

Fire Ecology



Prescribed burning is an essential part to longleaf pine restoration and management. Ideally, burning should be done every 2-5 years to keep a longleaf pine forest healthy. Fire is important because it can reduce brush and fuel load, while simultaneously providing animals with high quality grasses after the fire ceases. Fire has been an essential part of the longleaf pine ecosystem for thousands of years, and is a critical component to the regeneration of our lost forests.



Longleaf Pine Forests near Wilmington



University of North Carolina
Wilmington



Carolina Beach State Park

For more information on longleaf pines please visit: www.srs.fs.usda.gov/longleaf

*All information was taken from the USDA.gov database



CAPE FEAR TREES



Informational Guide for Longleaf Pines (*Pinus palustris*)

[Facebook.com/Alliance-for-Cape-Fear-Trees](https://www.facebook.com/Alliance-for-Cape-Fear-Trees)

History



Before colonists came to settle in the New World, longleaf pines dominated the southeast all the way down into Florida. The colonists used the longleaf primarily as a timber resource, and it was thought that the supply was limitless. Unfortunately, nothing is limitless, and therefore loggers eventually ran out of materials. They left the Earth scoured and clear-cut, which left the ground open to erosion. The depletion of the longleaf pine ecosystem to less than 3% of its original area is mainly due to the poor logging practices of the 18th-19th centuries.



Restoration Efforts



Due to the historically bad management of the longleaf pine forests, efforts are being made today to restore the ecosystem. Some organizations and institutions that are leading the way include:

- UNCW at EV-Henwood
- USDA through the "Longleaf Pine Initiative"
- Longleaf Alliance
- Alliance for Cape Fear Trees
- Americas Longleaf Restoration Initiative
- University of Virginia/Alabama

These organizations and institutions are on the front line trying to bring back our endangered longleaf pine ecosystems. If you would like to participate as a private land owner to the regeneration of the longleaf pine ecosystem visit;
www.ncrs.usda.gov

Interesting Facts

- Endemic to the southeastern United States.
- Favored habitat of the red cockaded-woodpecker.
- Pine needles are 6-24 inches long.
- Fire resistant species/ecosystem.
- Grass state of the longleaf can last from 7-15 years, where they develop a deep taproot (this provides stability in hurricane force winds).
- palustris* means "off the swamp," but was incorrectly named by the colonists.
- Longleaves don't like competition.
- Longleaf pine cones can shatter windows.
- The oldest longleaf is 463 years old (Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve near Southern Pines, North Carolina.)



- Only 3% of the original range is left due to clear-cutting and timber practices.



Photo: Nancy Whelan, in a forest of longleaf pines