

Strategic Plan 2023



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Introduction

In 2018, the Jones Center at Ichauway adopted its first formal strategic plan since its early years. Now 5 years later, the Center takes stock of what has been accomplished and what lies ahead. To that end, this is a revision, or an upgrade, of the 2018 plan focused on strategic approaches to research, outreach, and education. In addition, we look more deeply at mentoring and education of students, interns, and other employees. Our purpose is to identify what we consider to be the 'Ichauway Experience' and our objective is to ensure all who spend time at the Center have a clear sense of our distinctive approach to understanding, demonstrating, and promoting natural resource management and conservation.

Background

The land we call Ichauway has long been a crossroads. Archaeological evidence suggests a near continuous human presence from 12,000+ years ago. Evidence of humans is abundant on the banks of the river and creek. Archaeological and ethnographic evidence also suggests a long tradition among native peoples of harvesting medicinal plants, growing crops, and managing the land with prescribed fire. The arrival of European settlers led to a massive shift in the ways forests were managed, with extraction of timber and turpentine, conversion to row-crop agriculture, and fire suppression all bringing significant changes to the landscape.

Robert W. Woodruff, the long-standing guiding force of The Coca-Cola Company, began acquiring the land he developed into Ichauway Plantation in the 1920s. Although primarily a businessman, Mr. Woodruff enjoyed hunting and relished the solitude of nature. At the time of his purchase, this land, like much of southwestern Georgia, had been subject to extensive extraction of resources. Woodruff and his land managers encouraged forest regeneration and actively managed the property to enhance wildlife

habitat. This allowed the land to recover during its time as a quail hunting property and Woodruff's personal retreat and passion until his death in 1985. During his time at Ichauway, Woodruff quickly realized the health challenges – such as malaria – of rural communities and established the Emory University Field Station in 1939 to examine the effects of environmental conditions on human well-being. He also strongly believed in the role of philanthropy in improving people's lives and demonstrated this frequently by example.

In addition to Mr. Woodruff's conservation legacy at Ichauway, the thoughts of several others have contributed to the development of the Ichauway conservation ethic. Through work on private hunting properties in southwest Georgia and north Florida, Herbert Stoddard, Ed and Roy Komarek, and Leon Neel developed and practiced one form of what has become modern ecological forestry. Central to their approach is the idea that forest management modeled



after natural processes and disturbances can sustain the longleaf pine ecosystem while balancing timber, wildlife, and biodiversity objectives. Many of Ichauway's current Conservation staff are direct descendants of this philosophy of conservation management. Aldo Leopold, widely credited with establishing the rationale for the modern conservation movement, made the case that the 'land' is not a commodity but instead a community with intrinsic value. According to Leopold's land ethic, humans are a part of and dependent upon the land which should be managed in ways that provide opportunity for sustainability and resilience, concepts that were, in part, shaped by visits made to the Red Hills region to interact with Stoddard and others. Finally, Eugene Odum (the originator of modern ecosystem ecology) pioneered the concept of using modern ecological thinking and understanding to address natural resource management and conservation issues. Odum was an advisor to the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation in their deliberations regarding Ichauway's future that ultimately led to the formation of the Joseph W. Jones Ecological Research Center, and he was a charter member of the Center's advisory committee.

These diverse yet complementary lines of thought developed from different professional experiences—Robert Woodruff's commitment to conservation, the Stoddard-Neel holistic approach to forest management, the Leopold land ethic, and Odum's proposition for science-based management and conservation—come together in the Ichauway conservation ethic. Broadly stated, this ethic calls for stewardship that sustains the longleaf pine ecosystem in its entirety and in perpetuity using management actions based upon our best available knowledge while adapting our management actions as we gain new understanding or as objectives and conditions change. Supporting this legacy and conservation ethic, the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation provides the core financial support for the Jones Center programs and facilities.



Our Strategic Plan

The Jones Center at Ichauway is distinct in the community of privately funded ecological research centers. We are built on a strong foundation established by Robert W. Woodruff, who committed to conserving this land and improving the lives of those within Ichauway and surrounding communities. His foresight, followed by the vision and dedication of the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation, led to the establishment of a world-class research and conservation institution at Ichauway. Over the last 30 years, the Jones Center has earned a distinguished reputation and has grown its impact on the scientific understanding and management of natural resources in the southeastern U.S. With this updated strategic plan, we strive to grow our impact. We will evaluate our current programs and identify, prioritize, and expand the work deemed most important to our mission, while eliminating or scaling back aspects of our work that do not move us toward our vision and goals.

