

# EAST GULF COASTAL PLAIN JOINT VENTURE

## NEWSLETTER, Summer 2018



### Landowners “Learn and Burn” in Alabama



Photo by LuAnn Craighton

Landowners need hands-on, prescribed fire experience to build the skills and confidence required to burn their own land safely and effectively. In February 2018, the Alabama Prescribed Fire Council, with support from multiple partners, executed their third “Learn & Burn” educational program. This event was designed to provide less experienced burners with live-fire experience under the guidance of seasoned prescribed fire mentors. Conducted in Bullock and Macon counties (Alabama), the program gave participants a “start to finish learning opportunity” in prescribed fire planning and implementation. Participants included private landowners and consulting foresters along with many people from local, state and federal agencies. Early in the day participants were split into crews and assigned a burn unit. Under the guidance of an experienced burn boss each crew conducted a briefing on the burn plan, reviewed safety protocols, mustered equipment, and spent the day burning their assigned unit. Throughout the event participants were able to observe, ask questions, and experience igniting and holding prescribed fire in a variety of forest stand conditions. The crews finished the day with an after action review, discussing the burns and lessons learned. A few door prizes were even awarded for especially well-answered questions and observations! The event sponsors plan to host additional Learn & Burns programs. If you would like more information on future prescribed fire learning opportunities, please contact: LuAnn Craighton, Chattahoochee Fall Line Conservation Partnership - [lcraighton@tnc.org](mailto:lcraighton@tnc.org)

**Board Member Spotlight:** Vernon Compton works for The Longleaf Alliance as Director of the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP). GCPEP is a voluntary public/private landowner partnership formed in 1996 which now sustains over 1.3 million acres of diverse habitat in northwest Florida and south Alabama. To see a list of the fifteen partners, click here: <https://www.longleafalliance.org/gcpep/partners-missions>. The partnership provides opportunities for a much higher level



Photo by The Longleaf Alliance

of collaboration among the partners and as a result has accelerated the restoration of the longleaf ecosystem across the GCPEP landscape, especially in the areas of longleaf and habitat restoration, prescribed fire, invasive species control, and rare species recovery. Vernon grew up in central Louisiana near the Kisatchie National Forest and his love for the outdoors and the piney woods was instilled in him by his family. He attended Louisiana State University and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Forest Management. Prior to joining The Longleaf Alliance Vernon worked for the Florida Chapter of The Nature Conservancy and the Florida Forest Service at Blackwater River State Forest. He has always enjoyed exploring and learning about natural and historic areas and particularly likes to experience these areas through hiking, running, and kayaking. Written by Vernon Compton.

## “Telling the Joint Venture Story” Communications Plan

Migratory Bird Joint Ventures have a 31-year history of forging public-private partnerships for bird and habitat conservation that also benefits other wildlife, people, and the economy. They bring together diverse partners to build cost-effective, community-based conservation approaches for birds, other wildlife, and people. For continued success key decision-makers must be fully aware of Joint Ventures as a model of successful and cost-effective public-private conservation partnership. To accomplish this,



National Joint Venture Staff meet in Tucson, AZ

Joint Venture staff developed a strategic communication campaign called *Telling the JV Story*. The goal of this campaign is for Migratory Bird Joint Ventures to be recognized and supported by Congress, the Department of the Interior, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a highly successful model for collaborative conservation. This work will expand on individual Joint Venture communication efforts about their own unique partnerships. Effective conservation will benefit from consistent messages to be delivered by Joint Venture staff, Management Board members, and partners to inform our key audiences about Joint Venture partnerships. Messages focus on how Joint Ventures have resulted in positive social/community and economic outcomes that mesh with leadership priorities; demonstrate how federal investments are leveraged by state and private funds; describe key programs and investments that have supported community-based, proactive, non-regulatory habitat conservation actions that benefit a wide range of stakeholders; and increase awareness and understanding of JV accomplishments. To learn more contact Debra Reynolds, Atlantic Coast Joint Venture at [Debra\\_Reynolds@fws.gov](mailto:Debra_Reynolds@fws.gov)

## Kentucky Prescribed Fire Legislation Passes on First Attempt!



Photo by John Morgan

In 2008, the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources hosted a roundtable meeting of conservation partners committed to the expansion of prescribed fire in the Commonwealth. That event spawned the creation of the Kentucky Prescribed Fire Council. On April 4<sup>th</sup>, Governor Bevin signed into the law HB 208 and the number one priority of the Council from its founding day – a Prescribed Burn Program. Prescribed fire is widely considered our most powerful and cost effective land management tool, though a lack of trained and experienced practitioners in Kentucky has greatly limited its use. HB 208 created a pathway for farmers, small business, and motivated landowners to conduct prescribed burns by empowering the Council to certify individuals to conduct prescribed burning during the state’s fire hazard season. The Council will establish training, experience, and insurance requirements that must be approved by the KY Division of Forestry. Upon approval, the Council and its partners

will begin to certify individuals through this program.

