RECENT NEWS – LONGLEAF PINE GENETICS AND SILVICULTURE ACTIVITIES ON THE SOUTHERN NATIONAL FORESTS

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National Forests in the Southern Region are home to over 800,000 acres of longleaf pine, which serves as critical habitat for numerous species. Annually over 5 million longleaf pine seedlings are planted and approximately 500,000 acres are prescribed burned. Maintaining, improving and restoring the longleaf pine ecosystem is a priority for the region. Reforestation and restoration have been underway for several decades, utilizing both artificial and natural regeneration methods as well as prescribed fire.

Multiple activities in both the Genetics and Silviculture programs to support longleaf pine restoration are ongoing. These activities include: management of longleaf pine seed orchards and progeny tests for seed production; establishment of longleaf pine seed production areas on multiple forests; a south wide survey to assess longleaf pine seed orchard and seed bank resources; research on suspected hybridization between longleaf and loblolly pines (e.g. *Sonderegger* hybrid); DNA fingerprinting of all seed orchard longleaf pine trees and longleaf pine seed inventory for purity; research on suspect *Sonderegger* hybrid seedling morphology and prescribing burning to weed out hybrids; assessment of climate change impacts to the future desired condition for longleaf pine; development of updated planting zone maps and seed source maps for longleaf pine; and drafting a Southern Region Longleaf Pine Accelerated Restoration Strategy.

Many partners are involved in the various activities, including Southern Research Station, National Genetics Lab (NFGEL), Dr. Jim Barnett et. al., State Private Coop Forestry and Forest Health Protection.

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