Our strategic plan is a vision for the future. We feel a deep responsibility to continue Ichauway's tradition of excellence, and our commitment to stewardship of land, water, and wildlife will not waver. We acknowledge that our foundation and ethics are firmly rooted in both the land and the experiences of those who preceded us. We recognize the need to anticipate future challenges in our unique role as creators of opportunities for mutual learning through collaborative engagement between research, management, conservation, and policy communities. We are a crossroads between those who pursue knowledge and those who demonstrate and practice natural resource management and conservation. The core of our ethic is to apply this philosophy to future conservation and land management challenges.



The Ichauway Ethic

Located in the southeastern U.S., Ichauway is the epicenter of the globally imperiled longleaf pine forest. Although almost obliterated by human development, longleaf pine ecosystems in the southern coastal plain are heterogeneous, comprising diverse biota, communities, ecosystems, and landscapes. We recognize the intrinsic merit of all elements of the longleaf pine forest. Our ethic is grounded in the desire for wise use of natural resources. We are dedicated to work that sustains the integrity, diversity, functions, aesthetic, and historical significance of the longleaf pine forest through our actions at Ichauway and throughout the region. The core beliefs of the Ichauway ethic also have application across ecological boundaries and on a broad geographic scale.

We believe that:

The best use of Ichauway is to understand our natural resources, demonstrate excellence in their conservation, and promote best practices for science-based management.

The best measure of our success lies in our ability to foster sustainable conservation and management of land, air, and water.

Humans have a moral obligation to manage resources sustainably, offering future generations the full range of resource options that we now enjoy.

Informed conservation and natural resource management are critical to human health and well-being.

The Jones Center is an objective and science-based broker of information for conservation and natural resource management issues, where people can freely explore and build consensus around conservation issues.

Decision-making originating from an objective and informed framework improves conservation and natural resource management outcomes.

Our Mission

One key outcome from the strategic planning process is that all associated with the Jones Center agree that the Center's mission shall not change. The mission remains:

To understand, demonstrate, and promote
excellence in natural resource
management
and conservation

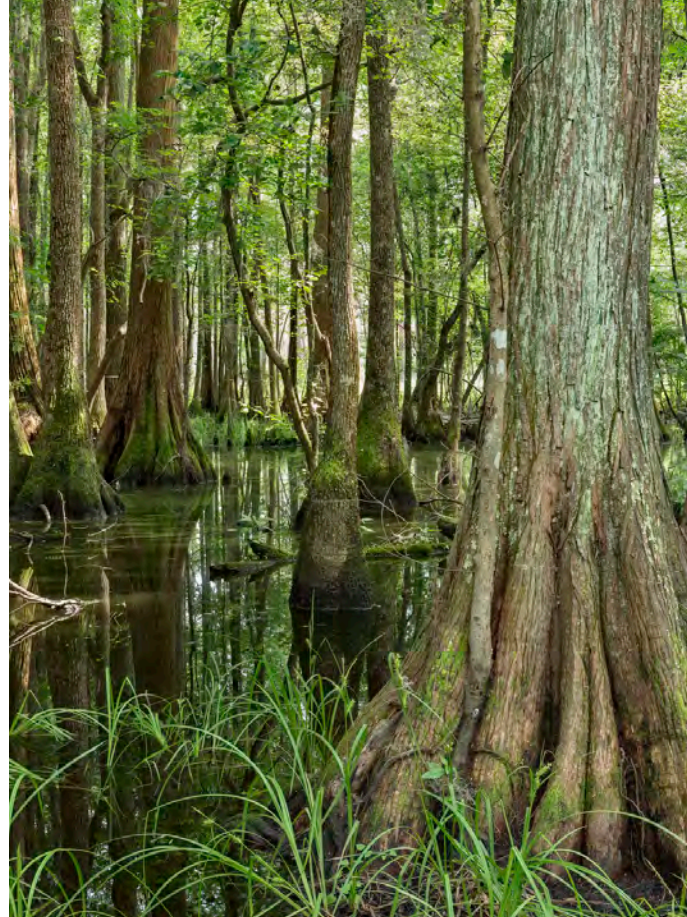


The Jones Center at Ichauway is a research and conservation site of regional, national, and international significance. Ichauway's 29,000-plus acres contain almost 18,000 acres of mature longleaf pine woodlands, 4,000 acres of young restoration plantings of longleaf pine, 100 depressional wetlands, 29 miles of rivers and streams, and 3,000 acres of field and food plot habitat. Most of Ichauway is dedicated to research and educational demonstrations. This land base is complemented by 50,000 square feet of research and education facilities, 400 miles of roads, and a full-time staff of 84, plus numerous graduate students and temporary workers.

