



**Center for  
Conservation  
Solutions**

American Forest Foundation

2007 ANNUAL REPORT





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*The American Forest Foundation's (AFF) Center for Conservation Solutions (CCS), formerly known as Forests for Watersheds & Wildlife (F<sup>2</sup>W<sup>2</sup>), cultivates and supports a network of conservation and research partners to conserve and enhance ecosystem services on family forestlands. Our approach to forest conservation challenges is to provide forest landowners with the necessary tools to manage their lands for both ecological and economic gains.*

**CCS operates with support from USDA Forest Service Cooperative Forestry.**

Forty-two percent (262 million acres) of U.S. forestland is in family ownership. Few of these families can afford to sustain a forested property for long without generating some income from their land. Even if the land is fully paid for, annual tax and upkeep expenses can make forestland a liability, not an asset. Unless these expenditures can be offset by occasional income, more forestland will likely be lost to urban sprawl and development, leading to the continued fragmentation of forests and watersheds.

To meet these challenges, CCS integrates conservation priorities and economic realities to promote ecosystem management that improves habitat for declining species and at the same time generates income, thereby ensuring long-term economic as well as ecological sustainability. Reaching family forest owners is a unique role played by CCS. Through local, regional and national initiatives with conservation partners, private organizations and public agencies, CCS develops sustainable forestry conservation strategies and then educates and motivates family forest owners to adopt them.

## The Thin Green Line

Working family forests conserve our water quality, natural areas and wildlife—now and for future generations.

CCS is a source of trusted conservation advice to the Center for Family Forests' American Tree Farm System® (ATFS) network, another AFF program. ATFS is the largest and oldest family forest owner group in the U.S. with 80,000 family forest owners (who hold 33 million acres) and 5,000 volunteer foresters. Tree Farmers are certified without charge by ATFS foresters for their commitment to providing clean water, fertile soil, quality recreation, homes for wildlife, and wood for products. Access to these thought-leaders of the family forest owner community is invaluable when developing and promoting conservation initiatives and provides a starting point to reach out to the greater family forest owner community.

The CCS conservation approach is voluntary, pro-active, and cost-effective. Often the greatest challenge lies in making landowners fully aware of how they can contribute to conservation efforts and that assistance is available to make it happen. Landowners are most receptive to new ideas that are presented as voluntary options. They like to hear about what they could do rather than what they should not do. CCS outreach and education raises awareness and spurs landowners to action. To meet the challenges of declining forest habitat and the lack of active forest management, CCS works with partners to develop wildlife habitat recommendations, organize educational events and field tours, develop self-guided conservation trails, produce management handbooks for family forest owners, facilitate pilot projects, and promote and recognize voluntary actions of participating forest owners.

## CENTER FOR CONSERVATION SOLUTIONS NATIONAL OPERATING COMMITTEE

As of January 2008, the previous Advisory Committee for F<sup>2</sup>W<sup>2</sup> transitioned into a formal operating committee to help guide the newly-formed Center for Conservation Solutions.

The National Operating Committee (NOC) provides leadership and guidance to CCS and the AFF Board of Trustees. The NOC represents professionals from a broad spectrum of backgrounds and areas of expertise from across the country.

### CCS NATIONAL OPERATING COMMITTEE

**Connie Best**

Pacific Forest Trust

**Robert Bonnie**

Environmental Defense

**Judd Brooke**

Family forest owner, Mississippi

**Drue DeBerry**

American Forest Foundation

**George Fenwick**

American Bird Conservancy

**Mike Greenheck**

Family forest owner, Minnesota

**Buddy Huffaker**

Aldo Leopold Foundation

**Dr. David Kittredge**

University of Massachusetts  
Dept. of Natural Resources Conservation

**Steve Koehn**

Maryland DNR Forest Service

**Julie Moore**

US Fish & Wildlife Services  
Endangered Species Division

**Allyson Muth**

Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Program

**Dr. Oswald Schmitz**

Yale University  
School of Forestry & Environmental Studies

## PARTNERSHIPS

CCS works with partners on a local, regional, and national level to maximize the program's impact. Each partner plays a unique role that adds a critical element to an initiative. CCS coordinates initiatives so that the strength and efforts of each partner result in a greater conservation benefit than any one partner could achieve alone. Non-profit partners like American Bird Conservancy recruit support from specific conservation communities. Others, like Environmental Defense Fund, provide experience with regulatory issues and creative solutions while organizations like The Nature Conservancy provide an opportunity for CCS to integrate its work into larger conservation initiatives. Some partners, like the Mississippi Fish & Wildlife Foundation, provide on-the-ground assistance by working with cost-share recipients. State forest agencies and associations link initiatives to the broader forestry community. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, USDA Forest Service and other federal agencies provide technical expertise and guidance. Partnerships are the power of CCS.

## OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Educational field days, interpretive trails and printed materials, including handbooks and fact sheets, are just a few of the ways that CCS delivers regionally-appropriate, sustainable forestry strategies to family forest owners. Whatever the mechanism, the intent is always the same: to provide landowners with the tools and the information they need to turn knowledge into conservation action.

## CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

Through its conservation initiatives, CCS develops wildlife and stream habitat recommendations, organizes educational events and field tours, develops self-guided conservation trails,



produces handbooks and other publications for family forest owners, and promotes the voluntary actions of participating forestland owners.

