



NRCS & TNC Partnership For Landscape Conservation In Louisiana (Scott Edwards [NRCS] & Jim Bergan [TNC])

CEER- New Orleans, LA

July 31, 2014

# Our Missions

**The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.**

**The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.**



# OVERVIEW

- **TNC x NRCS collaboration in Longleaf Pine conservation in West Central Louisiana**
- **TNC x NRCS collaboration in the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley tied to Farm Bill – Conservation Title (WRP/WRE) delivery and environmental market development**



**The Texas-Louisiana Longleaf Taskforce formed in 2010 to support the America’s Longleaf “Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine” in the four SGA’s located in the western Gulf region.**

**The West-Central Louisiana Ecosystem Partnership (WLEP) formed in 2011 as a place-based project sanctioned by this taskforce.**

# SIGNIFICANT LANDSCAPES FOR LONGLEAF PINE CONSERVATION



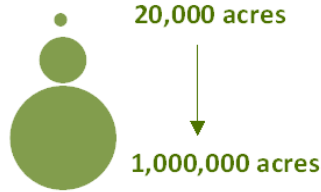
## Key

- Longleaf Pine Historic Range
- Federally Managed Lands

## Longleaf Pine Acreage by County (FIA)

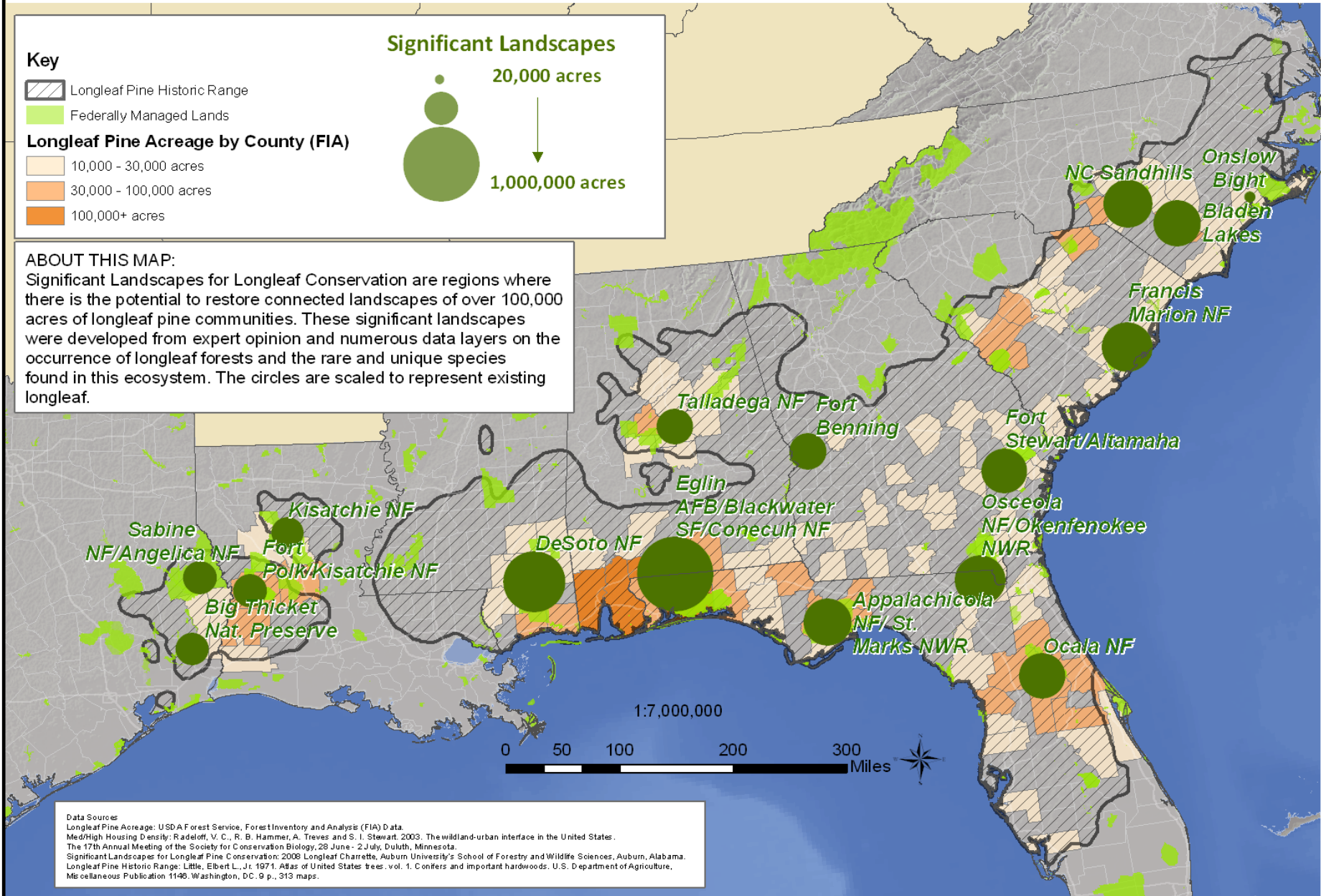
- 10,000 - 30,000 acres
- 30,000 - 100,000 acres
- 100,000+ acres

