

News Release

For Immediate Use

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RMS and Partners Celebrate Inaugural Longleaf Pine Restoration Initiative in Florida

Largest Project of its Kind to Date on Private Forestlands

Santa Rosa County, Florida – April 24, 2019: Representatives of [Resource Management Service \(RMS\)](#), [The Conservation Fund](#) and the USDA's [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) (NRCS), gathered at Pace, Florida with 30 other partners to commemorate the first stage of the Coastal Headwaters Longleaf Pine Forest Restoration Project and to celebrate the unique and ambitious public-private collaboration that is making it possible.

The event was headlined by remarks from Chief Matt Lohr of the NRCS and by U.S. Representative Matt Gaetz (R-FL), both of whom congratulated the partners and spoke to the environmental and economic importance of longleaf pine restoration in the U.S. South.

"This project has been in the works for 5 to 6 years and it's all about the partnerships and the collaboration," said Chief Lohr. "It's amazing to see the work that has been done."

"These types of conservation easements create a platform for innovative forest management practices," said Congressman Gaetz.

RMS and Partners Celebrate Longleaf Pine Restoration – Page 2

The project was made possible through funding provided by NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). It entailed developing and funding an innovative conservation easement on lands RMS manages in Santa Rosa County, Florida. The easement is the first step in what is envisioned to be a larger conservation project in lower Alabama and the Florida Panhandle. This initial 3,719-acre perpetual easement will ensure the lands are managed as a working longleaf forest and as a functioning longleaf ecosystem, providing both economic and environmental benefits to the region.

Craig Blair, President and CEO of RMS, said he envisions the Coastal Headwaters Longleaf Pine Restoration Project eventually helping to protect and restore as many as 200,000 acres of private working forestland in the coastal regions of Florida and Alabama.

"For those who care about the South's forest legacy, restoring longleaf pine ecosystems is important work, not only because longleaf is one of our signature tree species, but also because of the positive, long-term environmental and economic impacts it will have on the region," said Blair.

In addition to thanking representatives of the NRCS, The Conservation Fund and the other partners involved in the project, Blair also acknowledged the support of Congressman Gaetz and U.S. Senators Bill Nelson (R-FL) and Marco Rubio (R-FL), who were instrumental in securing funding for this initial easement project.

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RMS and Partners Celebrate Longleaf Pine Restoration – Page 3

"Longleaf pine is an iconic symbol of the South's natural heritage, but our longleaf forests have been in decline for decades after vast expanses of its unique, coastal plain habitat underwent harvesting around the turn of the twentieth century to produce the lumber that literally built the homes and cities of the southern United States. Then much of the land once in longleaf forests were converted to row crop agriculture or pasture land," said Jimmy Bullock, Senior Vice President of Forest Sustainability at RMS. "As the pulp and paper industry expanded in the South, after World War II, many of these agricultural lands were re-planted with faster-growing pine species, such as loblolly and slash, in response to the region's expanding mill capacity. This initial easement, which we believe will be the first of many such efforts RMS will undertake with our partners from the private, public and NGO sectors, will help protect working, longleaf forestlands in Santa Rosa, County from conversion and help us continue the process of re-establishing the region's natural longleaf ecosystem," continued Bullock.

According to Bullock, the working forest component of the project will continue to support the local economy by keeping the lands on the tax rolls and by producing pulpwood, sawtimber and poles, which the region's expansive wood-processing-based businesses require.

RMS and Partners Celebrate Longleaf Pine Restoration – Page 4

For More Information on the Coastal Headwaters Longleaf Pine Restoration Project, please see these additional sources.

<https://www.conservationfund.org/news/press-releases/1963-3-719-acres-of-land-protected-for-longleaf-restoration>

<https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2019/04/25/santa-rosa-county-longleaf-pine-conservation-easement-celebrated/3555387002/>

<https://www.fws.gov/southeast/articles/coastal-headwaters-project-in-florida-is-a-major-step-for-longleaf-pine-restoration>

<http://southeastagnet.com/2019/04/29/coastal-headwaters-longleaf-forest-project/>

About Resource Management Service, LLC

Founded in 1950, RMS is recognized as one of the world's leading timberland investment management firms, employing best-in-class systems, technology and sustainable forest management practices to create forest value. Based in Birmingham, Alabama, RMS is a private, employee-owned and operated company with \$4.4 billion of timberland assets under management in the United States, Brazil, Australia and New Zealand. For more information, please visit www.resourcegmt.com.

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