

# NATURE

**LOUISIANA**

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One of the 2024 Cypress Island photo contest winning photographs © Julie Pastor

## Conservation Wins

Thanks for making it possible for us to dream big about conserving Louisiana nature

It's hard to believe that we are about to turn the page on another year of conserving nature in Louisiana. In 2024, our goals became more ambitious, and the need to reach them gained urgency in response to mounting evidence of global biodiversity loss and climate change. Thanks to your support, we can continue to raise the bar for what we hope to accomplish with partners and colleagues here in Louisiana and throughout the southeastern United States.

On land, The Nature Conservancy secured 283 acres in Louisiana, including the recent expansion of our CC Road Preserve (featured on the next page). We also delivered prescribed fire to 2,515 acres and planted 118,000 seedlings on 373 acres to restore the ecological health of native longleaf pine savanna that once covered more than 90 million acres across our region.

In the water, we installed 1.5 miles of oyster reefs—bringing our new total to 9 miles—in an effort to restore this critical wildlife habitat that provides resilience against storms, sea-level rise



Karen Gautreaux, State Director © TNC

and erosion. We also joined partner RTI International in introducing Nature-Based Solutions Explorer, a new freshwater management tool, to an international audience of 71 peers at World Water Week.

We continued to seek and embrace opportunities to leverage support for our mission. Thanks to a grant from the USDA Forest Service and support from the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, we launched Treesilience to restore tree canopies in southeastern and southwestern Louisiana parishes hit hardest by the 2020 and 2021 storms. It was also satisfying to secure \$1 million for Louisiana Outdoors Forever to advance conservation projects around the state and connect with hundreds of visitors to the annual Grand Isle Migratory Bird Festival.

That's just a taste of all we were able to achieve in 2024, thanks to your support. We appreciate all that you do for nature in Louisiana and look forward to seeing what we accomplish together in the year to come.



Flatwoods Pond at CC Road Preserve © Will deGravelles/TNC

## Places We Protect

New funding makes it possible to expand our CC Road Preserve

It's official! Thanks to an award from the state's inaugural round of the Louisiana Outdoor Forever program and a generous bequest from the family of the late Camille Coates, The Nature Conservancy has acquired a new property that makes it possible to expand our CC Road Preserve in Allen Parish. Securing the parcel adds 283 acres to the now 881-acre preserve.

In addition to expanding the preserve, the acquisition builds on TNC's efforts to restore and manage additional longleaf pine forest and savanna, which only covers 6 percent of its historic 90 million-acre range across the southeastern United States. Bringing this native habitat back to our landscape will build resilience against pests and increasingly intense weather—including hurricanes and drought—because longleaf pines are more resistant to these threats than other pine species. They also store carbon and filter air and water to benefit wildlife and people.

This recent land protection win represents the first stage of long-term conservation. Before incorporating this new tract into TNC's CC Road Preserve, our scientists will take an inventory of its ecology, which they know includes a rare, embedded natural community called a West Gulf Coastal Plain Flatwoods Pond. The data they collect will inform a 10-year restoration plan for integrating the parcel into the preserve, a plan that will rely heavily on returning fire to the landscape. When carefully delivered by conservation professionals to mimic what historically occurred in nature, these routine groundfires can re-create the characteristic sunlight-filled forest where meadows of grasses and wildflowers emerge beneath open stands of tall pine trees to support diverse wildlife. In this part of Louisiana, that includes the federally endangered American chaffseed, state-rare Oklahoma grass pink orchid and Gulf bluestar, as well as Henslow's sparrow, Bachman's sparrow and a variety of other grassland birds. We look forward to welcoming back these plants and animals, and more native longleaf pine forest, to this part of Louisiana!

## NATURE LOUISIANA

### Louisiana's Burn Boss Nationally Recognized

We are pleased to share that Bill Rivers, a 23-year veteran of The Nature Conservancy and long-time Burn Boss and Fire Manager in Louisiana, received the Burner Bob Prescribed Fire Champion award at the 15th Biennial Longleaf Conference in October. This achievement, awarded by The Longleaf Alliance, recognizes an individual or organization for outstanding efforts in championing prescribed fire to ensure the future of this ecosystem on private land.



Will deGravelles (left) and Bill Rivers © TNC

Over the years, Bill has safely and successfully planned and led hundreds of prescribed burns, mostly on TNC's longleaf pine preserves in St. Tammany Parish, and at other TNC preserves and partner properties, as well. These burns, totaling tens of thousands of acres, served to mimic millennia-old natural fire regimes, and have been crucial to restoring longleaf savannas hosting dozens of rare species. Just as importantly, Bill has spent a career dedicated to building teamwork and fostering the skills and knowledge of young fire practitioners, many of whom have gone on to careers with other TNC programs and federal and state agencies. Nature in Louisiana would not be what it is without Bill. We congratulate him on this achievement and look forward to his future successes!