Mission / Purpose
The Black Belt Conservation and Research Institute is a project of the University of West Alabama to gather and disseminate information on the unique environments of the Black Belt and to promote the conservation and management of habitats specific to the region.

I. Goals and Other Outcomes/Objectives, with Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

A. Goal: To be acknowledged as a primary agent of positive change in Alabama's Black Belt
   To be recognized nationally and internationally for providing quality education programs via traditional and alternative means and to be acknowledged as a primary agent of positive change in Alabama's Black Belt.

1. Objective: Environmental Educational Outreach
   The BBCRI strives to raise awareness about the Black Belt natural resources and to promote conservation, management and protection of these unique environments, especially those that relate to the Blackland prairie.

a. Measure: Earth Day
   To provide an opportunity for students to better appreciate and utilize natural areas during a week of celebration and educational activities.

   1. Achievement Target:
      To commemorate Earth Day, BBCRI will provide educational scavenger hunts, cookouts, tours of the Black Belt prairie and campus environmental facilities, a fishing tournament, canoe and john-boat races, and developed t-shirts.

   2. Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met
      BBCRI held an Earth Day Celebration at Lake LU that attracted approximately 30 students on April 17. Activities included a presentation of the Tree-Campus Award, which was followed by a cookout, canoe and john-boat races, and a fishing tournament.

   3. Action Plan:
      Earth Day Educational Outreach
      BBCRI will continue to find innovative ways to teach students about natural conservation, sustainable lifestyle, and environmental stewardship.

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
Implementation Status: In-Progress
Priority: High
Implementation Description: Will provide packets of information geared to participants focusing on sustainable practices, local recycling resources,
and environmental stewardship.

**Responsible Person/Group:** Lee Stanton  
**Additional Resources Requested:** none

b. **Measure: Database Development**  
To establish a free online database of environmental information specific to the Black Belt region.

1. **Achievement Target:**  
   To have database usable and web-accessible by Spring 2012

2. **Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Not Met**  
   BBCRI currently has two databases that are ready to be uploaded to the webpage, but are waiting for webpage improvements to occur before doing so.

c. **Measure: Student Research Interns**  
To support student research and scholarship pertaining to the natural resources and environs of the Black Belt

1. **Achievement Target:**  
   To support at least one student per year focusing on environmental issues in the Black Belt Region.

2. **Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met**  
   BBCRI has supported a student this year whose primary responsibility was to continue adding materials to the bibliographic database focusing on Black Belt Prairies.

3. **Action Plan:**  
   **BBCRI Student Intern**  
The student intern is also responsible for creating and designing a series of seasonal educational posters to display at the UWA Prairie Restoration Area.  
   **Established in Cycle:** 2011-2012  
   **Implementation Status:** In-Progress  
   **Priority:** High  
   **Implementation Description:** Work on the posters will continue once a new intern is identified, and completed by Spring 2013.  
   **Responsible Person/Group:** Lee Stanton  
   **Additional Resources Requested:** None

d. **Measure: Continuing Education Workshops**  
BBCRI will continue to host workshops and provide training opportunities so that regional landowners can become better stewards of their land.

1. **Achievement Target:**  
   To provide two workshops or training opportunities focusing on land stewardship per year.
2. Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met
BBCRI supported two workshops this year, one which focused on training landowners in using GPS technology to help meet management goals, and another that provided instruction in using prescribed fire as a land management tool.

3. Action Plan:
Continuing education workshops
Two workshops and/or training opportunities are held each year to provide local and regional landowners, as well as state agencies, with instruction aiding land management goals.
Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
Implementation Status: In-Progress
Priority: High
Implementation Description: For the upcoming cycle, BBCRI plans to develop a program focusing on exotic species control, and a certified burn manager training course.
Responsible Person/Group: Lee Stanton
Additional Resources Requested: None

e. Measure: Prairie and Trails Development
Using the BBCRI to raise awareness and improve accessibility of the natural areas around Lake LU

1. Achievement Target:
To provide support in upgrading trails, facilities, and managing continued prairie restoration efforts.

2. Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met
BBCRI provided support for additional seating areas and trail maintenance, as well as logistical and on the ground support for the spring prescribed fires.

3. Action Plan:
Prairie and Trails Development
BBCRI will provide financial support to the Lake LU Manager for both trail maintenance and materials to construct benches for resting areas along the UWA Nature Trail.
Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
Implementation Status: Planned
Priority: High
Implementation Description: Lee Stanton will continue to work with Robby Limerick, Lake Manager, to identify ways to improve the facilities and trail network at the UWA Prairie Restoration Area and the Nature trail complex. We will also improve current methods to track the number of visitors using this area by Spring of 2013.
Responsible Person/Group: Lee Stanton
Additional Resources Requested: None

f. Measure: Interpretive Prairie Panels
Design, create and install 7 prairie panels around the Lake LU Nature Trails. Create educational posters and/or write articles highlighting the unique aspects of the Black Belt natural environment.

1. Achievement Target:
   To install and maintain Black Belt Prairie interpretive panels, to create posters and/or write articles highlighting the unique environments of the Black Belt, and to reach 25 participants during the series of Prairie Stroll's offered during peak bloom season.

2. Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Partially Met
   The interpretive prairie panels are installed and have been maintained, and an article focusing on Black Land Prairie Restoration has been accepted for publication in Alabama Wildlife. However, BBCRI had only 5 participants for the series of guided Prairie Strolls during peak wildflower season.

3. Action Plan:
   Black Belt interpretive signs and other outreach
   The interpretive prairie panels were created and installed, which greatly increased visitation to the UWA Prairie Restoration Area and trail system. Although an article focusing on Black Belt Prairie Restoration was published through “Alabama Wildlife”, there were only five participants for the series of guided tours of the Prairies during the peak of wildflower season. Reasons for poor turnout are likely due to a combination of event timing and advertising. The BBCRI director will work with the Division of Educational Outreach PR Specialist to coordinate these messages to reach the target audience better.
   Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
   Implementation Status: In-Progress
   Priority: High
   Implementation Description: Lee Stanton will work with Gena Robbins to create a BBCRI Marketing Plan
   Responsible Person/Group: Lee Stanton
   Additional Resources Requested: None

II. Other Plans for Improvement:
   A. BBCRI Student Intern
      The student interns responsibilities include identifying and organizing new bibliographic information on the natural environments of the Black Belt, assisting in other projects focusing on Environmental Outreach for BBCRI and ongoing work at the UWA Prairie Restoration Area.
      Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
      Implementation Status: In-Progress
      Priority: High
      Implementation Description: BBCRI will identify a new intern to work with BBCRI this Fall, who will continue to find and organize new bibliographic information, as well as assist in other projects focusing on Environmental Outreach and ongoing work at the UWA Prairie Restoration Area.
**B. Black Belt interpretive signs and other outreach**

The interpretive prairie panels were created and installed, which greatly increased visitation to the UWA Prairie Restoration Area and trail system. Although an article focusing on Black Belt Prairie Restoration was published through “Alabama Wildlife”, there were only five participants for the series of guided tours of the Prairies during the peak of wildflower season. Reasons for poor turnout are likely due to a combination of event timing and advertising. The BBCRI director will work with the Division of Educational Outreach PR Specialist to coordinate these messages to reach the target audience better.

**Established in Cycle:** 2011-2012  
**Implementation Status:** In-Progress  
**Priority:** High  
**Implementation Description:** Lee Stanton will work with Gena Robbins to create a BBCRI Marketing Plan  
**Responsible Person/Group:** Lee Stanton  
**Additional Resources Requested:** None

**C. Increased Awareness of Earth Day on Campus**

Earth Day awareness and participation for 2012-13 can be enhanced by an increase in the number of press releases and Facebook posts prior to the event. The BBCRI director will work with the Division of Educational Outreach PR Specialist to coordinate these messages to reach the target audience better.