## Significant Landscapes



## ABOUT THIS MAP:

Significant Landscapes for Longleaf Conservation are regions where there is the potential to restore connected landscapes of over 100,000 acres of longleaf pine communities. These significant landscapes were developed from expert opinion and numerous data layers on the occurrence of longleaf forests and the rare and unique species found in this ecosystem. The circles are scaled to represent existing longleaf.



**Data Sources**  
 Longleaf Pine Acreage: USDA Forest Service, Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Data.  
 Med/High Housing Density: Radloff, V. C., R. B. Hammer, A. Treves and S. I. Stewart, 2003. The wildland-urban interface in the United States. The 17th Annual Meeting of the Society for Conservation Biology, 28 June - 2 July, Duluth, Minnesota.  
 Significant Landscapes for Longleaf Pine Conservation: 2008. Longleaf Charrette, Auburn University's School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, Auburn, Alabama.  
 Longleaf Pine Historic Range: Little, Elbert L., Jr. 1971. Atlas of United States trees, vol. 1. Conifers and important hardwoods. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Publication 1146. Washington, DC. 9 p., 313 maps.





Longleaf  
Flatwood/Savanna





Upland Longleaf  
Forest





Xeric Longleaf  
Woodland





Sandstone Glade





Hillside Seepage  
Bog



# West-Central Louisiana Ecosystem Partnership Goal

**Work collaboratively with multiple partners to accelerate restoration of longleaf pine and other native ecosystems on public and private lands within the project area.**







## **WLEP Objectives**

- **Promote effective communication and collaboration among partners and landowners**
- **Leverage available resources and tools to best meet landowner needs**
- **Reduce duplication of effort between partners**
- **Provide networking and educational opportunities**

