



REPI

READINESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION INTEGRATION PROGRAM LONGLEAF PINE | ICONIC SOUTHERN FORESTS AIDING MILITARY READINESS

The longleaf pine ecosystem was historically the predominate forest type across the Southeast, but the loss of this ecosystem through conversion to other land uses or forest types reduced longleaf acreage to less than 5% of its original extent. Additionally, the lack of frequent and low intensity fires from the landscape, on which this ecosystem depends, has led to degradation of longleaf forests that remain. The extensive loss of longleaf pine was a dramatic change in the region, as these forests contain some of the most important habitats for plants and wildlife in the United States. Longleaf forests support 29 federally-listed threatened or endangered species and many more that are candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), primarily due to the loss of habitat. Red-cockaded woodpecker, indigo snake, flatwoods salamander, and gopher tortoise are just a few of the many federally-protected species that call longleaf habitat home.

Today, the **Department of Defense manages over 715,000 acres of longleaf pine habitat on 34 military installations from Louisiana to Virginia.** This acreage represents a significant portion of the remaining longleaf across the United States, and frequent fires from training activities have kept these acres in healthy condition. Today, rapid development of lands adjacent to military bases is eliminating wildlife habitat and putting pressures on base lands.

The conversion of forests to urban sprawl pushes wildlife onto installations, which can trigger restrictions on military testing and training activities. To prevent DoD from becoming the last remaining habitat for imperiled species, DoD is working with partners through the America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative (ALRI) to help protect and restore this threatened ecosystem. ALRI represents a coalition of federal and state agencies, non-profit organizations, forest industry, private landowners, and other interests who have united in a single cause: to restore the iconic longleaf pine forest in the southeastern United States. A Conservation Plan was developed in 2009 to guide efforts by participating agencies, organizations and individuals to a **15-year Initiative goal of increasing longleaf from 3.4 to 8.0 million acres by the year 2025.**

DoD is contributing to ALRI's range-wide efforts by sustaining and enhancing longleaf ecosystems both on and off



Longleaf Forests Provide Benefits to DoD:

-  Expanded habitat for endemic species, which decreases the likelihood that threatened and endangered species will seek sanctuary on military lands due to urban sprawl
-  Optimal terrain and cover for military mission training and operations
-  Dark skies and landscapes crucial for nighttime training activities
-  Compatible land use near military facilities to buffer against potential conflicts with airspace, safety, noise, and smoke during training exercises
-  Protection of military housing residents from wildfires that might arise through normal military training operations
-  Economic benefits to rural economies, thus supporting the military's surrounding community as a whole
-  Opportunities to advance species recovery and allow the military more flexibility to conduct critical training operations on base

“Protection and restoration of longleaf pine forests strengthens military readiness by promoting compatible land uses near military facilities and enhances habitat for imperiled species, which in turn provides greater flexibility for our training, testing and operational missions.”

— John Conger, formerly performing the duties of Assistant Secretary of Defense (Energy, Installations and Environment) (June 30, 2015)

DoD established the REPI Program in 2003 to help reduce military-community-environmental conflicts resulting from urban sprawl and loss of habitat surrounding DoD's installations and ranges. The REPI Program is a key tool for ensuring the sustainability of our military's training, testing, and operational capabilities by allowing the Department to enter into cost-sharing agreements with conservation organizations and state and local governments to protect compatible land uses and preserve habitats around military installations. As of FY2019, **DoD has spent approximately \$327 million and leveraged nearly \$285 million in partner funding on REPI projects to protect over 248,919 acres outside 18 military installations with potential or existing longleaf pine habitat.**

