longleaf pine ecosystem and its extraordinary wealth of cultural, ecological, economic, and social values;
- Encourage action by public, private, industrial, and non-industrial landowners to help restore the iconic longleaf pine forest in East Texas;
- Develop and distribute content stemming from strategies, successes, and outcomes of the LIT;
- Increase educational opportunities for professionals and landowners associated with longleaf pine restoration, enhancement, and management; and
- Continually evaluate and improve our communications efforts.

## Key Messages

- ▶ “Longleaf Pine...Your Forest, Your Future...What’s Your Plan? Let us help you take the next step to grow native forests on your land. For more information: Texas Longleaf Implementation Team: [www.txlongleaf.org](http://www.txlongleaf.org)”
- ▶ “Landowners, consider reforestation of your land to longleaf pine. Financial assistance can replace 50-75% of your cost to establish a new stand of longleaf, or treatments to enhance existing longleaf such as prescribed burning. Your Texas Longleaf Team includes multiple agencies working to create innovative solutions for landowners performing longleaf restoration in counties of its historic range. Contact us, the county/district office of Texas A&M Forest Service, or the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for technical and financial assistance.”
- ▶ “Restoring native longleaf pine forests to East Texas offers many economic benefits, including additional income to landowners for establishing working forests. State and federal agencies can provide assistance to landowners to help them understand land management options such as reforestation and prescribed burning. Many owners find that funding assistance provided by these programs is the boost needed

to offset establishment costs of longleaf pine, initiate a prescribe burn program, and enhance an existing stand. Longleaf pine also can meet or exceed production of other pines on certain soil types.”

- ▶ “Longleaf stands can provide risk reduction benefits to a land owner’s portfolio over other pines. Longleaf are resistant to southern pine beetle infestations. Longleaf are structurally adapted to survive fire better than other East Texas pines. Managed longleaf can withstand wildfire damage if they receive appropriate prescribed burns. Longleaf stands may develop with less herbicide use since they are adapted to defeat woody competition with properly administered prescribed burning. Prescribed burning can also help manage other pines by reducing hazardous fuel accumulation. The TLIT advocates the use of prescribed burning and assists partners in training and development of prescribed burning crews.”
- ▶ “Longleaf stands offer economic and wildlife benefits to East Texas land owners. Longleaf survive and thrive on some sites considered “marginal” or less productive for loblolly pine. In addition to the pulpwood and chip and saw products in plantation thinning, longleaf stands can yield outstanding, high value utility poles. Wildlife benefit from early plantation years where site prep and burning strategies develop a diverse ground cover of grasses and flowering plants. Land owners may enjoy seeing more robust populations of turkey, song birds, pollinators and other wildlife in burned longleaf stands even when planted at densities of 600 to 700 trees per acre. The TLIT helps communicate the use of stand management prescriptions that control woody invasive species such as yaupon holly and enhances a diverse herbaceous ground cover.”

### **Key Tools and Message Delivery Mechanisms (Current and Potential)**

- Direct contact, technical assistance, and education via workshops, consulting foresters, TLIT coordinator, and agency staff
- TLIT website ([www.txlongleaf.org](http://www.txlongleaf.org))
- ALRI website ([www.americaslongleaf.org](http://www.americaslongleaf.org))
- Educational videos for landowners (<http://txlongleaf.org/landowner-assistance/videos-for-landowners/>)
- TLIT blog (<http://txlongleaf.org/blog/>)
- NRCS Texas Longleaf Pine Initiative podcasts (<https://txlongleaf.org/landowner-assistance/media/nrcs-texas-longleaf-pine-initiative-podcasts/>)

- Cost-share opportunities (handout and online): <http://txlongleaf.org/landowner-assistance/cost-share-opportunities/>
- Texas Longleaf Task Force email listserv
- Local and national longleaf pine news (<http://txlongleaf.org/longleaf-pine-in-the-news/>)
- ALRI and TLIT communications materials (i.e., fact sheets, annual accomplishment reports, infographics)
- Identify and engage freelance writers who focus on the outdoors and conservation as allies
- Exhibitor booth displays
- Post cards (mail-outs and wood procurement networks)
- Land and tax records for mail-outs
- Publications and documents (<http://txlongleaf.org/landowner-assistance/publications-documents/>)
- Partner websites, newsletters, social media, links, and shared products
- Targeted presentations and conferences
- ALRI social media ([www.facebook.com/americaslongleaf](http://www.facebook.com/americaslongleaf)) and Texas Longleaf Landowner Campaign (facebook ad)
- Media coverage (i.e., magazines, radio, newspapers)
- Field tours/workshops/trainings with experts on topics of interest to key audiences
- Texas A&M Forest Service "My Land Management Connector" (<https://texasforestinfo.tamu.edu/MyLandManagementConnector/>)
- Texas A&M Forest Service "Got Land" app (<https://gotland.tfs.tamu.edu/>)
- "Contact Us" page for landowner inquiries (<http://txlongleaf.org/contact/>)
- Vendors and consultant lists (<http://txlongleaf.org/landowner-assistance/vendors-and-consultants/>)
- Tree nurseries list (<http://txlongleaf.org/landowner-assistance/tree-nurseries/>)

## Priority Action Steps with Timeline

To support and accomplish the objectives of this Plan, the Communications Team has identified the following action items.