Conservation initiatives are multi-year, ecosystem-based, collaborative efforts that strive to create a landscape-level change in habitat management. These initiatives bring together local, regional and national partners to develop and promote conservation forestry strategies. The collective impact of family forest owners who adopt conservation forestry practices can play a major role in habitat and species conservation.

The involvement, support, and expertise of forest owners, conservation groups, private organizations and public agencies is a critical component of these initiatives, allowing for the implementation of regionally appropriate conservation projects on family forestlands across a landscape. These cooperative efforts utilize and augment the strength and expertise of each partner, resulting in a greater conservation benefit than any one partner could achieve alone.

**To ensure the greatest impact, initiatives typically utilize multiple outreach strategies, including:**

***Demonstration Field Tours***

Seeing and learning how a peer has created and conserved critical habitat is one of the most effective tools for motivating landowners to initiate habitat improvement projects on their own land. A model family forest owner is chosen to host a demonstration field day to show other landowners conservation forestry management practices. Experts describe the conservation projects and the technical and financial assistance available from partners to improve wildlife habitat and watershed health. Field days provide an opportunity for landowners to share with their neighbors their positive experiences from practicing conservation forestry.

***Educational Forest Trails***

Signed trails provide permanent educational and outreach opportunities for landowners, schools, local resource professionals and the general public. The trails feature interpretive signs that help visitors understand the links between forest health and water quality and wildlife diversity. They explain how biodiversity issues and sustainable forest management can achieve compatibility on family forestlands.

***Publications***

CCS works with a broad spectrum of partners to develop, produce and distribute conservation management recommendations, often in the form of easy-to-understand, photo-filled handbooks, for family forest owners and the foresters who work with them.



***Technical and Cost-share Assistance***

CCS and its partners develop conservation management recommendations that private landowners can incorporate into their forest management plans to benefit wildlife. Typically, forest owners are guided to work with their foresters, state agencies, local conservation groups and natural resource professionals who can provide assistance in developing conservation forestry management plans. Special initiatives also provide cost-share as well as technical assistance through local partners to achieve conservation goals.

***Conservation Awareness Signs***

Awareness signs provide public recognition for family forest owners who are conserving and creating habitat for imperiled species or protecting water quality. To be eligible to display a sign, a landowner must meet certain criteria spelled out in a conservation initiative and incorporate recommended conservation practices into their forest management plan.



Gopher Tortoise  
 Photo by Randy Browning, MFWF/USFWS

## CENTER FOR CONSERVATION SOLUTIONS INITIATIVES

### PINE ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION FOR THE GOPHER TORTOISE IN ALABAMA, LOUISIANA, AND MISSISSIPPI

Through a grant from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, CCS is working to improve pine habitat for the gopher tortoise and other species associated with the historically open forests of the South.

The goal of the initiative is to assist in the recovery of the gopher tortoise so that it can be removed from the Endangered Species list. The USFWS' recovery plan states: "Private lands contain the vast majority of forest containing gopher tortoises. Accordingly, maintenance of the (gopher tortoise) population is not possible without some significant successes on privately-owned timberlands... Promoting protection of habitat on private lands is difficult because of the few legal responsibilities and the perceived economic interests of landowners. Therefore, special efforts are needed on private lands."

The initiative has two components: outreach and education to family forest owners and foresters designed to engage them in pine ecosystem conservation, and cost-share and technical assistance for family forest owners who are interested in habitat restoration and entering into Safe Harbor Agreements.

The first field day for this initiative was hosted in September of 2003 by Dr. John Lambert, the first family forest owner to sign a Safe Harbor Agreement for the gopher tortoise.

#### **Field Day: April 21st, 2007: Purvis, MS, Forrest County**

When Hurricane Katrina made landfall in August of 2005, the Chambliss family lost nearly fifty percent of standing timber. Research on their property found that longleaf pine received the least damage, followed by slash, with loblolly a distant third. Since Katrina, the Chambliss family has started reforestation efforts with a strong focus on longleaf.

More than **50 Mississippi family forest owners** who collectively hold **16,546 acres** came to the Chambliss Tree

**PARTNERS:**



Mark Anderson talks to field day participants about the benefits of prescribed fire

Farm to tour the property and learn how the family has adapted his forest management following Katrina's damage. Speakers covered forest management strategies such as converting to and managing for longleaf pine, utilizing prescribed fire, and invasives control. Safe Harbor Agreements were also discussed.

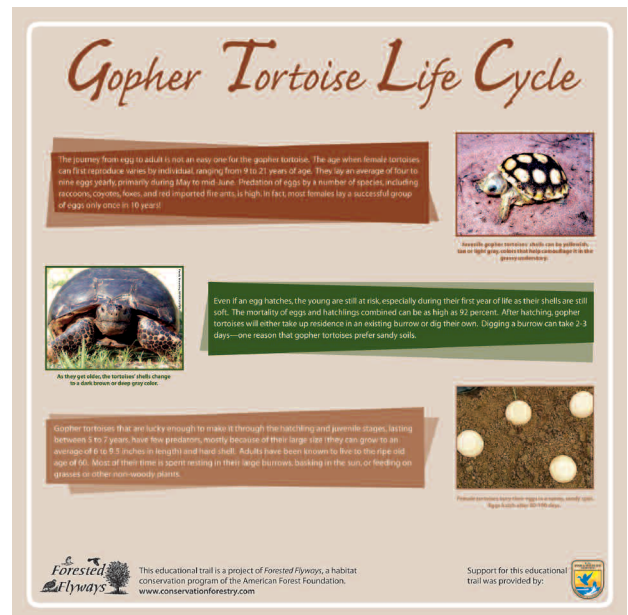
**Conservation Education Trail:**

Brookewood Forest, in Hancock County, has been in the Brooke family for nearly 70 years. Judd Brooke has been steadily converting much of this property to longleaf. Despite experiencing significant setbacks as a result of Hurricane Katrina, Judd continues to actively manage his property for timber resources as well as for the gopher tortoise and other wildlife.

