



## *Illustris Palustris Award* 2022



In 2022, the NC Longleaf Coalition selected Jesse Wimberley as the recipient of the Illustris Palustris Award. He was presented with the award during a joint meeting of the NC Longleaf Coalition and the NC Prescribed Fire Council at Millstone 4-H Camp. This award is the Coalition's annual recognition of an individual who has made outstanding contributions to the maintenance and restoration of North Carolina's longleaf pine ecosystem. Jesse has spent decades restoring longleaf on his own property in the Sandhills and encouraging his friends and community members to do the same.

Jesse was instrumental in the creation of the [Sandhills Prescribed Burn Association \(SPBA\)](#) in 2016. His dedication and passion for longleaf conservation and prescribed fire has made the PBA the incredible success that it is today. The SPBA was established to connect landowners with the peer support, training, and tools that could support the accomplishment of longleaf restoration goals on private property. Through his work, Jesse has become recognized as one of the leading voices on participation of private landowners in the restoration and maintenance of longleaf pine, a critical step in restoring the longleaf pine ecosystem on a landscape scale. In conjunction with coordinating the SPBA, Jesse is lending his expertise to connect habitat between the Uwharrie National Forest and the Sandhills Game Lands for the new Uwharries to the Sandhills Restoration Project.

Receiving a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Jesse has led the SPBA to many commendable achievements. As a direct result of Jesse's work, over 1,000 landowners have been reached. Of those, almost 200 signed up for NRCS Farm Bill Programs, resulting in over 4,000 new acres of longleaf pine planting and over 11,000 acres of longleaf pine woodlands being burned. The successes of the SPBA contribute to the mission of the NC Longleaf Coalition and a multitude of partner agencies and organizations.

Jesse shines as a community organizer and as an engaging educational speaker, but his conservation work does not stop at good words – he is always willing to grab the drip torch himself and happy to pass it on to others. He empowers people of all ages, backgrounds, and political views to reintroduce fire on the landscape and increase the conservation value of their lands. Jesse's work builds landowners' trust in conservation agreements and with organizations, and connects priorities in longleaf pine conservation to the goals and priorities in landowners' lives.

With his passion for North Carolina's natural and cultural heritage of longleaf pine and prescribed fire, Jesse truly embodies what it means to be a longleaf landowner in the "Land of the Longleaf Pine." Jesse's dedication and love of the longleaf pine habitat, his commitment to grassroots community organizing and proactive engagement with his Sandhills community make him an integral part of longleaf pine conservation in North Carolina. Congratulations to Jesse for a well deserved recognition.



**NCLC recognizes Jesse Wimberley as the 2022 recipient of the Illustris Palustris Award for his vast contributions to longleaf conservation in North Carolina.**

