



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SFI® Supports Ecosystem Restoration through Partnership with The Longleaf Alliance

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Longleaf Alliance, a non-profit organization focused on ensuring a sustainable future for the longleaf pine ecosystem, is the proud recipient of a Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Inc. (SFI®) 2014 conservation grant. This SFI funding will help expand the longleaf pine ecosystem by helping landowners maintain and expand markets for this valuable species.

“The USDA has been working with local partners to restore the longleaf ecosystem for a long time. We recognize that markets are an essential factor in motivating landowners to plant longleaf, so we’re pleased to see SFI working with The Longleaf Alliance to provide this important information to companies that use forest products,” said Robert Bonnie, Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Using longleaf pine commercially is absolutely crucial for the long-term protection and expansion of the ecosystem. The Longleaf Alliance is using SFI funding to provide landowners with the communication tools and facts they need to show timber buyers that longleaf pine is being harvested sustainably, and that active markets are essential to its restoration. The alliance is a non-profit conservation organization based in Andalusia, Alabama that began as a program in the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences at Auburn University in 1995.

“The Longleaf Alliance is committed to the sustainable use of longleaf pine as well as the restoration of the ecosystem. The reality is that private landowners are planting longleaf for conservation values such as wildlife habitat, but also for the economic values of the straw and the high-quality timber,” said Robert Abernethy, President of The Longleaf Alliance. “The longleaf ecosystem is growing and we want to maintain that momentum by expanding markets. This restoration has been achieved by working on our public lands but also by working on private lands to plant and manage additional longleaf acres.”

By the early 1990s, only about 2.8 million acres of this once vast and majestic forest remained. Thanks in large part to the efforts of The Longleaf Alliance and its many partners over many years, the acreage of longleaf forest has increased to about 4.4 million acres. America’s Longleaf Restoration Initiative, a state, federal and private partnership, has a goal to protect, restore or enhance a total of 8 million acres of longleaf pine ecosystems by 2024.

“We are pleased to be able to support The Longleaf Alliance in its efforts to encourage private landowners to keep planting longleaf pine to serve global markets, and in turn ensure the restoration and growth of this important ecosystem,” said Kathy Abusow, President and CEO of SFI Inc.

The SFI grant will also enable The Longleaf Alliance to work cooperatively with partners from the private sector interested in promoting longleaf restoration, including the National Council for Air and Stream Improvement, Resource Management Service, LLC, Forest Investment Associates and International Paper.

The SFI Conservation and Community Partnerships Grant Program fosters partnerships between organizations interested in improving forest management in the United States and Canada, and in improving responsible procurement globally. Funded projects address topics such as improving wildlife habitat management and conservation of biodiversity, protecting watersheds and critical flyways for migrating birds, and assisting local communities through forest education programs and green building projects for low-income families.

Since 2010, SFI has awarded more than 50 conservation partnership grants totaling more than \$1.9 million to foster research and pilot efforts to better inform future decisions about our forests. When leveraged with project partner contributions, that total investment exceeds \$7.1 million.

For more information, please visit <http://www.sfiprogram.org/grantprogram>.

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About Sustainable Forestry Initiative Inc. (SFI)

SFI Inc. is an independent, nonprofit organization that is solely responsible for maintaining, overseeing and improving the internationally recognized Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) program. Across the United States and Canada, about 250 million acres certified to the SFI forest management standard. In addition, the SFI program's unique fiber sourcing requirements promote responsible forest management on all suppliers' lands. SFI chain-of-custody certification tracks the percentage of fiber from certified forests, certified sourcing and post-consumer recycled content. SFI on-product labels identify both certified sourcing and chain-of-custody claims to help consumers make responsible purchasing decisions. SFI Inc. is governed by a three-chamber board of directors representing environmental, social and economic sectors equally. Learn more at www.sfiprogram.org and www.sfiprogram.org/Buy-SFI.

About The Longleaf Alliance

The Longleaf Alliance was established in 1995 when it became apparent that the interest in the longleaf ecosystem and the tree itself was growing rapidly, but there wasn't an outlet available for ecologists, foresters, wildlife biologists, land owners and land managers seeking information or a means to distribute information. A growing body of anecdotal information, personal experience and scientific data was being passed on fitfully, and many groups were not being reached. The Longleaf Alliance was created with the express purpose of coordinating a partnership between private landowners, forest industries, state and federal agencies, conservation groups, researchers, and other enthusiasts interested in managing and restoring longleaf pine forests for their ecological and economic benefits.

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