

CONSERVING MARITIME LIVE OAK FORESTS

A McIntire Stennis supported project
to improve coastal forest stewardship



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA
Warnell School of Forestry
& Natural Resources

The majestic Maritime Live Oak (MLO) forests on Georgia's coast are valued for many reasons. They are an iconic part of Georgia's natural and cultural heritage, they are cherished by residents and tourists for their recreational value, and they serve as natural infrastructure that protects our coastlines. The continued existence and integrity of these iconic forests is a high management priority, and many coastal natural resource managers are worried by the current lack of Live Oak tree regeneration.

We are studying the environmental factors that affect regeneration of Live Oak trees on several of Georgia's barrier islands. Large populations of deer and feral pigs limit the establishment of young oaks, and recent hurricanes toppled and damaged many mature trees. However, the forest gaps caused by the hurricanes also provide favorable sites for tree regeneration. Our ecological studies examine what restoration and stewardship methods can help ensure the future health of these valuable forests.



About McIntire-Stennis

The McIntire-Stennis program, a unique federal-state partnership, cultivates and delivers forestry and natural resource innovations for a better future. By advancing research and education that increases the understanding of emerging challenges and fosters the development of relevant solutions, the McIntire-Stennis program has ensured healthy resilient forests and communities and an exceptional natural resources workforce since 1962.



COLLABORATION

We are collaborating with state (Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Jekyll Island Authority), federal (NOAA, Salepo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve), and private (St. Catherines Island Foundation) agencies to share knowledge and build decision support tools.



Working Group

Forged a knowledge-building working group with over 20 agency and academic research partners to sustain future research momentum

IMPACT

Georgia's coastal economy depends on natural resources and the integrity of coastal ecosystems. The fishing and tourism sectors alone support over 21,000 jobs and contribute over \$1 billion to the state's GDP.



Our project provides natural resource managers with information and decision support for stewardship of Maritime Live Oak forests.



We are learning how hurricanes affect the forests and how we can take advantage of disturbances to promote forest regeneration.



We are studying site-specific threats and cost-effective restoration methods to promote Maritime Live Oak forest health and resilience.