



## Introduction and General Description

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program is a voluntary program to assist private landowners with fish and wildlife habitat restoration on their land. Georgia is the biggest State east of the Mississippi River and more than 90 percent of the land in Georgia is privately owned. Therefore, the future health of Georgia's land, water, and wildlife depends upon private landowners.

In Georgia, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program has focused on the restoration of longleaf pine habitat, restoration of degraded streams and riparian (streamside) areas, and restoration and improvement of endangered, threatened, and rare species habitat. Since 1995, approximately 145 private landowners have



Longleaf pine stand.

# GEORGIA

restored or enhanced about 11,000 acres of fish and wildlife habitat through the Partners Program in the State.

## Habitats of Special Concern

The longleaf pine ecosystem once covered an estimated 90 million acres in the southeastern U.S. Today, less than 3 million acres remain (over 97 percent decline), mostly in the coastal plains of the Carolinas, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas. Over 30 plant and animal species associated with longleaf pine ecosystems are threatened or endangered, including the red-cockaded woodpecker and the eastern indigo snake. Other rare plant and animal species that are associated with longleaf pine habitats include the sandhills rosemary, Pickering's morning-glory, Bachman's sparrow, and gopher tortoise.

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife



Gopher tortoise.

Program in Georgia is working with private landowners to restore and enhance longleaf pine habitat.

## Threats

Habitat loss is the greatest threat facing wildlife habitat in Georgia today. Georgia's population has grown to 8 million people in 2000, up 26 percent from a decade ago. As a result, thousands of acres of wildlife habitat are lost each year to accommodate the expanding human population.

## Conservation Strategies

### *Endangered, Threatened, and Rare Species*

Georgia has about 55 species of federally listed endangered and threatened species and many more State listed and rare species. The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program has assisted landowners with projects that restore and enhance habitat utilized by these rare species.

For example, the Partners Program in Georgia has assisted landowners in restoring and enhancing nesting and foraging habitat for the



Wood storks.

endangered wood stork.

Some projects have included assisting landowners in obtaining fish for foraging ponds and controlling undesirable understory vegetation in wood stork nesting ponds.

The Partners Program is also working with The Nature Conservancy on private land in south Georgia to manage a population of a rare plant species, Radford's dicerandra, a member of the mint family. This population is one of only two populations known in the world.

### ***Streams and Riparian Areas***

Streams and riparian (streamside) areas in Georgia are important to many fish and wildlife species. Many streams are degraded due to human disturbance.



**Oconee River bank before restoration.**



**Oconee River bank after tree revetment installation.**

Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission to assist landowners in restoring the integrity of streams and riparian areas by fencing out cattle and reestablishing buffer areas. This reduces erosion and stabilizes the streams. Costs of these projects generally range from \$1.25 to \$4.00 per linear foot.

The Partners Program also assists landowners in stabilizing stream banks and riparian areas by installing tree revetments (cut trees placed along an eroding stream bank to reduce erosion and help stabilize the bank) and planting trees. These in-stream projects range from \$25 per foot up to \$45 per linear foot.

These stream restoration projects may also benefit rare, endangered, and threatened fish species, such as the robust redhorse, Conasauga logperch, Amber Darter, and blue shiner; and several mussel species, such as the shiny-rayed pocketbook, southern acornshell, and purple bankclimber .

### ***Longleaf Pine Ecosystem***

The longleaf pine ecosystem once dominated much of the forest landscape in the coastal plain of Georgia. Currently this endangered ecosystem exists only in a few scattered areas in the State.



**Longleaf pine seedlings.**

In Georgia, the Partners Program is working with the Georgia Forestry

Commission, the Longleaf Alliance, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and other organizations to help landowners restore and enhance the longleaf pine habitat. An important component of this ecosystem is the ground-cover of wiregrass and other herbaceous plants. To fully restore this ecosystem, the Partners Program assists landowners in implementing prescribed fire programs. Restoration costs for longleaf pine habitats generally range from \$175/ acre up to \$350/acre. Enhancement of longleaf ecosystems usually costs anywhere from \$12/acre (for prescribed burning) up to \$120/acre (for midstory removal).

The Partners Program is working with the

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## Partners

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Georgia Forestry Commission  
Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission  
Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
The Nature Conservancy  
The Longleaf Alliance  
The Conasauga River Alliance  
Etowah River Alliance  
Limestone Valley RC&D  
Seven Rivers RC&D  
Upper Suwannee River Watershed Initiative  
Upper Chattahoochee River Keeper  
University of Georgia  
Auburn University  
Farm Services Agency  
Glynn County Board of Commissioners  
City of Jesup  
City of Lakeland  
Southeastern Natural Sciences Academy  
U.S. Forest Service  
City of Chickamauga  
Stephens Co. Soil & Water Conservation District  
Wayne County School Board  
Walker County Board of Education  
Appling County Middle School  
Tattnall County High School  
Gordon Central High School  
Georgia Conservancy  
Sandy Creek Nature Center  
Elachee Nature Science Center  
Emanuel County School Board  
Douglas County  
City of Alpharetta  
Floyd College  
Dade County  
Oconee County  
Ware County  
Morgan County  
Brantley County  
Bacon County  
Darton College  
Joseph W. Jones Ecological Research Center  
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

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## Accomplishments

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The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program has been active in Georgia since 1995. Since that time, partnerships with private landowners and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have achieved the following results:

- C Over 5,100 acres of longleaf pine habitat restored and enhanced.
- C Over 5,000 acres of riparian and wetland restoration and enhancement.
- C Approximately 30 miles of stream and riparian habitat restoration.
- C At least 25 federally endangered or threatened species have benefitted from projects in some way.

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## Future Needs

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- ' Restore or enhance 5,000,000 acres of longleaf pine habitat.
- ' Restore or enhance 3,200 miles of streams and riparian areas.
- ' Work with private landowners and others to enhance and restore 3,200 acres of rare species habitat throughout the State.

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## CONTACT



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July 2001

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# Georgia's Ecosystems