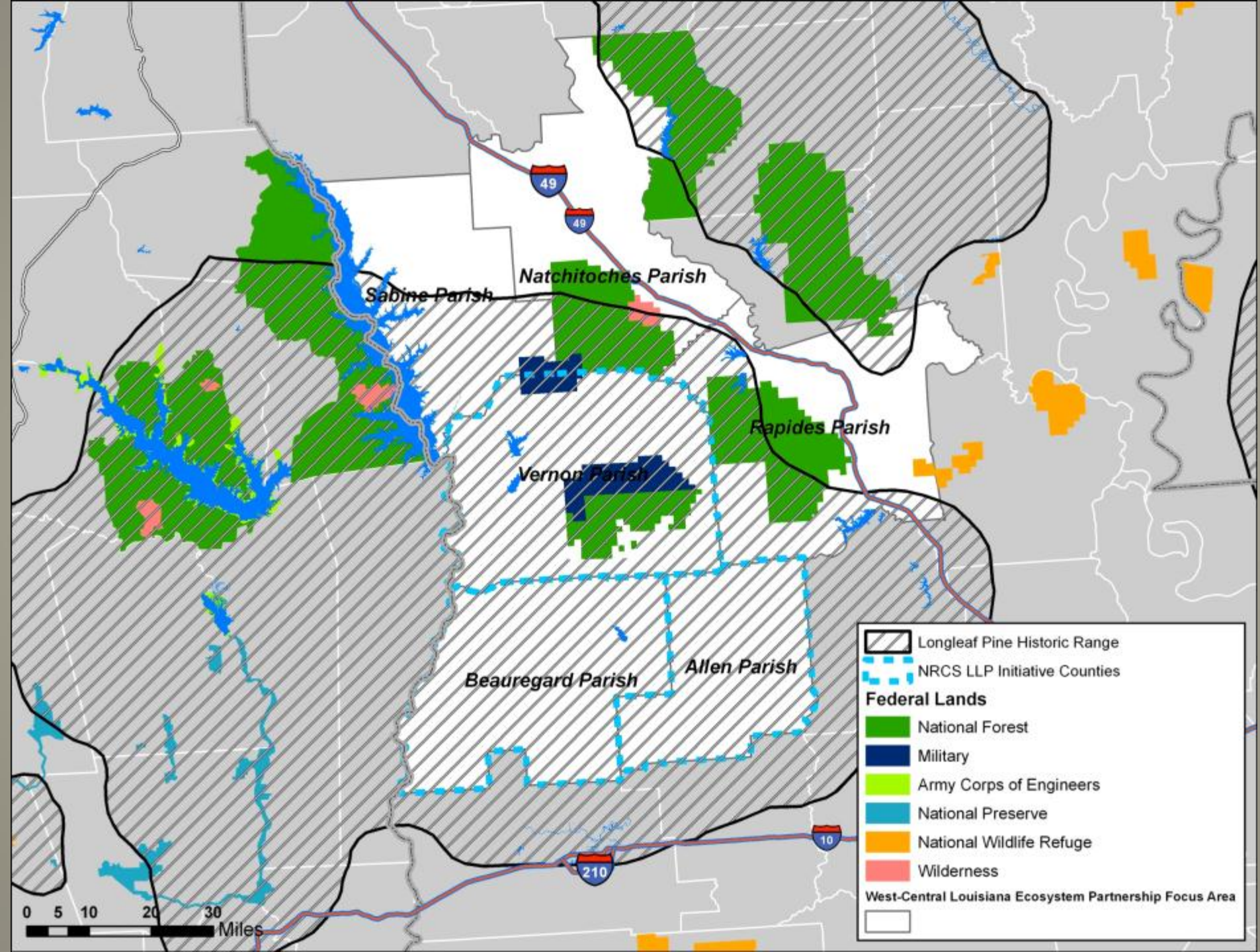




## Specific Actions Include

- **Coordination among federal, state agencies and NGO's to provide technical and financial resources in a focused, coordinated fashion, and**
- **Linking voluntary private landowner actions with actions on public lands to promote sustainable and secure native ecosystems that offer enduring ecological, social, and economic benefits.**







# Current Partnership Members

Association of Consulting Foresters-Louisiana Chapter

**Department of Defense-JRTC and Fort Polk**

Farm Service Agency

**Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry**

**Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries**

Louisiana Forestry Association

Louisiana Society of American Foresters

Louisiana State University AgCenter

National Wild Turkey Federation

**Natural Resources Conservation  
Service**

**The Nature Conservancy-Louisiana**

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

**U.S. Forest Service-Kisatchie National  
Forest**

U.S. Forest Service-Southern Research  
Station



**RED FONT INDICATES MEMBER OF TECHNICAL STEERING  
COMMITTEE**



# Mississippi River Alluvial Valley





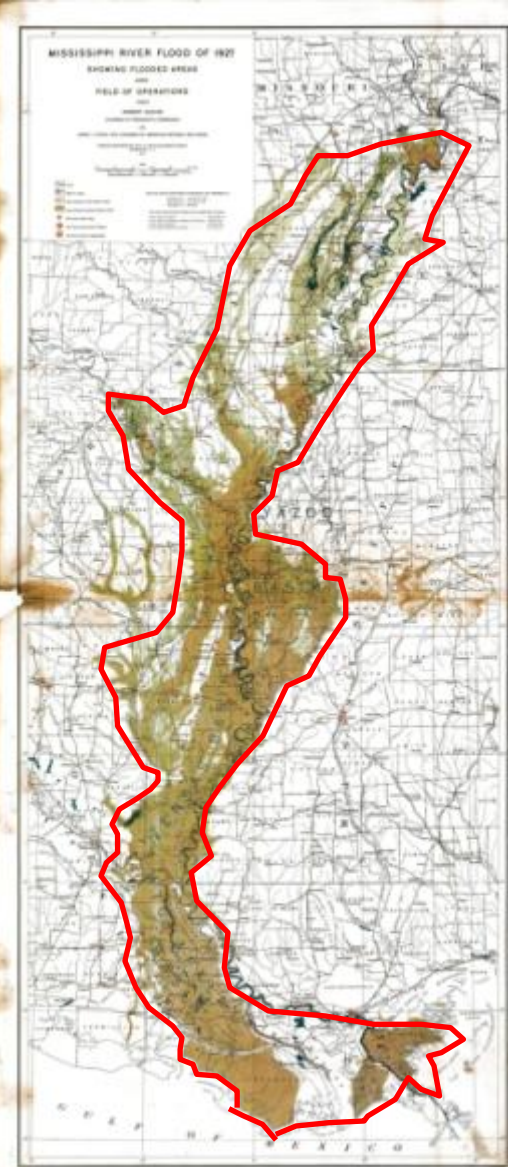
# LOWER MISSISSIPPI VALLEY (LMV)