Research at the Jones Center focuses on three programs – Woods, Water, and Wildlife – as ways of understanding the ecology, restoration, and management of the longleaf pine ecosystem; its associated wildlife; and water resources, wetlands, and aquatic ecosystems of the southeastern Coastal Plain. These focal areas reflect both the Center's geographic location and the information needs of the region. Ichauway is located in the heart of the historic range of longleaf pine. Longleaf pine ecosystems are among the rarest and most biologically diverse in North America and are

increasingly a focus of conservation restoration efforts. Southwest Georgia is also a hydrologically unique karst region that serves as the major recharge area for one of the nation's most prolific and heavily used aquifers, the Upper Floridan.

We balance basic research of these systems with applied work relevant to the natural resource management and conservation communities. Much of the Center's research is integrated under long-term projects that incorporate elements of terrestrial, aquatic, and wildlife research in an interdisciplinary approach. Research collaborations extend beyond the Center and include a growing network of colleagues at academic institutions and conservation organizations across the country. Our work combines traditional forestry and ecological sampling techniques with technologies such as eddy flux towers and LiDAR. Diverse modeling approaches are used to analyze and interpret the volume of data generated by our long-term and intensive data acquisition network. Knowledge generated from our research program is disseminated through peer-reviewed journal articles, technology-transfer events and products, and popular publications, and by participation in local, regional, national, and international meetings with scientific and non-technical audiences. Our programmatic philosophy emphasizes collaboration between Center staff and information users. Our work seeks to address important natural resource management and conservation questions so that our stakeholders can utilize science to support the development of sustainable resource management and conservation plans and policies.



The Center's conservation program concentrates on the stewardship and management of the Ichauway land base. It also serves as a technical resource for Center staff and visitors and demonstrates sound resource management in the region. Integration of research and natural resource management at the Jones Center presents a unique opportunity for these programs to inform one another. Research programs can be tested and demonstrated at Ichauway, and management applications provide valuable feedback for the research programs and generate additional research questions. The Center's conservation program incorporates a diverse range of activities into a management model that balances multiple values of our deeply rooted land ethic. Land management activities include an extensive prescribed fire program, conservation-based forest and wetland management, and restoration and expansion of longleaf pine and embedded ecosystems across the Ichauway landscape. Our wildlife program includes game management for species like bobwhite quail and white-tailed deer as well as management and monitoring of nongame, rare, threatened and endangered species, such as the red-cockaded woodpecker and gopher tortoise.

Our outreach efforts influence conservation and management at differing scales. Center staff are actively engaged in collaborative partnerships at the state, regional, and national level, complementing our work onsite at Ichauway. Primary audiences for outreach are practicing natural resource professionals and university faculty and students in natural resource programs. Outreach efforts targeted at natural resource professionals include

workshops, publications, and collaborative meetings. This audience offers the opportunity to impact those currently making decisions about natural resource management and conservation at a range of levels from field staff to administrative and leadership levels and include Federal, State, and non-governmental organizations.

Our work with graduate and undergraduate university students impacts future natural resource professionals. Major components of outreach efforts include our cooperative graduate education program, visiting university classes, Center-led Maymester courses, our Conservation Fellowship Program, and our experiential training of seasonal technicians. We also have relationships with new partners (such as Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and local technical and high schools) to recruit new talent into our conservation program and train future land managers. Our work with educating and advising graduate students helps prepare the next generation of professionals and magnifies our influence by sharing our ethics and practice. As of 2023, more than 150 students have completed advanced degrees through our cooperative graduate education program, and this successful program will continue to grow in influence over time. Key cooperating institutions include the University of Georgia, the University of Florida, the University of Alabama, and numerous other nationally ranked programs. Our graduate student alumni provide a unique legacy that continues to influence the management and conservation of natural resources throughout their careers. Our Ichauway Conservation Fellowship Program is a non-thesis MS program that provides intensive hands-on experience with aspects of land and game management. In addition to formal training, seasonal technicians in our research and conservation programs are intentionally exposed to our land management and conservation ethic. These individuals often leave the Jones Center to take positions in natural resource management or attend graduate school elsewhere, further advancing our impact.