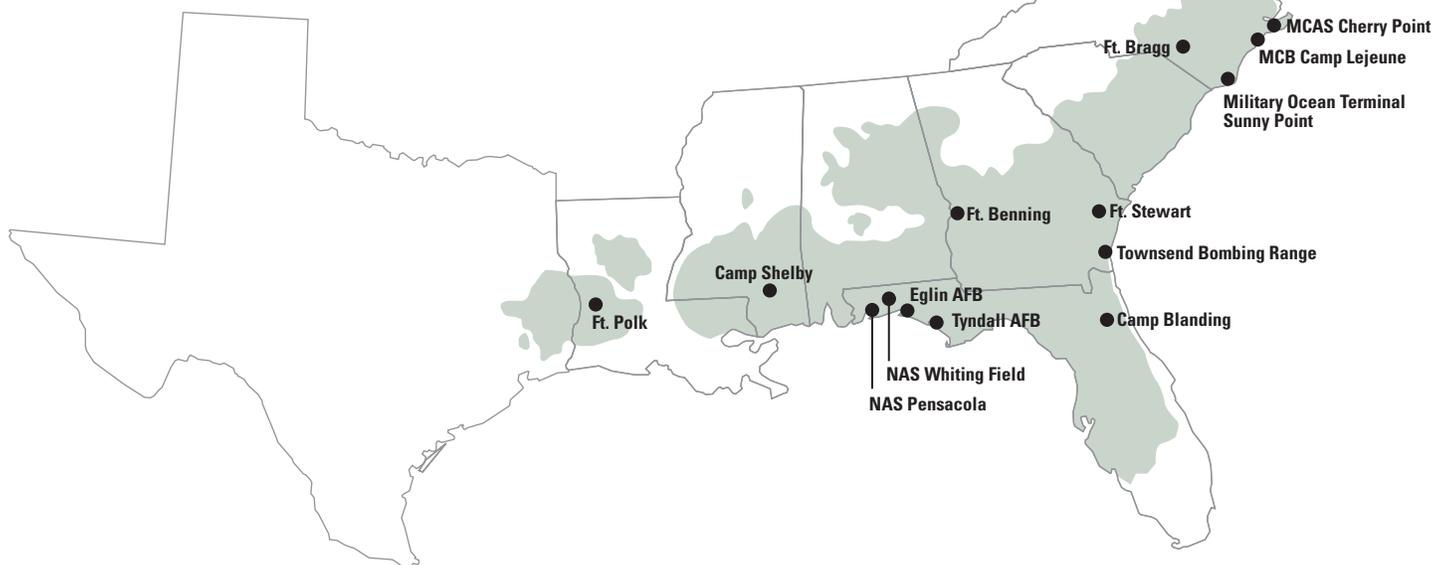
installation. Natural resource management activities in longleaf pine forests on military installations may include prescribed burning, reforestation, forest stand improvement, and species management; these activities were conducted primarily due to obligations under the ESA. Outside the installations, the DoD Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program is working with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Longleaf Stewardship Fund — a landmark public-private partnership supported with federal and private funding to expand, enhance and accelerate longleaf pine ecosystem restoration across the historical range. Since 2012, **the NFWF Longleaf Stewardship Fund has maximized DoD’s investment by leveraging over \$6.3 million in DoD funds more than 9-to-1 overall to protect the missions of 14 DoD installations.**

Mission benefits as a result of longleaf restoration occur at rangewide and local scales, such as Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU) in North Carolina. MOTSU is operated by the Army on the east coast of the United States and is the largest ammunition terminal in the nation. In 2013, a Longleaf Stewardship Fund grant was awarded to the Cape Fear Arch Longleaf Initiative. Through this award, longleaf forests were restored off-post and within installation safety zones, which improved habitat for threatened and endangered species. This project also facilitated prescribed burning to

“The U.S. Army Environmental Command is committed to helping installations manage natural resources to PREVENT, minimize or eliminate restrictions on Army training and testing activities. Protecting longleaf pine protects military readiness. When more habitat exists for endangered species outside our ranges, the need to implement training restrictions on Army training lands decreases.”

— Colonel Robert C. Wittig, Army Environmental Commander

Military Installations Benefitting from the Longleaf Stewardship Fund (as of 2020)



“All of us at Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point embrace the conservation achievements accomplished by our partners through the Longleaf Stewardship Fund. The restoration of nearby longleaf pine forests directly aligns with our natural resource management efforts and improves habitat for imperiled species dependent on the longleaf pine ecosystem. Our partners provide expertise and assistance to private landowners who conduct prescribed burning on lands surrounding our facility, which reduces the chance for wildfires and provides a safer operating environment for our personnel.”

— Colonel Chris Hart, Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point

reduce hazardous fuel loads in nearby forests; this in turn reduced the potential for high intensity wildfires on-base which could pose a significant risk for MOTSU and its mission. DoD contributed only a small investment of \$50,000 to the project based on its anticipated benefits to the military; in turn, this investment was coupled with matching funds from non-DoD partners to yield \$621,050 for project activities. Overall, **DoD received an 18:1 return on its investment** by leveraging non-DoD partner funds — an impressive example of maximizing taxpayer dollars.

The link between longleaf pine and DoD is clear. While great strides are being made in the restoration of this iconic forest, long-term commitment is needed by DoD and all of its partners to ensure that longleaf persists now and into the future. Our nation’s military depends upon it.

For more information, visit www.repi.mil and www.americaslongleaf.org