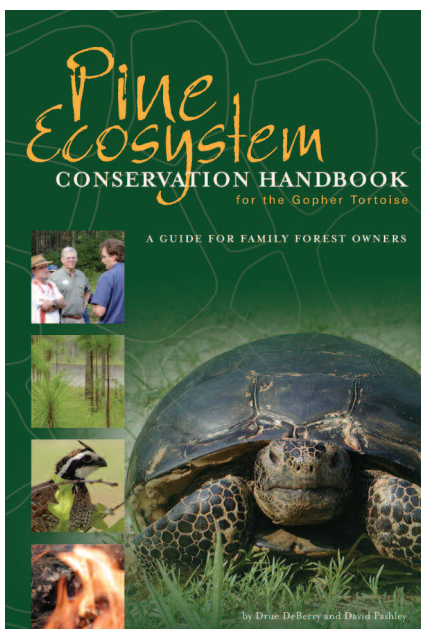
In early 2008, CCS worked with Mr. Brooke to develop an educational trail on his property to highlight his management and provide information on the biology and habitat requirements of the gopher tortoise, the benefits of longleaf pine forests, and how to restore and manage these forests for both wildlife and economic benefits. The trail will be open to resource professionals, students, educators, forest owners and other interested individuals.

**Cost-Share Assistance:**

During the 2007/2008 planting season, an additional **534 acres** of longleaf were planted on several properties. To date **3,832 acres** of habitat have been restored for the gopher tortoise under this initiative.



*One of the twelve signs posted along the new gopher tortoise conservation education trail at Brookewood Forest.*



**Pine Ecosystem Conservation Handbook for Gopher Tortoise—  
A Guide for Family Forest Owners:**

This easy-to-understand guide, printed in 2004, is written for family forest owners and foresters interested in improving pine habitat for the gopher tortoise and other wildlife species. It provides practical information on management strategies, prescribed burns, invasive species, regulatory assurances for landowners, and wildlife species that benefit from pine ecosystem management.

To date, the handbook has been distributed to **2,000 landowners** holding **1,050,371 acres**.



## GOPHER TORTOISE CONSERVATION FORESTRY IN ACTION—IMPACT TO DATE:

The handbook, field days, and conservation trails encourage family forest owners to practice conservation forestry for the gopher tortoise and to encourage other landowners to do the same. CCS sign applications and post-workshop surveys tell us that we are having an impact:

**29,109 acres** behind the Conservation Forestry Awareness sign

Prescribed burning on **42,825 acres**

Thinning on **15,378 acres**

Utilizing herbicide to control hardwood understory and invasive species on **11,088 acres**

Planting longleaf pine on **4,801 acres (2,592,540 trees planted)**

Landowner outreach to neighbors and landowners: **37,798**

### *Pine Ecosystem*

#### *Conservation for the Gopher Tortoise Sign:*

Since 2005, **sixty-three landowners** holding **29,109 acres** have applied

for a gopher tortoise application sign, having implemented recommended conservation forestry practices. Asked to spread awareness about forest management that benefits the gopher tortoise, they indicated they will share what they learned with **37,257 landowners and neighbors**.



*Gopher Tortoise Initiative sign*

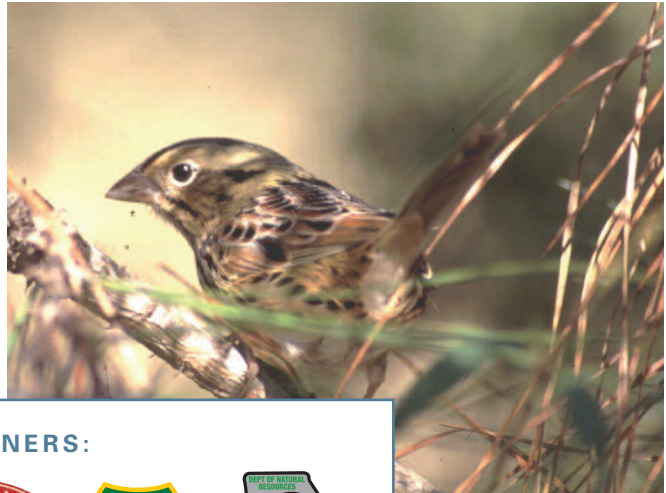


*A longleaf forest managed to benefit the gopher tortoise.*

## FOREST ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION FOR BIRDS IN GEORGIA

This partnership promotes comprehensive, efficient, and effective mechanisms for communicating wildlife habitat management and conservation recommendations to family forest owners who hold 72% or 17 million acres of forestland in Georgia. The work is supported by a grant from the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, Southern Company, and the Home Depot Foundation.