**Established in Cycle:** 2011-2012  
**Implementation Status:** Planned  
**Priority:** High  
**Implementation Description:** Lee Stanton will work with Gena Robbins to create a BBCRI Marketing Plan  
**Projected Completion Date:** 04/02/2012  
**Responsible Person/Group:** Lee Stanton Gena Robbins

### III. Analysis Questions and Analysis Answers

**A. What specific strengths did your assessments show? (Strengths)**

The assessment shows that the BBCRI has been successful in providing learning opportunities for local and regional landowners, improving infrastructure at the UWA restoration prairie, exposing college students to environmental concerns, and raising awareness about Black Land Prairie restoration.

**B. What specific weaknesses or challenges did your assessments show? (Weaknesses)**

That the BBCRI must find more innovative ways to encourage regional and campus-wide participation in our activities.

**C. What plans were implemented?**

The following plans have been implemented: Earth Day activities were held on the UWA campus. The interpretive panels in the Prairie are completed and installed. An undergraduate student/intern is currently being supported to focus on different
aspects of the Black Belt. Training opportunities for landowners were given. Maintenance and infrastructure improvements were supported in the Prairie Restoration area.

D. What plans were not implemented?
The only plans not implemented was the online bibliographic database focusing on the Black Belt Region, but will be once pending improvements are done to the current webpage.

E. How will assessment results be used for continuous improvement?
They provide a means of establishing goals, and furthermore allow quantify our progress towards those goals.

IV. Annual Report Section Responses

A. Key Achievements
- Serve as the Director for the Black Belt Prairie Conservation and Restoration Institute
- Organized "Black Land Blooms: Painted Prairies of the Black Belt" Saturday Stroll Series for the UWA Prairie Restoration area. Met on four Saturdays, two in May and two in June 2011.
- Organizer, Campus-wide Earth Week student and community activities (April 2011).
- Organized an Alabama Certified Prescribed Burn Manager Training Course at Alfa Hall, May 24-27, 2011. 55 Participants.

B. Faculty Achievements
Scholarly Research/Creative Projects/Grant Writing:
- Received a grant entitled "Measuring Marsh Plant Productivity and Micro-, Meio-, and Macrofaunal Abundance and Diversity in Response to Oiling in a Northern Gulf of Mexico Salt Marsh" for $45,310 from the BP-Gulf Research Initiative to support research efforts measuring oil impact in both Alabama and Louisiana coastal Marshes.
- Submitted a grant entitled "Measuring marsh plant productivity and micro-, meio-, and macrofaunal abundance and diversity in response to oiling in a Northern Gulf of Mexico salt marsh". Coxe Research Fund, 2010. PI. $2500.

Professional Organizations:
- Estuarine Research Federation
- Ecological Society of America
- Society of Wetland Scientists
- Society of Ecological Restoration International
- The Alabama Wildflower Society
- Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society
- The Nature Conservancy
- Sumter County Treasure Forests

Maintaining Current Knowledge in Discipline
• Maintained subscriptions to the following resources: Estuaries and Coasts, Ecological Applications, Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment, Wild South, Ecology, Restoration Ecology, Wetlands
• Serve as an external reviewer for several peer reviewed journals including *Journal of the Torrey Botanical Society* and *Remote Sensing of the Environment*.
• Taught Coastal Wetlands Ecology at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, Summer college program, 2011.

C. **Staff Achievements**

**Professional Service**
• President-elect, UWA Phi Kappa Phi Chapter (2010-2012)
• Member, Fort Tombecbee Advisory Committee.
• Member, University Focus Group on Town and Gown Relations.
• Member, Student Life Committee (2008-present).
• Member, Faculty Colloquium Committee (2008-present).
• Chair, PKP Colloquium Dinner Committee (2009-present).
• President, Sumter County Alumni Association (2010-2012).
• Member, SACS Governance and Administration Committee (2011-present)
• Member, UWA Athletic Committee (2008-present).
• Chair, UWA Traffic and Parking Committee (2009-present)
• Represent NSM/UWA at Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium (MESC)
• Program Committee Meetings (2009 - present).