All who experience Ichauway and the Jones Center, whether for a short field tour or a lengthy graduate student research program, are deeply impacted by the land we work on and the knowledge we generate from our research and adaptive management. The development of well-trained professionals through our education and outreach programs is one of the Center's most distinct and important contributions.



Our Vision

Ichauway will serve as a living laboratory for research, in a working landscape demonstrating conservation, and a dynamic space for outreach and education. Our work to increase knowledge and insights into conserving and restoring regional ecosystems will be continuously updated with new realizations about how we can most effectively carry out our vision:

To support and inform
natural resource conservation and restoration
by *excelling as a trusted source* of science
and management information



Our Plan

Our fundamental approach is to leverage our land, our work, and our people to achieve real impacts on the conservation, management, and restoration of ecosystems within the historic range of longleaf pine forests. After 30 years of rigorous research and demonstrated excellence in the restoration and management of Coastal Plain ecosystems, we continue to build upon our reputation for credible, independent, impactful science. We disseminate what we learn to a broader universe of stakeholders. Our core strategy is to expand our relational touch through all areas of the Center's operation. We currently investigate, manage, utilize, teach, and learn in the best traditions of Mr. Woodruff. We will continue to purposefully seek to grow the Center's impact, in both traditional and new ways, on those that influence the natural resource research and management communities.



We intend to become better known, in more communities, by engaging and capitalizing on our stakeholders' appreciation of Ichauway, its ethic, and its attributes. Each Center area of expertise touches unique communities of stakeholders beyond our property lines and beyond our networks. We will build on a century of stewardship and decades of Jones Center research to expand our impact.

Our strategic plan depends on:

- Capitalizing on the natural attraction of Ichauway's legacies and capabilities
- Sharing our conservation ethic and excellent stewardship to a broader audience
- Building upon the passion we and others have for the Jones Center, our philosophy, and our work
- Maintaining rigorous research, conservation, and education programs
- Using innovative approaches and partnerships to advance science and conservation

Our Goals

Our goals will help us realize our vision, and determine strategies to be more effective, impactful, and trusted. These goals also correspond to our threefold mission to understand, demonstrate, and promote excellence in natural resource conservation. While we continue to do the work that we do well, we will move forward by focusing on the following goals, objectives, and strategies:

Rigorous science requires an inclusive and effective work environment. We understand that we can only achieve our goals by valuing diverse perspectives, championing inclusivity, and promoting equity in every aspect of the Center's work. Details of this renewed vision will be included in the Action Plan.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

As a team and Center, since our 2018 plan we have made substantial progress in addressing issues around inclusion, diversity, and equity. We can do more.

Counsel from the Jones Center Advisory Committee and direction from the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation urge us to focus on ways forward that can improve the inclusivity of the center, making it a community where all feel they belong, while serving as a model on how to tackle these challenges in the fields of science, conservation, and natural resource management. To keep track of changes and progress, they encourage us to assess our current relevant stakeholder community, and determine who we want that to be in the future.

Specific stakeholder suggestions included:

- Partnering with universities concurrently taking on these challenges.
- Building on our initial progress in increasing diversity of Jones Center students and technicians and setting goals for the future, including program development funded via extramural funders.
- Issues to address around representation, looking toward opportunities to expand role models for future generations of science, conservation, and natural resource managers.

In addition, in the summer of 2022, we hosted leaders from the National Center for Civil and Human Rights. Our engagement focused on Equal Dignity at Work as a group of 30 Center employees learned and discussed in three sessions: Examining Beliefs and Values, Cross Generational Diversity, and Inclusive Behaviors.

Most recently, the Center has received an NSF grant to host undergraduate students from minority serving institutions in a series of research experiences and begun research on social justice impacts of prescribed fire smoke.

Our collaborative, interactive, inclusive activities have resulted in insights and accomplishments, improvements and revealed blind spots. Herein, the Director provides a DEI vision, providing goals and strategy for continuing to address these critical issues within the context of our natural resources research, education, and conservation mission.

The central tenets of this vision are:

The Jones Center at Ichauway aspires to fully embrace equity, diversity, and inclusion. We reject all forms of racism including overt and systemic, prejudice, discrimination or hate toward any race, ethnicity, culture, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, national origin, veteran status, socioeconomic class, religion, or professional status.