In addition to improving forest sustainability, implementation of recommended management practices on these lands will also contribute towards forest habitat objectives for priority birds as outlined in planning documents developed by Partners in Flight and other North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) partners. Though emphasizing birds, concurrent benefits to numerous other wildlife species will be realized through implementation of conservation forestry practices.



*Henslow's Sparrow  
Photo by  
Todd Schneider,  
Georgia DNR*

### PARTNERS:



The partnership and products developed through this pilot project will serve as templates for expanding the NABCI/CCS partnership throughout the country, region by region. The overall potential to promote beneficial conservation forestry practices and restoration on family forest lands is significant.

This initiative started with a June 2004 field day hosted by Chuck Leavell. The event drew **120 landowners** who hold **38,000 acres**.



*Attendees at the Butler field day*

### **Field Day: April 14th, Camilla, GA, Mitchell County**

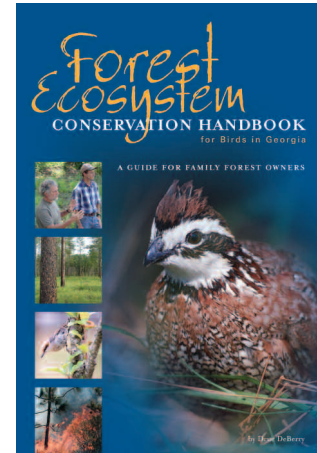
Forest Lodge Farms has been managed by the Butler family for over four generations. In 1950, the Butler's decided to reforest their property. Initial plantings consisted primarily of slash pine; however, in recent years they have made the decision to establish longleaf pine with the intention of restoring this native ecosystem and continuing to manage for both timber income and wildlife habitat.

**Thirty-three landowners** who collectively manage over **10,000 acres** toured the Butler's property and learned from resource professionals about forest management strategies for converting to and managing for longleaf pine. The important benefits that the longleaf understory provides to Georgia's birds, and other wildlife, was highlighted as well.

***Forest Ecosystem Conservation Handbook for Birds in Georgia—  
A Guide for Family Forest Owners:***

Family forest owners, state and federal agencies, conservation partners, consulting foresters and industry foresters helped develop the management recommendations for this handbook. This landowner-friendly guide provides information on threatened and endangered bird species and how conservation forestry practices can improve habitat for them.

To date, the handbook has been distributed to over **8,000 landowners** holding more than **3.7 million acres** of forestland in Georgia.



***Forest Ecosystem Conservation for Birds in Georgia Sign:***

Since 2005, **229 landowners** who hold **139,083 acres** and have implemented conservation forestry practices have applied for a sign. Asked to spread awareness about forest management that benefits Georgia's birds, they indicated they plan to share what they learned with **8,823 landowners and neighbors**.

***Conservation Education Trail & Opening Event: August 4th, 2007***

Located in Pine Mountain, Georgia, the Preserve at Callaway encompasses roughly 11,000 acres. The preserve is situated where the flat, sandy Coastal Plain ecosystem meets the rolling hills and clay soils of the Piedmont. In addition, Pine Mountain Ridge, the southern-most mountain in Georgia, is here and supports plant species typically found growing further north in the Appalachian Mountains. The intersection of these three different geologies creates a great diversity of wildlife habitats. While the areas was once deforested and intensively farmed, nowadays, longleaf pines, streamside forests, and ridge hardwoods have regenerated. Roughly 2,200 acres of the preserve is under a permanent conservation easement.



*Landowners examine a sign along the newly-installed educational trail at the Preserve at Callaway.*

## GEORGIA BIRDS CONSERVATION FORESTRY IN ACTION—IMPACT TO DATE:

The handbook, field days, and conservation trails encourage family forest owners to practice conservation forestry for the Georgia's birds and to encourage other landowners to do the same. CCS sign applications and post-workshop surveys tell us that we are having an impact:

**139,083 acres** behind the Conservation Forestry

Awareness sign

Prescribed burning on **44,018 acres**

Thinning on **32,937 acres**

Utilizing herbicide to control hardwood understory and  
invasive species on **26,101 acres**

Planted trees at 550 tree/acre on 15,514 acres (**8,533,000  
trees planted**)

Landowner outreach to neighbors and landowners: **9,603**

The Preserve at Callaway regularly hosts educational events and outings. Developing an educational trail that highlighted the benefits of longleaf pine forest management to Georgia's birds was a natural fit for both CCS and the Preserve. On August 4th, CCS and the Preserve at Callaway celebrated the installation of the trail by leading a guided bird walk. The trail opening was timed to coincide with the bi-annual conference of the Georgia Forestry Commission's "Georgia Recognized Our Woodland Stewards" program. Over 200 landowners attended the conference and had access to the trail during the event.



*Worm-eating Warbler  
Photo by Giff Beaton*

*"Excellent learning experience for landowners!  
Continue to promote good forest management  
showing what Georgia landowners are doing  
on their property."*

*Field Day Attendee*

## FOREST ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION FOR CONSERVATION-RELIANT SPECIES IN SOUTH CAROLINA

This initiative, started in the spring of 2005, is aimed at improving ecosystem conservation for declining species dependent on fire-maintained southern pine communities and forested wetlands in South Carolina. The initiative is funded through a grant from the Fish & Wildlife Service's Private Stewardship Grants Program (PSGP).