North America's largest river basin

Natural floodplain from S. Illinois  
to Gulf of Mexico

Historically covered approximately  
24 million acres

Flood of 1927 provides best  
estimate of natural boundary

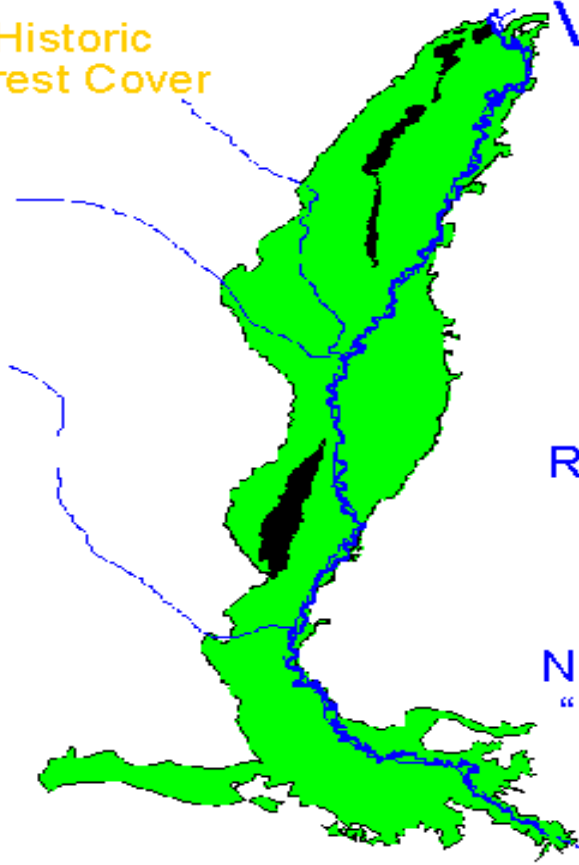




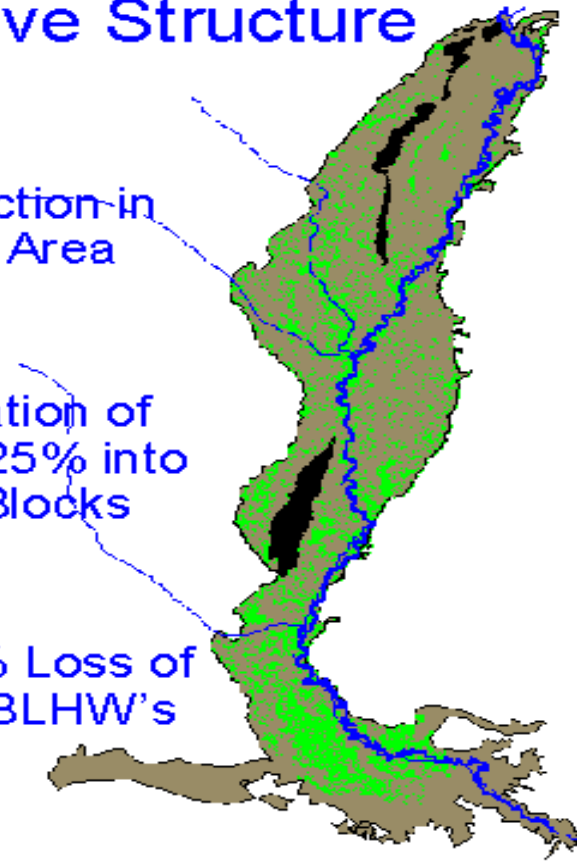
# WHY LMV? - AN ECOSYSTEM IN CRISIS

## Alterations To Vegetative Structure

Historic Forest Cover



Current Forest Cover



75% Reduction in Forested Area

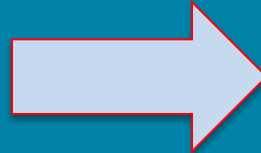
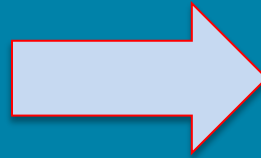
Fragmentation of Remaining 25% into 35,000+ Blocks

