



Illustris Palustris Award 2015



Bill Pickens, Conifer Silviculturalist with the NC Forest Service, was honored in late 2015 by the North Carolina Longleaf Coalition as the third recipient of the group's annual Illustris Palustris Award. The award is presented to an individual who deserves recognition for his/her significant contribution to the longleaf efforts in North Carolina.

Among the many North Carolinians contributing to the longleaf movement in this state, Bill holds a unique place as one of the true leaders in advancing the mission of the NC Longleaf Coalition. Bill served on the initial Planning & Organizing Committee (along with Susan Miller, Lark Hayes and Barry New) prior to the official organization of the Coalition in March 2010. This small committee was instrumental in setting the vision, mission, purpose and operational framework that formed the foundation of leadership, collaboration and action under which the Coalition has since operated. Bill was heavily involved in the Coalition's Private Lands Workgroup, which identified and prioritized needs, then developed a work plan to address issues associated with increasing longleaf establishment and management on private lands in NC. Bill was also instrumental in planning the Coalition's first ever Longleaf Summit held in partnership with the NC Prescribed Fire Council in New Bern in August 2012. Bill has remained an active participant at Coalition meetings and events over the past 5 years, continually serving as a person who steps-up and gets things done. Additionally, Bill is the creator of this Illustris Palustris award, developing the criteria and previously managing nominations and the selection process.



Bill Pickens (left) receives the Illustris Palustris Award from NC Longleaf Coalition representative Barry New (right), NC Forest Service.

Over the past 17 years, Bill has served as the Conifer Silviculturist for the NC Forest Service providing technical silviculture expertise for all conifer species, including longleaf pine, with an emphasis on planting and establishment, herbicides, stand improvement, economics and research and demonstration. In this role, Bill serves in a unique position with responsibility for researching and investigating many of the critical challenges and barriers associated with longleaf planting and management in NC. Bill has conducted 17 applied research and demonstration studies of longleaf designed to provide answers and solutions to real-world issues that arise from the ground-up. Not only does he design the research and collect and analyze data and results, Bill transfers these findings and recommendations to practitioners through training, publications and educational outreach. Results from Bill's longleaf studies have led to a much fuller understanding of how to successfully establish longleaf pine on a variety of soils and sites and under various management regimes. Results from this body of research have influenced NC Forest Service tree planting and maintenance standards and led to changes in Forest Development Program standards and procedures.

Bill's knowledge, experience and passion for promoting the maintenance and restoration of NC's longleaf pine ecosystem is evident in his life's work. Congratulations Bill!