Recognizing that we have work to do, and that equity, diversity, and inclusion are active processes that require continuous commitment, we strive to:

1. Foster a culture of open mindedness, compassion, equal dignity, and inclusion among individuals and groups working, visiting, and learning at the Center.
2. Actively build a community of diverse cultures, backgrounds, and life experiences.
3. Create and maintain opportunities for engagement, education, and discourse for all.

We will seek to determine what success in DEI would look like at the Jones Center, and how we can measure and regularly gauge our progress toward that success.

We will commit to ensuring that all are treated with equal dignity at the Center, through:

- Focusing on hiring diversity and how employees are treated once they are here.
- Exploring reverse mentoring, what can experienced employees learn from newer arrivals?
- Identifying training offerings around emotional intelligence, and being open minded, inclusive, and compassionate in all we do.

Goal

Building Understanding through Research

Increase our leadership role as a crossroads for research and practice

The Jones Center was founded to build and maintain a world-class research, conservation, and education Center within a working landscape including representative native ecosystems. Our current credibility, relevance, and impact as a trusted source of science-based knowledge is due to our history of rigorous, replicated, and published research. We will increase our prominence as a world-class research center by engaging in new partnerships and bringing expertise into the Center while continuing to emphasize scientifically robust research. This will include the placement of our research findings within high-quality peer-reviewed literature while striving to increase the impact of our science on a broader audience. Our results will be translated into language and formats accessible to managers, landowners, policymakers, as well as fellow scientists. This will accelerate the application of our research results into management and policy.

Objectives

Focus on our strengths and the areas where we can most effectively contribute

Activities

Document and assess long-term dynamics of ecosystems

Understand function of ecological processes in fire-dependent open pine grassland system

Do the science that informs the practice of conservation and management, translate the science to application, and enhance ecological literacy



Objectives

Align our research efforts with relevant natural resource questions and anticipated future needs for research

Activities

Continue to build upon our long history of science co-production by strategically seeking out and developing collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders (e.g., private landowners outside our area that are not currently able to manage to true Stoddard-Neel specifications), including government agencies, academic institutions, nonprofit organizations, landowners, and local communities. This will further enhance the Center's co-production of sound science and ensure its practical application in longleaf pine, water resource, and wildlife management and conservation. We will identify and prioritize research areas based on the most pressing needs and challenges within these realms, and consider ecological, economic, and social factors, which will enable the Jones Center to address critical issues more effectively.

Actively engage practitioners in discussions regarding their information needs. Practitioners will include not only other researchers, but also community members and the public, policy makers, media representatives, government and elected representatives, and other potential beneficiaries.

Build and use more diverse and collaborative teams to conduct and convey our science. We believe truly collaborative teams benefit from a range of perspectives, which can significantly improve problem-solving and decision-making processes. Additionally, diverse teams can identify blind spots, uncover biases, and facilitate interdisciplinary research. We will do this through working with new partners, seeking new resources, and more effectively leveraging our existing resources to enable new collaborations.

Engage in constructive debates and discussions, collectively evaluating evidence and results, assessing risks, and coming to group conclusions to make more informed and robust inferences.

Cultivate a culture that expects, encourages, and rewards a tight knit, cross-disciplinary team approach to science.

Objectives

Increase Center emphasis on developing natural resource scientists and leaders

Maximize the depth, breadth, credibility, and impact of our research, tracking our progress and success

Expand our research and relationships beyond our traditional disciplinary boundaries.

Activities

Pursue collaborations with the best faculty appropriate to the project and working together to recruit the best students possible to address critical questions. Successful outcomes will derive from research but also from producing graduates who are well trained to continue their careers and impact their fields of endeavor.

Use metrics including numbers of citations, individual and institution-wide impact factors, number/value and sources of grants and contracts, and stakeholder feedback as assessment tools.

Provide more structured opportunities for staff skill and professional development.

Identify and prioritize new partners (new faculty from current university partners as well as working with universities we have not yet partnered with). We will utilize existing mechanisms of shared interests and resources, as well as seek new sources of support.

Explore new areas of research and skillsets with existing personnel and partners and explore connections between ecological research and human dimensions such as policy and economics.

Continue to leverage graduate student co-advisement as a mechanism for developing, sustaining, and expanding research partnerships that fill gaps in expertise.