The initiative has two components: outreach and education to family forest owners and foresters designed to engage them in pine ecosystem conservation, and cost-share assistance for family forest owners who are interested in habitat restoration for at-risk species.



*Brown-headed Nuthatch  
Photo by Todd Schneider,  
Georgia DNR*



The first field day for this initiative was held in June 2005 at Bob Schofield's family forest. The event drew **75 landowners** who manage **6,143 acres**.

### **Field Days:**

#### **June 16, 2007: Green Pond, SC, Colleton County**

The Cheeha-Combahee Plantation was purchased in 1929 from a lumber company for management as a sporting plantation. Today, it continues to be managed primarily for wildlife. The 12,500 acre property is rich in habitat diversity including approximately 2,000 acres of natural longleaf pine.

On June 17, Cheeha-Combahee Plantation welcomed **62 landowners**, who manage a combined **59,712 acres**, to tour the property. Participants learned about a variety of forest management techniques the Plantation has used over the years to restore their forest. Speaker topics included growing season prescribed fire, forest management for songbirds, and converting loblolly stands to longleaf pine.



*Landowners listen to Matt Nespeca of The Nature Conservancy discuss hardwood midstory control.*

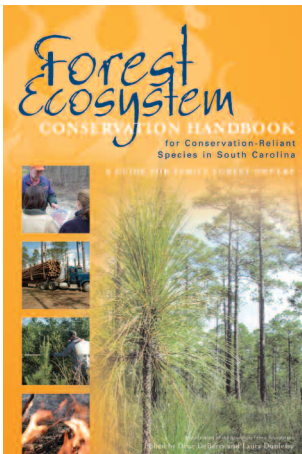
**November 3, 2007: Trio, SC, Williamsburg County**

Black River Bluffs has several miles of frontage on the Black River as well as over 1,500 acres of forestland and hardwood swamps. The property has a long history of quail management, including prescribed burning and selective harvesting, resulting in beautiful examples of mature longleaf forests and multiple-aged stands.

On November 3, owners Berry Coggeshall and Gairy Nichols, welcomed **37 landowners**, who manage a combined **8,443 acres**, to tour the property. Participants learned about a variety of forest management techniques they have used over the years to restore their forest. Speaker topics included growing season prescribed fire, forest management for game birds, and converting loblolly stands to longleaf pine.



*Bob Franklin discusses converting from loblolly to longleaf pine*



*South Carolina Conservation Forestry handbook*

**Forest Ecosystem Conservation Handbook for Conservation-Reliant Species in South Carolina—A Guide for Family Forest Owners:**

Printed in December of 2007, this 100-page, landowner-friendly guide outlines forest management practices that benefit conservation-reliant species in South Carolina. It provides family forest owners with practical information on establishing pine stands, prescribed burns, utilizing herbicides for hardwood midstory and invasive species control, cost-share assistance, and regulatory assurances for landowners.

The handbook was mailed to over **2,000 landowners** who collectively hold roughly **800,000 acres**. Each landowner was provided with an additional copy of the handbook to encourage sharing the information with other landowners, family and friends.



Conservation Forestry in Action on 1,740 acres near the Savannah Wildlife Refuge.

### **Conservation Forestry in Action**

#### **Awareness Sign:**

A conservation sign to provide public recognition for family forest owners who are conserving and creating habitat for imperiled species in South Carolina was created in June of 2005. Applications for the sign are distributed at all field days and were mailed with the conservation forestry management handbook. The response has been enthusiastic—**179 landowners** who manage **197,030 acres** and have implemented at least two of the recommended conservation forestry management activities applied for a sign. Asked to spread awareness about forest management that benefits conservation-reliant species, they indicated they plan to share what they learned with **8,859 landowners and neighbors**.

#### **Cost-Share Assistance:**

CCS received over 65 applications from family forest owners interested in habitat restoration for at-risk species. Eighteen landowners were selected to participate in the program. To date, treatment practices, such as hardwood midstory control and the planting of longleaf, has been implemented on over **479 acres**.

#### **Upcoming Events:**

An additional field day is planned for May 2008 at a landowner property in Aiken County.

### **SOUTH CAROLINA CONSERVATION FORESTRY IN ACTION—IMPACT TO DATE:**

Our outreach efforts motivate family forest owners to practice conservation forestry for conservation-reliant species and to encourage other landowners to do the same. CCS sign applications and post-workshop surveys tell us that we are having an impact:

**197,030 acres** behind the Conservation Forestry Awareness sign

Prescribed burning on **70,616 acres**

Utilizing herbicide to control hardwood understory and invasives on **24,313 acres**

Converting loblolly to longleaf on **8,629 acres**

Planted trees at 550/acre on **12,084 acres (6,525,360 trees planted)**

Landowner outreach to neighbors and landowners: **9,086**

## OAK SAVANNAH RESTORATION IN OREGON'S WILLAMETTE VALLEY

In Oregon's Willamette Valley, less than 1% of indigenous white oak (*Quercus garryana*) savanna habitat remains. Fire historically controlled competing vegetation and kept the canopy open for oak seedling establishment but fire suppression has led to overstocked, poorer quality closed-canopy oak woodlands and conifer/ hardwood forests. As a result, many wildlife species, especially migratory and cavity-nesting songbirds and Western gray squirrels, have declined. Conservation forestry offers an approach that will restore habitat and improve the economic sustainability of oak savannas and woodlands. However, although techniques and strategies for oak savannah restoration and management have been developed, only a handful of private landowners have adopted them.



