

Farm Service Agency Introduces New Initiative to Restore Longleaf Pine Forests



CP36 is a federally subsidized conservation practice designed to provide numerous conservation and environmental benefits.

By *Claude Jenkins*, Land Stewardship Biologist

(In partnership with the Alabama Forestry Commission, the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association, the Alabama Wildlife Federation, and the USDA Forest Service)

In October 2006, the United States Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA) introduced a new longleaf pine initiative designed to reforest up to 250,000 acres of longleaf pine in nine Southern states. Conservation Practice 36 (CP36) under the continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) will be the vehicle for achieving this initiative. Landowners in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia – states that include the natural range of longleaf pine forests – may be eligible to participate in the new initiative if CRP CP36 eligibility requirements are met.

Historically, the longleaf pine was the dominant tree species on an estimated 60 million acres and occurred in mixed for-

est stands on another 30 million acres along the coastal plain from east Texas to the Piedmont of Virginia and extending into the mountains of Alabama and northwest Georgia. However, natural stands of longleaf pines have rapidly declined and currently occupy less than three million acres of its original range. Much of the residual forest is severely degraded, and thus, does not function as a viable ecological system or provide the values for which the historical forest is known.

Eligible land includes cropland that is located within the historical range of the longleaf pine in the nine states and is suitable for the establishment of longleaf pine. In addition, cropland must meet the basic CRP requirements and have been cropped four out of six years between

1996 and 2001. Eligible acres are automatically accepted instead of being competitively ranked as in the general CRP. While enrollment is automatic, it must not exceed a state's allocation. Therefore, CP36 will be allocated on a first-come/first-serve basis.

CP36 indeed provides landowners tremendous incentive to restore and manage longleaf pine stands. With CP36, it is possible to provide critical habitat for many wildlife species while supplying landowners with a valuable timber resource. The key is proper management; just simply planting longleaf pines will not accomplish the conservation and environmental goals of the initiative. Sign-up began December 1, 2006, and will run continuously (i.e. eligible land

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