Continuously refine and improve our research portfolio through periodically, internally assessing our research structure. We will emphasize balance among foundational, responsive, and integrative research projects; and evaluating the impacts of our research on natural resources.

Objectives

Focus our research to address important topics that enhance the conservation and management of southeastern landscapes
(*cont.*)

Activities

Concentrate on broad integrative themes including ecosystem services and functions for multiple objectives, C sequestration, water quantity and quality, wildlife habitat, and biodiversity.

Continue our efforts to improve the conservation and management of ecosystems in the southeastern U.S.

Continue to explore the role of natural disturbances in shaping the ecology of forests of the region.

Pursue Center-focused research that is foundational, integrative, or responsive to the scientific, management, or conservation needs of the South's open pine forests.

Focus on broad integrative themes including ecosystem services and functions characteristic of open pine systems managed for multiple objectives, and maximize the acreage of open pine systems in the Southeast for carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, and biodiversity.



Objectives

Focus our research to address important topics that enhance the conservation and management of southeastern landscapes

Activities

Prioritize contributions to issues related to smoke and air quality. We will contribute to region-wide efforts to improve air quality while maintaining conservation objectives in numerous interrelated ways:

- Collaboration with regional leaders in the field, including smoke modeling researchers at Tall Timbers and the USDA Forest Service.
- Continued leadership within the regional quail property smoke management group.
- Continued influence in, and contributions to, statewide prescribed fire council meetings.
- Leadership and influence through convening annual EPA smoke summits.
- Leadership through hosting and coordinating regional prescribed fire and smoke training through partnership with Tall Timbers.
- Engagement at the policy level through congressional and agency informational and networking efforts.

Improve training and adoption of new technologies, both internally and for our stakeholders, to address conservation issues more effectively.

Seek opportunities to conduct research beyond Ichauway's borders so we may expand the application of management systems and practices developed on Ichauway and apply them on private working lands to extend our footprint and impact.

All of these efforts will be focused at three complementary levels of engagement:

Foundational Data and Projects A unique attribute of the Center, long-term monitoring, data collection and projects continue and support new research and analysis. Representative examples of this level of effort include monitoring of groundcover, wetland water budgets, long-term streamflow monitoring, populations of threatened and endangered species, and insect abundance and diversity.

Responsive and Anticipatory Research Originates at the lab and scientist level, builds on foundational data, and addresses strategic areas and emerging issues. Examples at this level include wild pig management, longleaf ecosystem responses to drought, and nesting requirements and recruitment success of shoal bass in the lower Flint River.

Integrative Research Higher strategic-level, Center-wide focused research designed to take advantage of the team of scientists assembled at the Center to address larger issues.

Current and potential future examples include:

- Quantifying wetland ecosystem services in the southeastern coastal plain.
- Quantifying ecosystem services and functions in longleaf pine, including carbon sequestration, biological diversity, forest structure and composition, and water quality and quantity.
- Improving longleaf pine restoration outcomes.

Optimize the Ichauway experience for Jones Center graduate students

As we strategically plan our research, education, and outreach for the next 5 years, we will consider ways to most effectively and beneficially impact our students while they are here. We will:

- Develop more formal means of connecting students with each other, with scientists, and with Conservation staff.
- Determine and deliver the basic knowledge students should carry with them from their time at Ichauway.
- Develop internal education programs to train students in important skills for the workplace and career development.

Goal

Demonstrating Knowledge through Conservation

Ensure that all who encounter the Jones Center become inspired, informed advocates for our conservation ethic and practice

When the Center began, we hired local practitioners, steeped in knowledge of traditional land management practices developed in the pinelands of southwestern Georgia and north Florida, to oversee the stewardship of Ichauway's natural resources. This was a tradition established by Robert Woodruff and we built upon it to mentor and train subsequent generations of conservation professionals, now providing them with state-of-the-art tools and the practical experience of managing the land. Conservation tactics are forged through the day-to-day experiences of our conservation staff and refined by ongoing dialogue with natural resource scientists. As adherents to an adaptive management philosophy, we track what, where, and when management actions are taken, and we can adjust practices as results are evaluated over time.