An oak savanna restoration site in the Willamette Valley, Oregon.

If properly managed, the oak savanna ecosystem can provide wood for wine barrels as well as critical habitat for a number of species in decline. To promote conservation forestry techniques related to oak savanna management, CCS was awarded a grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The conservation forestry practices will create critical wildlife habitat as well as wood products. Outreach activities include the development of an interpretive education trail, a sign program to recognize early adopters of conservation forestry, and two demonstration field days for family forest owners. The initiative also provides \$57,000 in assistance to family forest owners for habitat restoration.

### Field Days:

#### May 19th, 2007: Yamhill, OR, Yamhill County

**Sixty-three** landowners and resource professionals, managers of approximately **5,650 acres**, toured the Cooke Family Forest to learn more about conservation forestry strategies the family has been implementing since 2000 for oak savannas and woodlands. Field day participants had the opportunity to learn about the oak management practices used on the site, including the preservation of oak legacy trees, thinning of excess tree stems, control of non-native invasive plants, and the restoration of native grasses and forbs. The economic benefits of oak wood, including its use for wine barrels and flooring materials, was also covered.



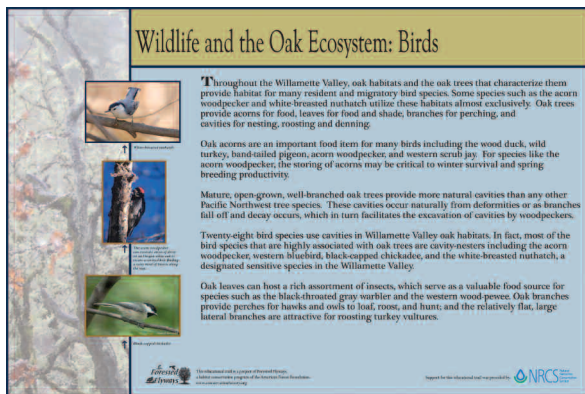
**September 15, 2007: Salem, OR, Marion County**

Mark and Jolly Krautman acquired Jefferson Farm in 2003 and almost immediately began oak restoration activities. The couple has thinned overstocked oak woodlands and controlled invasive species threatening the oak understory on over 80 acres. In addition, with the help of botanist Lynda Boyer, remnant populations of prairie wildflowers have been identified on the property to aid in future understory restoration.



*Frank Pender of Tanglewood Timber Products highlights custom sawmilling techniques for oak wood products.*

The Krautmann's welcomed **51 landowners**, who collectively hold **4,183 acres**, on their property to learn about oak habitat restoration strategies. Field day participants learned about the preservation of oak legacy trees, thinning of excess tree stems, control of non-native invasive plants, and the restoration of native understory plants. The economic benefits of Oregon white oak wood, such as its use for wine barrels and flooring, was also discussed.



*One of the signs to be installed along the Oregon Oak Conservation Forestry Education Trail.*

**Conservation Education Trail:**

Twelve signs were created for the Oregon Oak Conservation Forestry Education Trail. The signs will be installed in the summer of 2008 at a family forest owner property in Benton County. The signs along this trail tell the story of the Willamette Valley's oak savannas and woodlands, the wildlife that depends upon these oak habitats, and the conservation forestry practices that are needed to maintain them.

**Cost-Share Assistance:**

CCS received 30 applications for cost-share assistance from family forest owners interested in oak savannah habitat restoration. Eight landowners were selected to participate in the program. Restoration activities, including oak thinning, native groundcover restoration and invasive species control will be implemented on over **160 acres** in the summer of 2008.



*Steve Smith of the USFWS informs landowners about management practices that can help restore Oregon's oak woodlands.*

## EXPANDING THE GOPHER TORTOISE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE INTO FLORIDA

The gopher tortoise is listed as threatened west of Mobile and Tombigbee Rivers in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. The USFWS has recently received a petition to expand this federal status to the eastern portion of its range, including Florida. Additionally, Florida recently uplisted the gopher tortoises' state status from a Species of Special Concern to threatened, primarily as a result of the loss of open, fire-maintained pine forests and habitat fragmentation and degradation (from development and invasive species).

To further strengthen the impact of the Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative, CCS initiated outreach to family forest owners in Florida through hosting a workshop related to gopher tortoise habitat conservation and restoration. CCS is also in the process of updating the Pine Ecosystem Conservation handbook to provide specific information to Florida landowners on gopher tortoise conservation.

### **Field Day: November 28th, 2007, Niceville, FL, Walton County**

**Twenty-nine landowners and resource professionals** attended a half-day workshop covering how family forest owners can conserve habitat for the gopher tortoise and address concerns about managing for threatened species.

The workshop consisted of a forester-led walk around Little Creek Woods to explain conservation forestry strategies used to conserve gopher tortoise habitat. Afterwards, participants headed to the Walton County Extension Service office for presentations on landowner assurance agreements including a federal Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances and a state Safe Harbor Agreement. A question and answer session followed and landowners were asked to provide input on these agreements to help ensure they are sensitive to landowner needs and concerns.