Nearly 100% Loss of "High-site" BLHW's



# RESULT: HABITAT FRAGMENTATION

## SOLUTION: LOWER MISSISSIPPI VALLEY GROUPED AFFORESTATION PROGRAM





# THE APPROACH: LEVERAGING CRP/WRP

Two sources of income to landowner:  
TNC Carbon \$ + USDA CRP/WRP \$ =

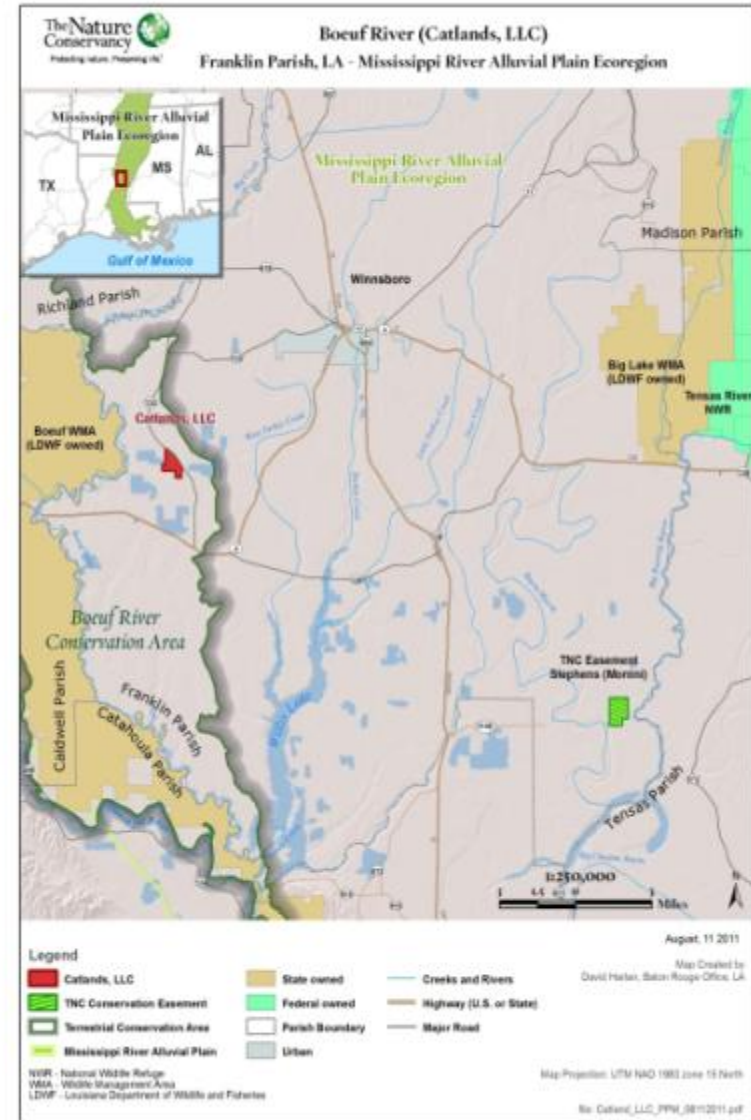


Combined funds overcome landowner cost threshold (lost agricultural rent) to incentivize WRP/CRP participation



TNC Carbon financing funds:

- 100% of site prep & forest restoration
- Permanent easement & carbon rights
- VCS carbon project development and certification





# ACHIEVE MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDER GOALS



- USDA achieves more WRP (30 yr.) & CRP signups
- Corporate partner reduces carbon footprint with VCS-verified carbon credits
- Landowners retain rights of use:
  - recreation/hunting with CRP & WRP
  - sustainable timber with CRP
- TNC stretches limited funding to increase conservation outcomes
- US Taxpayer achieves conservation at lower cost (TNC pays 100% of restoration)

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

## Three landowners enrolled in CRP



*Ronnie Ulmer, TNC LMVGAP Manager  
measures seedling growth in LMV*

## VCS validation of project design

- Achieved 11 October 2012
- First VCS ‘grouped project’ in USA on private lands

- Catlands LLC, Pondlands LLC, and Agnes Russell
- 434 acres in program via CRP
- 285 acres planted (2012)
- First WRP-30 year term to close by mid-August (150 acres)
- > 2,300 acres in “pipeline”
- Financed by \$2M from Disney Corporation



# USDA – TNC Collaboration in LMV

- **Regional Conservation Partnership Program proposal for AR-MS-LA has been submitted to USDA (\$4.3M)**
- **Member of WRP Partners group and State Technical Committee**
- **Established development of a NRCS/TNC Cost Share position to advance conservation delivery of WRE in high priority areas of the LA LMAV**
- **Developing environmental market partnership with USDA tied to LMVGAP-Carbon rights acquisition**
- **NRCS designated a Special Project area to accelerate environmental market signup in the LMVGAP**
- **Conservation Innovation Grant to support water quality application to direct EQIP funding**



**STEVE CRUSE**