The preservation of Ichauway and other large contiguous properties in the southwest Georgia/north Florida region maintained primarily as hunting preserves was accomplished through the vision of Robert Woodruff and other property owners who understood that a conservation ethic was complementary to hunting pursuits. Quail hunting was the reason for applying frequent fire to large tracts of land, yet the frequent prescribed fires led to the development of the sparse pine canopy and open midstory that sustain an astonishing diversity of plants and animals. Hunting is still central to the Ichauway conservation ethic: the deer herd is culled each fall through a carefully managed hunting program, the quail hunting tradition continues according to specific terms of use, and game animal populations are monitored with scientific rigor.

The Ichauway conservation ethic, however, encompasses much more than the maintenance of game populations. The broad objective is to maintain – and restore when necessary – a functioning ecological landscape with as many of the natural floral and faunal components as possible. This includes management to preserve and enhance a diverse understory plant community and suitable habitat conditions for both non-game and game wildlife species. Practices utilized to implement this conservation ethic, including frequent prescribed fire and conservative timber management practices, are applied in a manner informed by patterns of natural disturbance and to preserve the multiple ecosystem components.



That Ichauway represents a shining example of managed longleaf pine forests is a central belief held by those with intimate knowledge of the property and its management. This property is a legacy of a conservation ethic articulated and passed down from early conservationists. We seek to grow this ethic in others by showcasing the land, its history, and the knowledge gained from classic research methods, adaptive management, and conservation experiences passed down for generations to ignite and nurture the ideas of 'what could be' regarding the open pine systems of the Southeast and their associated water and wildlife.

Creating inspired advocates demands that we define and continue to refine our conservation and management practices and communicate them with others. This will require us to:

Objectives

Focus our people on a common vision of excellence in science-based stewardship and conservation

Activities

Assess needs for orientation, cross training, and a baseline of needed information.

- Directly engage new employees and students in Ichauway's rich history and novel approach to conservation, land and wildlife management, and forestry.
- Update employee orientation to reflect our refined mission and goals, outline opportunities for cross-training, and define the minimum curriculum, with optional additional learning opportunities, among all employees and students.

Expand the Ichauway Conservation Fellowship program through recruiting additional students and working in partnership with state and federal agencies to provide work experience beyond the borders of Ichauway.

Develop integrated experiences for graduate students and conservation fellows to foster mutual learning opportunities.

Define our capacity to meaningfully engage visitors and deliver an exceptional Ichauway experience. This will include defining goals and desired outcomes in hosting guests and stakeholders.

Objectives

More widely share our Ichauway ethic of stewardship by highlighting Ichauway's unique features (land, legacy, history, knowledge, and people) and allowing the land to serve as a model of excellence in conservation.

Be a more focused convener for opportunities to advance the mission and ethos of the Jones Center

Activities

Identify new opportunities to demonstrate our conservation practices and ethic.

Identify opportunities for engagement and think beyond traditional partners to address gaps in capacity.

Identify where features and programs of Ichauway can best be applied.



Goal

Promoting Sound Management through Education and Outreach

Maximize the impact of our knowledge and conservation ethic on natural resources management

Over the last 30 years, the Jones Center has become a leading source of scientific research and technical information on longleaf pine ecosystems and associated wetlands and wildlife, and on regional water sources. Ichauway is also renowned as one of the finest examples of sound management of a longleaf pine ecosystem. Our research and conservation programs offer a powerful and complementary platform upon which our education and outreach programs are built. The Center seeks to maximize our impact through these programs by prioritizing efforts that influence those in positions to make decisions about natural resource management and conservation.

Objectives

Enhance our reputation as a trusted source of natural resources and conservation knowledge and practices

Activities

Target our internal and external communications for maximum impact.

- Evaluate and refine our internal and external communications plans. To maximize our impact, we will determine intended impacts, audiences, strategic messages and appropriate delivery mechanisms.
 - › Increase strategic social media engagement and digital communications.
 - › Expand use of publication briefs and news releases for important new and existing outputs.
 - › Strategically use Jones Center in-house products such as Stoddard-Neel and Deer Management publications.
 - › Achieve excellence in outreach, education, and communications databases and networking. Concentrate on effective distribution and communication to serve and grow our audience.

Objectives

Enhance our reputation as a trusted source of natural resources and conservation knowledge and practices
(*cont.*)

Activities

- Engage stakeholders to assess information needs and inform all Center programs, cultivate stakeholder buy-in, and create open systems for communication and synergy.
- Articulate how we will do the work that stakeholders need and incorporate it into future research, conservation, and education plans.