*A gopher tortoise hatchling  
Photo by Krista Noel, University of Southern Mississippi*



*Landowners learn about gopher tortoise biology from Rick Hatten of the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission.*

#### **PARTNERS:**



### **Upcoming Events:**

Two field days are being planned for late fall 2008 to highlight opportunities for Florida landowners to participate in gopher tortoise conservation through Florida's new permitting process. Additionally, the revised handbook is scheduled to be printed in September 2008.

## MANAGEMENT OF EARLY-SUCCESSIONAL HABITAT FOR THE NEW ENGLAND COTTONTAIL: POTENTIAL FOR MARKET-BASED CONSERVATION?

The New England cottontail (NEC), the only native cottontail in New England, was historically found in early-successional, upland habitats in southeastern and northern New York, southern Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine and statewide in Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. During the mid-20th century, distribution of this species declined dramatically, with the NEC's current range estimated at 4,700 square miles, roughly an 86% reduction from its historic range of 34,750 square miles. Because of this, the USFWS considers the NEC as warranting listing under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Research has pointed to the concurrent decline in large blocks (>25 acres) of early-successional habitat that the NEC requires, as well as the modification of landscape surrounding remaining suitable habitat, as reasons for the NEC's decline. Early-successional habitat is temporary (lasting 20-25 years) and dynamic in nature; therefore, periodic management is required in order to maintain desired habitat. In addition, most of the remaining suitable or potentially-suitable habitat is found on private lands. For this reason, the need to work with private landowners, especially forest owners, to manage for early-successional habitat is critical. The loss of this habitat has led to the decline in other wildlife dependent upon dense, shrubby cover. In the Northeast, over half of the birds associated with early-successional habitat, such as the Eastern Towhee and the American Woodcock, are undergoing significant population declines.



*New England cottontail  
Photo by John Litvaitis*



*Early-successional habitat is essential for the survival of the New England cottontail.*

### ***A Feasibility Study of a Market-Based Habitat Recovery Approach in Southern Maine:***

CCS explored the feasibility of using a habitat credit bank to engage family forest owners in NEC conservation. Habitat credit banks are a powerful potential tool for conservation of metapopulations on private lands. The goal of the bank would be to fund enough credits within an area to conserve sufficient habitat for a local population. The bank would provide a financial incentive for family forest owners to participate while also maximizing conservation benefits through an open market.

Recommendations related to the development of a habitat credit bank were developed into a "white paper" and distributed to state and federal agencies and non-profits in Maine involved in NEC conservation.

### ***Upcoming Events:***

CCS is pursuing partnership opportunities in Maine to promote management practices that will benefit the NEC and other early-successional habitat specialists. Specifically, CCS and its partners are applying for grant funding to provide cost-share assistance for beneficial management practices and to host a demonstration field day.

## PONDEROSA PINE RESTORATION FOR PRIORITY BIRD SPECIES ON FAMILY FORESTS IN IDAHO, OREGON, AND WASHINGTON

Dry forests dominated by ponderosa pine, with varying amounts of other coniferous trees, are distributed widely throughout the West at lower elevations. Historically, these forests burned at regular intervals of 5-25 years. These fires promoted an open uneven-aged forest dominated

by large pines, with open grassy and shrub understories. Logging, habitat conversion, and encroachment of denser fir stands have resulted in a dramatic decrease in the distribution of mature pine stands in the last 50 years.

### PARTNERS:



*A ponderosa pine forest with an open understory*

Private lands can play a key role in the conservation of ponderosa pine habitats and the birds that depend on them. Over 25% of the ponderosa pine acreage in the “Bird Habitat Conservation Areas” identified by the Intermountain West Joint Venture (a coalition of bird conservation partners) is on private lands and 39% of those acres are in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. These lower elevation habitats are often interspersed with the grassland and riparian habitats preferred by the Flammulated Owl, Lewis’s Woodpecker, and the White-headed Woodpecker.

The American Bird Conservancy, CCS, and Forest Restoration Partnership are working together to identify suitable habitats for these priority-bird species on private lands that can be enhanced through restoration. Of special interest are properties with significant acreages of ponderosa pine habitat where landowners are interested in participating in bird conservation while meeting their other management objectives. To encourage the implementation of

recommended ponderosa pine management practices, such as the creation of snags (standing dead trees) and thinning to create an open understory, this initiative will provide up to \$60,000 in grant funding. In addition to funding assistance, a field day event will provide an opportunity for interested landowners to learn more about ponderosa pine habitat management. A “Landowner Stories” booklet will also be created to highlight the restoration work on the selected landowner properties and shares lessons learned.

***Grant Funding:***

CCS and partners received over 30 applications for grant funding. The list has been narrowed to 7-8 potential properties which will be visited during the late spring.

***Upcoming Outreach and Education Activities:***

**Demonstration Field Day for Landowners**

A field day, planned for the summer of 2008, will showcase ongoing management efforts by landowners and highlight the benefits of ponderosa pine habitat to cavity-nesting birds.

**Landowner Stories Booklet**

Following completion of the habitat restoration work, a booklet will be developed to describe the stories of each of the landowners involved to showcase the role private landowners can play in bird conservation.



