

Texas Longleaf Conservation Assistance Program helps to Close 5,500 Acres Easement

The Texas Longleaf Implementation Team (TLIT) has been operating in east Texas to accelerate the restoration of the longleaf pine ecosystem on private lands since 2013. The team consists of 14 state and federal conservation agencies as well as private organizations including the National Wild Turkey Federation, The Nature Conservancy, and the Texas Forestry Association. This Texas team operates with funding received with grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and International Paper's Forestland Stewards Program.

The TLIT helps private lands remain as working forests with innovative cost share programs not available through traditional USDA farm bill programs. In 2016, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation had an opportunity for our Texas Longleaf Team to obtain grant funds that could assist with conservation easements on tracts relevant to longleaf restoration goals. The Texas team won such a grant that allowed us to offer a 50% cost share for some easement closing costs. The closing cost funds were offered through its Texas Longleaf Conservation Assistance Program, administered by its fiduciary, Texas A&M Forest Service. This year, Crown Timber/Campbell Global requested grant funds to assist with the closing costs for a conservation easement on a 5,500 acre tract in northern Jasper County, Texas, known as the Longleaf Ridge Phase II of the Forest Legacy Program. The bulk of the easement cost, \$2.7 million, was paid for with federal funds under the Land and Water Stewardship Fund. This tract has many desirable habitat characteristics, most notably being several thousand acres of longleaf being burned regularly, characteristic of the historic longleaf ecosystem. It also contains rare pitcher plant bogs and a natural-formed waterfall.

Many lands suitable for conservation easement come with a story of a family that perpetuated a land ethic across generations of ownership. This Longleaf Ridge Phase II parcel was recently owned by Crown Pine Timber LP, a limited partnership managed by Campbell Global, a timber investment and management firm based in Portland, Oregon. Most of the Campbell Global lands in Texas had been assembled under ownership of the Temple Family in the mid-1900s. Thousands of acres of the Temple lands had outstanding conservation values which were maintained for decades with intact native forests, unique plant communities, and rare species such as the red-cockaded woodpecker. The easement will retain those values in perpetuity for future generations. It will be administered by Texas A&M Forest Service and will prohibit subdivision and extensive development of the tract while allowing the land to be managed as a working forest.

For information about the Texas Longleaf Team, see www.txlongleaf.org.