

SOUTHERN FORESTS PROJECT

ARKANSAS



The Nature Conservancy and International Paper have undertaken a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to protect ecologically important forests, rivers and streams in 10 southern states. The Nature Conservancy will acquire more than 218,000 acres in the largest private land conservation project in the history of the southern U.S. Partners include state governments, federal agencies, the Department of Defense and timber investment entities.



Clasping coneflowers at the Rick Evans Grandview Prairie WMA. This site represents the most significant example of blackland prairie. © TNC.



Conservancy scientists, volunteers and partners monitoring plants at Miller County Sandhills. © Scott Simon / TNC

THE PROJECT

MILLER COUNTY SANDHILLS

Miller County Sandhills site is the highest quality example of the western sandhill woodland and sand barrens community known in Arkansas. Twenty-two rare plant species are recorded from this area, four of these 22 are found nowhere else in Arkansas. The rare plant community is of high significance. This site is the only western sandhill not under cultivation or in pine plantation and the project conserves one system, five plant communities and two plant ecoregional targets.

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total area 8,123 acres
blackland prairies 228 acres
falcon bottoms 143 acres
miller county sandhills 108 acres
oak ridge ravines 1,087 acres
palmetto flats 1,848 acres
poison springs 4,778 acres

representative species

neotropical songbirds
bald cypress
black bear
freshwater mussels
arkansas, durand's and bluejack oaks

project partners

The Nature Conservancy
International Paper

POISON SPRINGS

More than 400 plant species have been identified in the sandhills of Ouachita and Nevada counties (Poison Springs Site – 181,278 acres) accounting for over 13 percent of the entire flora of Arkansas in a very small part of the state. The sandhill region harbors a distinctive group of plant communities (4 - G2, 2 - G3) supporting 20 sandhill endemic plants (3 - G3). Many of these are disjunct populations previously thought to be endemic to sites in Texas (Roberts 1978). Nine Upper West Gulf Coastal Plain (UWGCP) ecoregional conservation targets are represented by 36 viable occurrences. This includes one system target, six plant community associations and three plants. The site includes ownership by The Conservancy, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (ANHC), Arkansas Forestry Commission (AFC), and Arkansas State Parks (ASP). The The Conservancy and ANHC tracts have been cooperatively managed since 1998.

BLACKLAND PRAIRIES

This site (aprox. 35,000 acres) contains the largest remnant of the blackland ecosystem under conservation management in the world (aprox. 6,500 acres). The 4,885-acre Grandview Blackland Prairie Wildlife Management Area represents the largest and most significant example of blackland prairie and woodland in Arkansas and the largest contiguous tract in public ownership across the United States. Eight UWGCP ecoregional conservation targets are represented by 25 viable occurrences, which include one system, 22 plant associations, and one plant—the world's largest population of eared false foxglove (*Tomanthera auriculata*). The Conservancy, ANHC, and Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) all have ownership within the site and have managed it cooperatively since 1998.

NACATOKH RAVINES CONSERVATION AREA

This blackland ecosystem site represents an ecological gradient from uplands to lowlands and between pine dominated sands and hardwood dominated calcareous slopes and ravines. The site contains viable occurrences of two ecosystem types, 14 plant community targets (two are globally endemic), and three plant targets. The Conservancy and ANHC own tracts at the site and have been cooperatively managing since 1995. It is one of the largest intact examples of dry, dry-mesic, and mesic upland forest in Arkansas portion of the UWGCP. The acquisition would conserve five viable occurrences of plant targets, seven plant community targets, and allow for ecosystem restoration on the uplands and more efficient management of the site as a whole.

PALMETTO FLATS CONSERVATION AREA

Palmetto Flats Conservation Area is a large wetland ecosystem situated on the upper terraces of the Red River Alluvial Plain. This low gradient site retains surface water through late spring and early summer. Palmetto Flats comprises a diverse association of wetland plant communities that varies with subtle changes in topography. The wetter flats are dominated by a low density overcup oak canopy with a dense sedge dominated herbaceous layer. These flats have a wet savanna appearance studded with Mima mounds, small circular mounds that rise 4' to 5' above flats, that are dominated by post oak with occasional white and Durand's oak. Several heronries with great white egrets and great blue herons breeding in the tree tops are located along one of the small creeks. The site represents the only conservation site on the Red River floodplain maintaining these ecosystem types.

BAYOU DORCHEAT CONSERVATION AREA

Acquisition of the Falcon Bottoms/IP tract will protect one half mile of a small stream and its bottomland which flow into the Bayou Dorcheat main stem adjacent to other protected areas. The tract adds to the protection of eight viable system-level targets and three species-level targets. The acquisition would leave five percent of the site in conservation.