*A ponderosa pine snag*

## PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES IN DEVELOPMENT

In 2008 and beyond, CCS will focus on the creation of national, multi-year, science based initiatives to address the loss of Southern forests, the impacts of invasive species, the use of prescribed fire, and the application of conservation incentives on family forests. These initiatives will strengthen the forestry community's ability to address these issues while working towards very specific species and habitat conservation goals.

### **PARTNERSHIPS FOR SOUTHERN FORESTS**

Partnerships for Southern Forests (PSF) will work to strengthen the sustainability of Southern forests and stem the predicted fragmentation and loss of forest habitat in the South.

Initiatives that are ongoing or in development include:

- **Conservation and Restoration of Longleaf Pine**

- **Habitat for the Gopher Tortoise:**

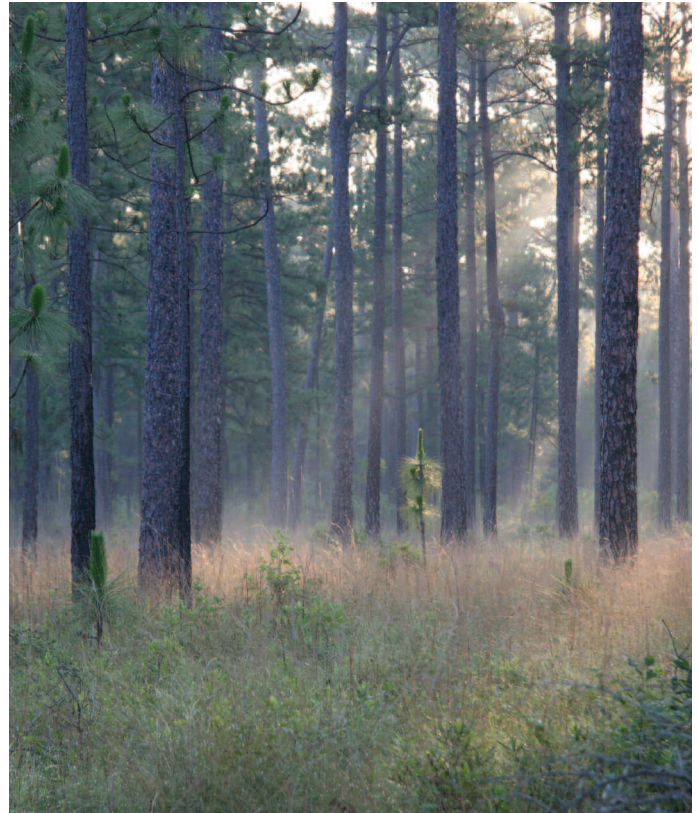
- New editions of the "Pine Ecosystem Conservation Handbook for the Gopher Tortoise" in the non-federally listed portions of its range in Georgia, Alabama, and Florida is part of PSF's landowner outreach and education efforts.

- **Habitat Management for Declining Bird Species:**

- PSF will partner with other conservation organizations and family forest landowners to increase outreach and education to landowners on habitat management that benefits priority species.

- **Working Forest Conservation Easements and Family Forestlands:**

- To better understand the role working forest conservation easements can play in conserving family forestlands in the South, PSF will undertake landowner and land trust surveys and seek funding opportunities to pilot projects that can put lessons learned from the survey into action.



*An actively-managed longleaf pine forest*

## CONSERVATION INCENTIVES

Conservation Incentives (CI) works with partners to promote and develop incentives and market-based solutions for family forest owners to sustainably manage their lands by conserving and enhancing a multitude of ecosystem services.

Initiatives in development include:

- **Market-Based Conservation Incentives Workshop: Strategies for Family Forest Owner Participation in Biodiversity and Water Markets:**

CCS is hosting a workshop on September 10th and 11th, 2008, to bring together organizations and individuals who want to help develop strategies to increase family forest owner involvement in conservation using market-based approaches. This first-of-its-kind national workshop is intended to fill a void and start an ongoing dialogue focused on how family forest owners can capitalize on the ecological and economic benefits of ecosystem services

markets. In addition, this event will provide a networking opportunity for environmental professionals and others interested in utilizing markets for long-term forest conservation and management on family forest lands.



*Market-based incentives are an emerging tool that offer great hope for the conservation of the gopher tortoise and other declining wildlife.*

- **Gopher Tortoise Habitat Credit Bank Pilot Project on Family Forest Lands in Portions of Georgia and Alabama:**

This collaborative project will focus on creating additional income streams and providing incentives to family forest owners who voluntarily conserve and enhance gopher tortoise habitat. Creating a market would enable the Army to purchase conservation credits (issued to landowners for successful management outcomes) to offset their impact on installation lands.

## ADDITIONAL PROGRAM AREAS

- Starting in late 2008, the **Prescribed Fire** focus area will develop and implement partnerships that strengthen and improve family forest owners' ability to use prescribed fire to conserve forest ecosystems. The program will work closely with state Prescribed Fire Councils.
- In 2009, the **Invasive Species** focus area will develop and implement partnerships that strengthen and improve family forest owners' ability to address the threat of invasive species to forest ecosystems.

*The accomplishments of the Center for Conservation Solutions in 2007, and aspirations for 2008, highlight the critical role that family forest owners and partnerships play in achieving on-the-ground conservation results. This strengthens the Thin Green Line—working family forests conserving our water quality, natural areas and wildlife—now and for future generations.*

**For more information contact:**

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