Google

Longleaf Pine Restoration in South Carolina

In 2021, Google announced a new [water stewardship commitment](#) to replenish more water than we consume by 2030 and support watershed health projects that benefit communities and ecosystems. Google supports longleaf pine restoration in the Francis Marion National Forest in South Carolina as one of these projects.

Immediately after a prescribed burn

Healthy longleaf pine forest

Background

Spanning nine states in the southeastern U.S., longleaf pine once dominated the coastal plain, blanketing more than 90 million acres. Today only 5.2 million acres remain. Restoration of longleaf pine forests has become a major conservation priority in recent years for a number of reasons. Compared to other southeastern pines, longleaf pines are more resilient to climate change impacts such as severe windstorms, pests, wildfires, and drought. These forests provide habitat for more than 30 threatened and endangered species. When healthy, they also use less water than other types of forests or pine plantations—with benefits to wetland water supply, water quality, and groundwater infiltration.

The Project

Longleaf pine forests depend upon frequent fire to thrive, making the practice of prescribed fire the most effective tool for longleaf pine forest restoration. In partnership with The Nature Conservancy, Google supports prescribed fire applications at a landscape scale (54,750 acres) and protects surrounding lands from uses such as golf courses, housing, and other infrastructure. The project site is within the Francis Marion National Forest, located 30 miles northeast of Google's data center in Moncks Corner.

By controlling hardwood encroachment and maintaining native ground cover, prescribed fire reduces the susceptibility of the forest to insect and disease outbreaks, wildfire, and water stress. Protecting surrounding lands enhances habitat connections and buffers the core forest blocks that require active fire management.

Benefits

By the time it is completed in June 2024, the project will deliver increased freshwater supply to wetlands, improved water quality and groundwater infiltration, wildlife habitat protection, and a climate-resilient landscape.

Learn more: sustainability.google