Cultivate future generations of natural resource professionals through experience, outreach, and education.

- Host university classes from natural resource programs to impact students entering professional ranks.
- Strategically reassess our short courses to meet the needs of students and professionals in natural resources.
- Recruit the best graduate students to achieve our strategic goals.



Objectives

Expand the influence of our natural resource management philosophy

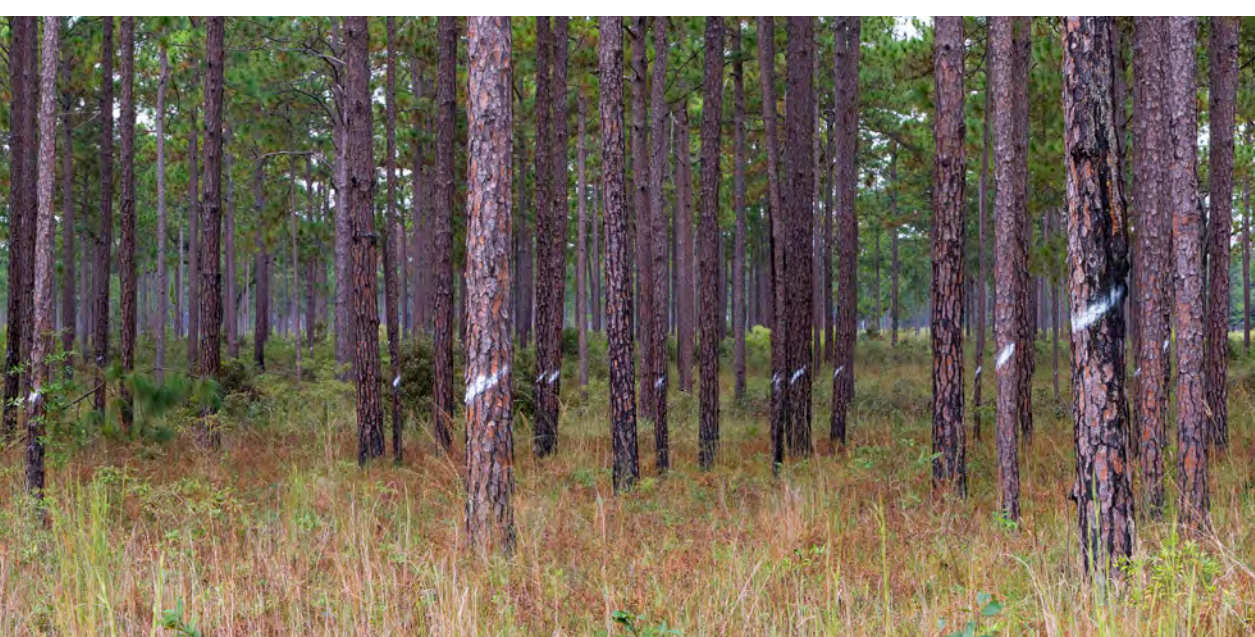
Activities

Increase the acreage and geography of land impacted by our work.

- Expand our engagement in national and regional partnerships.
- Expand our leadership role by providing strategic advice and guidance to partners, practitioners, policymakers, and other stakeholders.
- Increase the number and impact of educational events and consultations from natural resource managers and influencers.
- Continue our high-impact Ecological Forestry Workshops.
- Develop additional demonstration activities and materials.

Engage with Ichauway alumni to better evaluate the impact of our programs and grow our outreach networks.

- Develop an Ichauway alumni association to expand our communication and outreach network and provide opportunities for connection.
- Survey Ichauway alumni to identify areas of success and room for improvement in our programs.





Outlook for the Future

The Jones Center is entering a new era. We have new scientists and staff to augment our foundational research, educational and outreach programs. We have new facilities for educating, housing, and hosting students, technicians, and guests. As reflected in this strategic plan, we will enhance our abilities to address new challenges to successful research and management in new ways. Our next phase will concentrate on effectively delivering rigorous science that translates into environmental and societal benefits. We look forward to interacting with our advisors, partners, and trustees to realize our new vision and goals. We remain confident that our best work and highest impacts are yet ahead of us.

“Let our future story be dazzling and bright. Let us connect, with curiosity and enthusiasm, across our differences and across our disciplines. Let us grow our partnerships and collaborations to do more and greater things together than we could ever do alone.”

Jennifer Mnookin, Chancellor, University of Wisconsin