



Restoring Longleaf Pine in Alabama

Salem Saloom will tell you, he grew up outside. From his early years, he spent the majority of his hours hiking and camping, becoming a Cub Scout, then a Boy Scout and landing honors as an Eagle Scout. Those earlier years fostered a love of trees, big spans of forests, and the wildlife, particularly turkey that roam them.



Once grown and married, Salem and his wife Dianne purchased their first 158-acre piece of timberland in Conecuh County. With hopes of growing timber and enjoying the wildlife (especially the turkey hunting), he wanted to create a place where his family could enjoy and appreciate the outdoors.

Unfortunately, the Saloom's vision and activities were interrupted. Hurricane Ivan, a category 3 hurricane, hit their land in 2004. The storm and winds upended the majority of the loblolly and slash pine on the property. All that remained were a few older longleaf pine trees scattered across the land.

Salem had grown up seeing longleaf pine all his life, but until the storm hit, never really appreciated it. Seeing the toughness of the tree firsthand, he began to do a bit of research and ask fellow members of the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) about it.

Longleaf pine was historically a vast and majestic species across the South. It provided vital habitat for the critters he loved like turkey, but also for many others – the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker and the threatened gopher tortoise. He read how these species were dwindling because there wasn't enough longleaf pine habitat for them to thrive. While efforts to aid recovery were taking place on national forest land, little was being done on private land.

The storm and his subsequent research were turning points for him and his family.

While Salem knew that he was practicing good forestry, he was following the laws and best management practices, he wasn't causing any harm to the land

The author establishes context by describing Salem's personality and location.

The author explains the obstacle the Salooms ran into – a hurricane.

The author hints at the solution – a network of individuals who provide a community worth of information

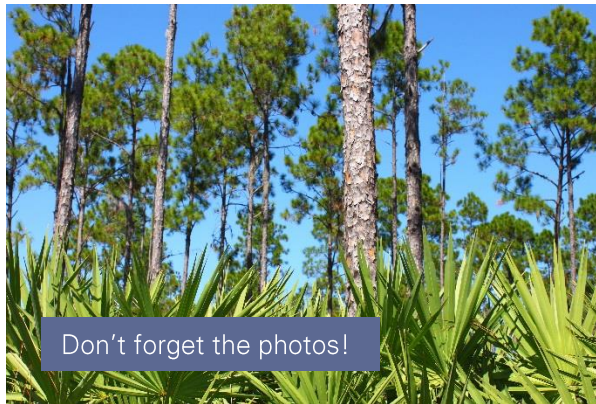
and was meeting all the needed standards, he began to wonder if he could do more. Could he go beyond and help bring about positive change for the wildlife in his area? Could he be a part of the solution to solve a conservation issue?

The Salooms decided it was time for a new vision for their land. Looking into the future, they decided there was great value in restoring longleaf pine for community and beyond. Longleaf would create a forest that would be better able to withstand future hurricanes, drought and pine beetle infestations. It would provide the needed habitat for many of the wildlife species they enjoyed or were threatened. And it would still provide the high valued wood fiber they could sell timber.

They set to work. Through ATFS, they were able to connect with experts who helped them source longleaf plants to get started planting. They also were able to attend Field Days and workshops and learn how to conduct prescribed burns (a healthy practice for longleaf) and to do it safely. Soon they became pro's themselves.

The author again showcases the solution – a network of individuals who provide a community worth of information and resources.

Today, now owning more than 2,200 acres, the Salooms have planted more than half of their property in longleaf. Some of the trees are already 10 years old. They continue to maintain the health of their longleaf pine, using prescribed burns to create the fresh ground growth the wildlife depends on for food. They plan to continue to plant more in the future.



Not only do Salem and Dianne find their longleaf forest beautiful, but they can report they have healthy populations of turkey, quail and deer. They also have several gopher tortoises and gopher tortoise nests on their land, where before they had none.

The author concludes with a description of what has resulted from their work – the impact. Or this can be called the resolution.

They are also involved in their state's ATFS program, encouraging other landowners to help go beyond meeting the standards and be a part of the solution to help restore this ecosystem. They hope for a day where some of the wildlife species can be delisted, and they can tell their grandchildren that they were a part of the recovery to make it happen.