D. **Public/Community Service**

**Public Service**
• Advisor, Sumter County Soil and Water Conservation District Board (2008-Present).
• Board Member, Sumter County Nature Trust, (2011-Present)
• Judge, Sumter Academy Science Fair. 17FEB2011
• Judge, Livingston High School Science Fair. 3MAR2011
• Judge, Tuscaloosa Home School Science Fair, 28FEB2011
• Judge, Regional Science Fair, UWA 12MAR2011 Organizer, Alabama Certified Prescribed Burn Manager Training Course at Alfa Hall, May 24-27, 2011. 55 Participants.
• Judge, Sumter County Environthon, Sponsored by the Sumter County Soil and Water Conservation District, March 24th, 2011.
• Organized "Black Land Blooms: Painted Prairies of the Black Belt" Saturday Stroll Series for the UWA Prairie Restoration area. Met on four Saturdays, two in May and two in June 2011. J. Member, Livingston Beautification Board (2010-present).
• Member, Livingston Historic Review Board (2008-present).
• Volunteer, Alabama Forestry Commission/Sumter County Soil and Water Conservation District tree-seedling give away (2011).
### SELF-STUDY

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Approved</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Findings</strong></td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Findings are indications whether an outcome/objective was met or not. Findings are put into the system under each achievement target. Findings include an interpretation of results, possible uses of results, reflection on problems encountered, indicated improvements/changes and strengths or weakness.</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Action Plans</strong></td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>These need to be emphasized more, especially for budget planning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action plans are detailed plans created by the unit to meet an outcome/objective that was only partially met or not met or to make improvement to those outcomes/objectives that were met but still need some strengthening. The plan includes a projected completion date, implementation description, responsible person(s)/group, resources required, and budget amount (if applicable).</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action plans created in previous cycles have been updated with implementation notes.</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>This is another area while these will strengthen so please are used more.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Annual Report</strong></td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Annual Report section contains information on key achievements, faculty and/or staff achievements, and community/public.</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<td><strong>Analysis Report</strong></td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>The unit has reflected on and created narratives for each of the following areas: specific strengths and progress made on outcomes/objectives, specific weaknesses or challenges, plans that were and were not implemented, and how assessment results will be used for continuous improvement.</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
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Approved by: [Signature of Dean or Vice President]  
Date: 7-27-2012  
Received by OIE: [Signature of Coordinator of Planning and Assessment]  
Date: 8/8/12
### ANNUAL PLAN

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goals are broad statements describing what the unit wants to accomplish. Goals relate to both the unit's mission and the University's mission. The goal(s) is stated as the University goal(s) a unit is attempting to meet.</td>
<td><strong>YES</strong></td>
<td><strong>Remarks:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Outcomes/Objectives</strong></td>
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<td>Outcomes and objectives are statements that describe in some detail what the unit plans to accomplish. Outcomes/objectives are associated with all applicable goals, strategic plans, standards, and institutional priorities.</td>
<td><strong>YES</strong></td>
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<td>Objectives are active-verb descriptions of specific points or tasks the unit will accomplish or reach. Outcomes are active-verb descriptions of a desired end result related to student learning and the unit's mission.</td>
<td><strong>YES</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Measures</strong></td>
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<td>Measures are statements to judge success in achieving the stated outcome or objective. Measures contain information on the type of evidence and assessment tool that a unit will use to verify if stated outcome/objective has been met.</td>
<td><strong>YES</strong></td>
<td><strong>Remarks:</strong> Both measurements not targets need to be more quantifiable. This will help with future planning.</td>
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<td><strong>Achievement Targets</strong></td>
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<td>Achievement targets are the thresholds that the measures must meet for the unit to determine that it has been successful in meeting its specified outcomes/objectives. Achievement targets are measurable statements.</td>
<td><strong>YES</strong></td>
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