

## **Highlights of WGCP - LMVJV CDNs May to October 2022**

In the West Gulf Coastal Plain & Ouachitas (WGCP; BCR 25) of the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture (LMVJV), partners are enhancing open pine and bottomland hardwood habitat, with a focus on restoring shortleaf and longleaf pine ecosystems through four Conservation Delivery Networks (CDNs). The Northeast Texas and Arkansas-Louisiana CDNs, and the Texas and Louisiana Longleaf Teams, support forest habitat conservation efforts that benefit LMVJV priority open pine species, including the Northern Bobwhite and the Eastern Wild Turkey.



The **Northeast Texas Conservation Delivery Network (NETX CDN)** convened our first **successful “in-person” CDN meeting post-COVID on September 7, 2022, with approximately 90 participants**, at the newly renovated Tyler Nature Center at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department’s Regional Office in Tyler, Texas. Guest speakers Dr. Ron Masters, Mike Black, and Tyson Hart discussed Shortleaf Pine and the value of prescribed fire. Presentations by other partners were well-received. All 11 presentations and details can be found at the following link: [https://drive.google.com/drive/u/3/folders/1SQyhBFzeK\\_FB1Bs-TR\\_H16SRMvL1C1Q](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/3/folders/1SQyhBFzeK_FB1Bs-TR_H16SRMvL1C1Q)



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Entering into its 7<sup>th</sup> year of the Habitat Incentive Program (HIP), the NETX CDN is continuing to provide coordination and leadership for partner agencies and organizations to promote conservation of open pine habitat. Total HIP funds and conservation completed to date are **\$929,549.86 and 20,369 acres**, respectively. The 2022 RFP resulted in a record 41 proposals, requesting almost \$500k in conservation funding. With funding primarily through Texas Parks and Wildlife Department upland game bird stamps and federal aid, **19 projects** proposed almost **4,300 acres of habitat improvement at a cost of \$252,235**, and were approved for immediate development of project agreements. An additional 10 projects were tentatively approved to move forward, should more funds become available.

The NETX CDN, AR-LA CDN, and Oklahoma partners – 47 in all – gathered on 11 October for a Field Day in Clayton, OK, at the Pushmataha WMA. This first-time effort, to gather like-minded partners across the WGCP to learn about the WMA's 40 years of fire and habitat treatments, was a big success. As previewed during the September 7th CDN meeting by Dr. Ron Masters, the continued research was explained by Dr. Rodney Wills (OSU), and management was described by ODWC supervisor and LMVJV Management Board member, Richard Beagles. Prescribed fire and wildlife habitat, as a WGCP foundation to success, was covered well.



*Richard Beagles overviews 40 years of fire research Pushmataha WMA, 10/11/2022*

Since May, 2022, the **Texas Longleaf Team (TLT)** was very active in SE Texas, with significant development in outreach and education. With COVID less of a concern, a number of events have been well-attended. In July, special emphasis was placed on Longleaf savannah

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ecosystems for forest landowners and managers through TFA's "Branchin' Out" Symposium. These Longleaf Pine Ecosystems (and other open pine areas) lead to increased soil health, carbon storage and sequestration, water quality and quantity, and wildlife habitat.



*The rain simulator is demonstrated by Alan Shadow of NRCS.*

TLT's continuing partnership with Texan by Nature, and the refinement of the website by Texas A&M Natural Resource Institute partners, has also provided great communication and connection with landowners (see <https://txlongleaf.org/>). Though virtual opportunities continue, recently more local field demonstrations are being used post-COVID to communicate the open pine and Longleaf restoration message. In September 2022, a Forests & Water Forum **hosted 100 participants** from the forestry, conservation, and water utility sectors across the country. Co-sponsored by the Longleaf Alliance, this Forum came together to discuss the critical role that well-managed forests play in protecting our soil, and providing clean and abundant water, with an emphasis on impacts to Texas communities.

The TLT website continues to expand and improve. Not only with regular Facebook posts, but on other social media connections as well, TLT is communicating with an ever-widening audience. The TLT page, "Reptiles and Amphibians of the Longleaf Pine Ecosystem," was launched to convey more about these species and conservation of their habitat: <https://bit.ly/3BOLKQz>. This new resource highlights the herpetofauna of East Texas Longleaf Pine and Open Pine forests, and adds to the plants, birds, and conservation educational material found on the TLT website.

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In addition to aggressive outreach and communication, TLT's Spring and Fall RFPs, providing incentives to landowners for restoring longleaf pine, continues to see significant interest and success. The Fall application deadline was Sept. 30, with projects awarded later in October (the TLT process is described here: <https://bit.ly/3clJ9Xx>). Though incomplete at the time of this report, 16 proposal applications were received. TLT anticipates that these will increase conservation awards for an additional 3,444 acres on those 16 projects, making total projects approaching 90 in Texas Longleaf areas. TLT's accomplishments, as of September 2022, are as follows: **4,536 acres restored; 3,377 acres enhanced; and 24,873 acres prescribed burned.** Current Accomplishments can be viewed at the [Longleaf Accomplishment Dashboard](#). Future conservation work will continue, as TLT was awarded an additional \$490,000 by NFWF in August 2022 to cost-share with landowners on Longleaf restoration projects.

**West-central Louisiana Ecosystem Partnership (WLEP)** and the LMVJV have joined forces to support the WLEP presence on our website. In an effort to combine resources for information sharing about WLEP, you can now find the material by partners more readily. The WLEP link on the JV website is: <https://www.lmvjv.org/louisiana-longleaf-flatwoods-cdn>.

In addition, one of WLEP's landowner partners was recognized as a 2021 LMVJV Private Landowner Conservation Champion (see <https://www.lmvjv.org/plcc-main>). **Mr. Harvey Keiffer** has worked with partners in LA to achieve his vision. Through these partnerships, he has planted trees and native grasses, conducted forest stand improvement, and continued his consistent prescribed fire program. With these practices, he has ushered in a healthy herbaceous understory, creating habitat for grassland nesting birds, including wild turkey.