1. Communicate contents of the recent Farm Bill and its impact for the TLIT and Texas land managers. (January 2019)
2. Monitor website traffic with Google analytics and report results to the TLIT Steering Committee on an annual basis. (March 2019)
3. Review the branding name of the TLIT and determine if a new name is needed. If so, work to update all materials and information to reflect that change. (March 2019)
4. Complete this Communications Plan and present to the TLIT Steering Committee for their review and acceptance. (March 2019)
5. Identify, evaluate, and stockpile available images, graphics, and visuals sources. Determine if additional images, graphics, and visuals are needed. (March 2019)
6. Conduct planning/brainstorming session for potential community Fire Festival at a location TBD for an event to be held in 2020. (May 2019)
7. Add new information to the TLIT website on forest management to benefit avian species and understory/groundcover information. (June 2019)
8. Explore the potential for using social media marketing to increase website traffic and landowner inquiries. (June 2019)
9. Identify and engage at least one freelance writer. (June 2019)
10. Work with NRCS staff to create new landowner videos for the website using existing footage. (September 2019)
11. Investigate the feasibility of creating quality YouTube videos using regional experts. (October 2019)

12. On an annual basis, review communications materials and update/revise as necessary. Determine if new items are needed. (December 2019)
13. Increase the number of visitors to the website by 10% percent annually. (December 2019)
14. Distribute the remainder of the TELE workshop-generated message postcard to landowners. (December 2019)
15. Provide communication support for two field workshops for landowners with emphasis on understory/groundcover and planting. (April 2019 and September/October 2019) (February through October 2019)
16. Participate in at least six events annually (i.e., workshops, landowner meetings, etc.) to promote the mission and goals of the TLIT. (Ongoing)
17. Maintain the website and generate new content for visitors. (Ongoing)
18. Maintain a calendar listing of events relevant to the TLIT on <http://txlongleaf.org/longleaf-pine-in-the-news/upcoming-events/>. (Ongoing)
19. Work with The Longleaf Alliance staff for additional guidance and resources to enhance the state LIT efforts. (Ongoing)
20. Take advantage of media opportunities as they arise. (Ongoing)
21. Provide communication statistics for the TLIT for needed reporting efforts to NFWF, as identified/requested by the TLIT leadership. (Ongoing)
22. Work with partners to communicate timely longleaf news; find and promote longleaf success stories to keep longleaf relevant. (Ongoing)



## **Necessary Resources for Implementing Communications Plan**

Ultimately, the TLIT and its participating partner agencies, organizations, and individuals have responsibility for implementing this Plan. In addition to carrying out the outreach to decision-makers and allies described above, the partners' assistance with ongoing development of communications content and its distribution is essential. The TLIT will rely on its Communications Team and partners to provide day-to-day leadership, planning, and support. Efforts will be made to assure diverse team membership and participation from the partner agencies, organizations, and individuals.

## **Evaluation**

Evaluation of the Communications Team's identified goals and action items will be assessed at least annually.

## **Plan Review and Updating**

This Communications Plan is to be reviewed annually by the Communications Team and updated as necessary. The Team will consult with the Steering Committee of the TLIT and its leadership in determining whether updates or other substantive revisions to the Plan are necessary. The Team will then work together for edits/revisions and then present it to the Steering Committee for their final review and acceptance.

## **Acknowledgement**

This Communications Plan builds on the concepts and content of a 2008 Communications Plan for ALRI developed by D. J. Case & Associates whose earlier contributions are gratefully acknowledged. The Communications Team of the Texas Longleaf Implementation Team acknowledges that this document was provided as a template for use and appreciate being able to customize/edit it for use by the Texas team.

## **Communications Team Members**

Rufus Duncan, Landowner

Kent Evans, TLIT Coordinator

Amanda Haralson, Landowner

Stephanie Hertz, Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute

Wendy Ledbetter, The Nature Conservancy

Jennifer Smith, Resource Management Services, Inc.

Donna Work, Texas A&M Forest Service