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News Release

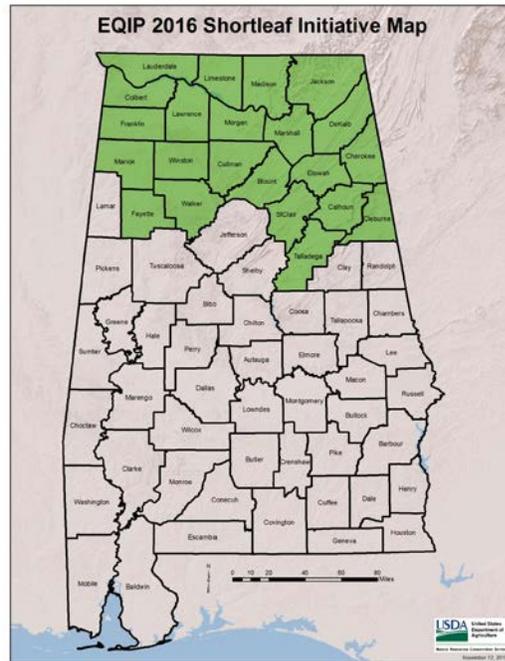
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\$100,000 Available to Alabama Landowners Interested in Shortleaf Pine Initiative

AUBURN, December 11, 2015 – USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Ben Malone announced January 15, 2016 as the sign-up deadline for the Shortleaf Pine Initiative. Forest landowners in 22 North Alabama counties are encouraged to apply for the initiative. Those counties include: Blount, Calhoun, Cherokee, Cleburne, Colbert, Cullman, DeKalb, Etowah, Fayette, Franklin, Jackson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Marshall, Morgan, Marion, St. Clair, Talladega, Walker and Winston.

[The Shortleaf Pine Initiative \(SPI\)](#) was created in 2013 to address multiple threats affecting the shortleaf pine ecosystem. Shortleaf pine forests and associated habitats once covered a vast area of North America stretching from eastern Texas and Oklahoma to the eastern seaboard from New Jersey down to Florida. Over the last 30 years, this extensive shortleaf pine ecosystem has lost over 50% of its former acreage with most of the significant decline taking place east of the Mississippi River.



As a member of the SPI Advisory Committee, NRCS Alabama has added shortleaf as a conservation practice supported through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Eligible landowners will be able to apply to receive funding to plant shortleaf pine on their land.

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“North Alabama landowners will be able to help the ecosystem make a rebound by supporting the shortleaf pine on their land,” said NRCS State Conservationist Ben Malone. “Our hope is that this first round of the Shortleaf Pine Initiative in Alabama will lead to more support for the effort.

Although applications are accepted all year, producers should submit applications by January 15, 2016 to ensure they are considered for this year’s funding. NRCS field offices are listed in the telephone directory under U.S. Department of Agriculture or on-line at <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov>.

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