

Apalachicola National Forest Longleaf Groundcover Planting

FY12 Update for Survival

In Fiscal Year 2011 the Apalachicola National Forest was funded to complete groundcover enhancement work on approximately 35 acres. This report describes the action taken to complete that work.

Longleaf pine restoration includes not only the forest canopy but the groundcover too. The condition of the groundcover in a stand of trees can affect the spread of fire across the stand. Wiregrass (*Aristida stricta*) is considered a “workhorse” species of the groundcover because of its ability to help fire, weather prescribed or wild, spread across the landscape. Fire is a major component of the Longleaf Pine Wiregrass ecosystem. Without fire the pine grasslands would eventually give way to hardwoods. The goal of groundcover enhancement is to supplement or increase the amount of burnable species in the groundcover. Planting wiregrass will help the continuity of fine fuels across these stands.

This year’s NFWV funding was used to grow and plant wiregrass seedlings on 35 acres. The Forest Service currently has a five year IDIQ contract with International Forest Company in Moultrie, Georgia to grow wiregrass seedlings. This year’s rate is \$126 per 1000 seedlings. Our order was for 170,000 wiregrass seedlings. The Forest Service has to provide the seed to grow the wiregrass seedlings. This seed was previously collected by the ANF Seed Bank. We shipped 100 pounds of seed to the Nursery. We also solicited a contract to plant the seedlings when ready in December. Express Forestry, LLC was the successful bidder at \$387 per acre. The planting began in December of 2011. Wiregrass plugs were planted on 3 x 3 foot spacing or 4840 seedlings per acre. This finished the restoration process for these stands.

The survival of the wiregrass plugs averaged 83% or about 4,000 wiregrass plugs per acre after the first growing season. Another survival check is planned for the end of the third growing season. If this survival rate is maintained the wiregrass established will aid prescribed fire spread throughout the stand and the role of fire will be restored.



Planting Wiregrass Plugs on Pipeline

Year Awarded: 2011
Project completion: (2011)

Report number: (2 of 2)

Expenditures:

- FY11 NFWV: \$ 70,000

Partners/Contractors/Coop:

The Nature Conservancy
National Seed Lab
International Forest Company
Express Forestry, LLC

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