The Department was actively engaged with the Council partnership to formulate and pass this legislative initiative. The bill was carried by two fantastic sponsors in Rep. Tom McKee and Rep. Mike Denham. Strong bi-partisan support and robust collaboration by the conservation community resulted in what many deemed unlikely – passage in the first attempt. Congratulations to all that were actively engaged in making this bill a reality! The Department will continue to be a critical partner towards the implementation of this landmark conservation program. For more information, please contact: John Morgan, Small Game Program Coordinator – John.Morgan@ky.gov



Photo by KY Dept of Fish & Wildlife Resources

## Partners at Work for Bobwhites on the Conecuh National Forest



Photo by Shane Wellendorf, TTRS

The National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI) has been working with the Southern Region of the US Forest Service to develop focal areas for bobwhites on National Forests across the region, including the 84,000-acre Conecuh National Forest (CNF) along the Alabama-Florida state line. In 2017, the USFS and Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) signed a MOU designating approximately 7,000 acres of CNF as Alabama's first Quail Focal Area, the Boggy Hollow Wildlife Management Area. The goal of the new area is to enhance bobwhite management and hunter opportunity in

support of the NBCI Coordinated Implementation Program (CIP). One component of CIP is a standardized monitoring program to evaluate bird response to management actions, including periodic extensive habitat assessment, monitoring annual spring and fall populations of Northern Bobwhite, and spring populations of high priority pine-grassland birds identified in the East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture's (EGCJV) Implementation Plan. Several EGCPJV partners met in January 2018 to discuss opportunities and ways to address the challenge of limited resources to accomplish the coordinated monitoring objectives. Following the meeting, staff from NBCI, ADCNR, CNF, EGCJV staff, the local Quail Forever chapter, the Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership (GCPEP), and the University of West Florida worked with GCPEP to supplement a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Longleaf Stewardship Fund grant proposal to support the monitoring and evaluation of Alabama's Quail Focal Area by this unique partnership of state, federal, NGO, and academic organizations. Without partners coming together to agree on clear and desired objectives, it would be almost impossible to implement the CIP. Look forward to more news concerning the Boggy Hollow WMA and the partnerships involved in making the project happen. To learn more visit <https://www.quailcount.org/monitoring/overview.html> or contact Steve Chapman of the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative at schapm16@utk.edu

## EGCPJV Landbird Planning Takes Flight



Over the past year the EGCPJV Landbird Working Group has been working in coordination with JV staff to develop and finalize an updated Landbird Plan for priority species in our geography. This plan will be an important step in targeting conservation delivery toward specific population and habitat objectives for landbirds. The team first identified a list of priority species using a weighted scoring process based on species identified as state Species of Greatest Conservation Need, classification in the 2016 Partners In Flight (PIF) Landbird Conservation Plan, PIF-identified Area Importance and Regional Concern classification, and other factors. Species were then grouped into JV priority habitats (e.g., Eastern Interior Grasslands), from which representative species will be selected for objective setting. Population objectives are developed at an ecoregional-scale and aim to “step-down” continental PIF objectives for red and yellow watchlist species, and common birds in steep decline. These objectives focus on recovery, prevention of decline, reversal of decline, and stabilization of population trends. The process of population objective setting relies heavily on the PIF Population Estimates Database (<http://pif.birdconservancy.org/PopEstimates/Database.aspx>) and the PIF Avian Conservation Assessment Database (<http://pif.birdconservancy.org/ACAD/>). Once population objectives are resolved, literature on species-habitat associations for priority species will be used in conjunction with regional habitat data to identify habitat needs (amount and configuration) within the geography to contribute to continental landbird objectives. The group will finalize the landbird plan this summer and plans to develop other taxa-based plans in subsequent years to support continued conservation delivery efforts of the JV. For more information contact Dr. Kristine Evans at [kristine.evans@msstate.edu](mailto:kristine.evans@msstate.edu).

