



**SOUTHEASTERN  
GRASSLANDS  
INSTITUTE**

Dreaming Big to Save E.O. Wilson's Southern  
Grassland Biome  
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**AP Austin Peay**  
State University  
CLARKSVILLE  TENNESSEE



# “The Forgotten Grasslands of the South”



**Prairies**



**Savannas**



**Balds**



**Glades**



**Barrens**



**Fens**



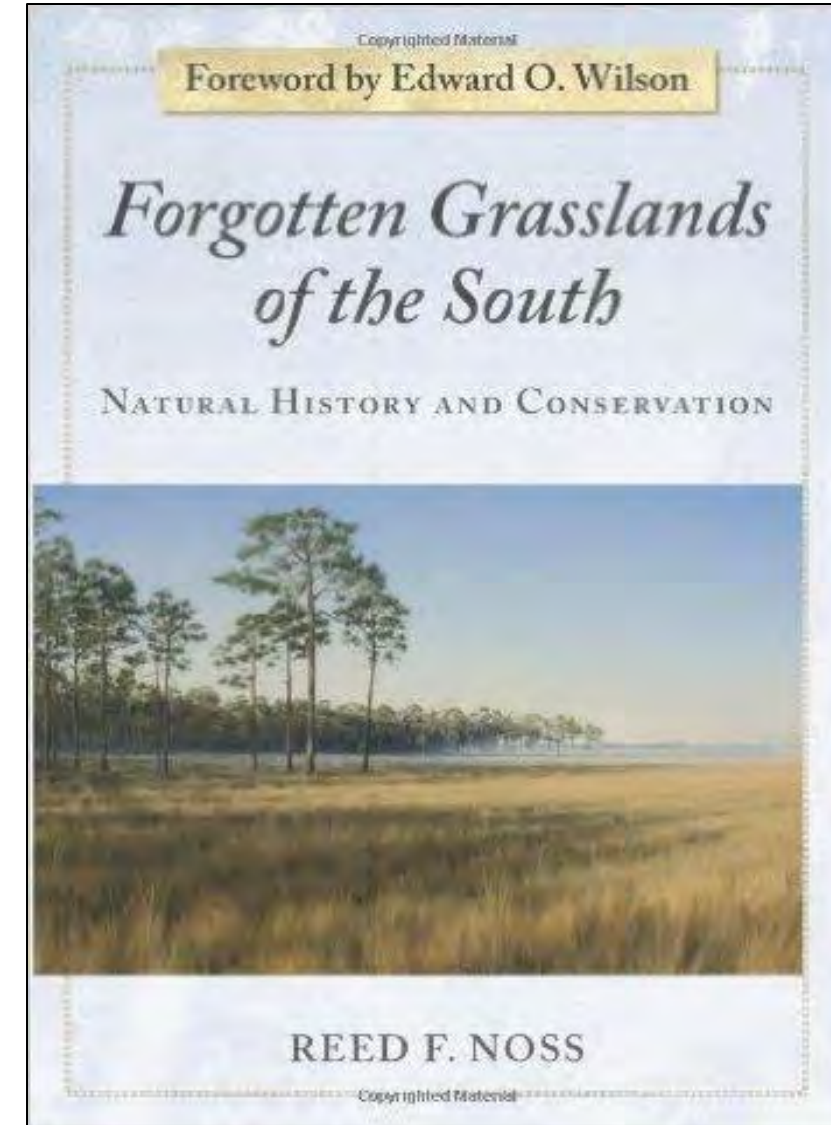
**Meadows**



**Marshes**



**Riverscours**

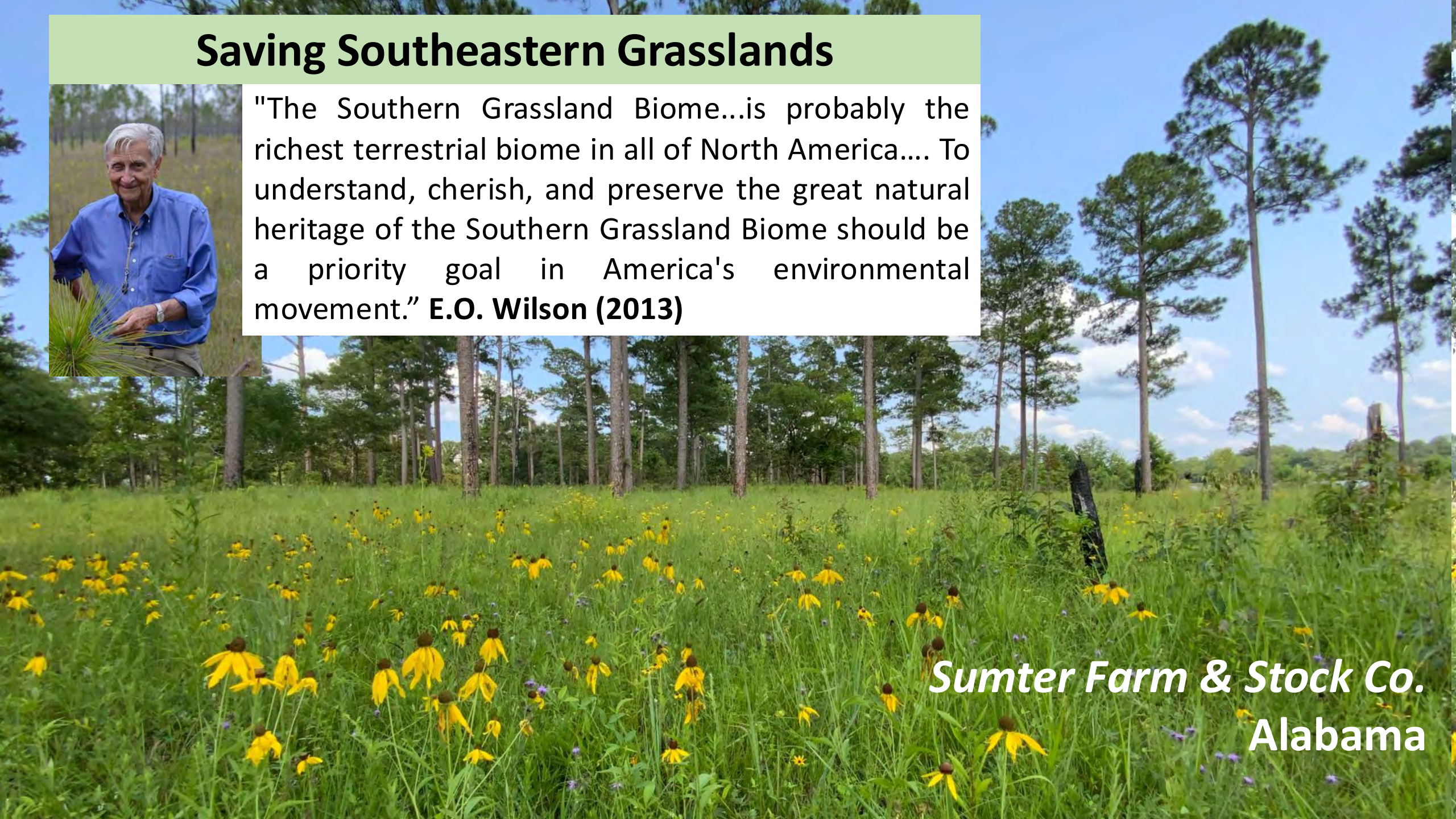




# Saving Southeastern Grasslands



"The Southern Grassland Biome...is probably the richest terrestrial biome in all of North America.... To understand, cherish, and preserve the great natural heritage of the Southern Grassland Biome should be a priority goal in America's environmental movement." **E.O. Wilson (2013)**



*Sumter Farm & Stock Co.*  
**Alabama**



“They’ve been gone so long, they’ve been erased from our collective memory as a society.”



“Gone before the camera was invented, before they could be painted, or before they could be described by naturalists.”



# What happened to the Southern Grassland Biome?



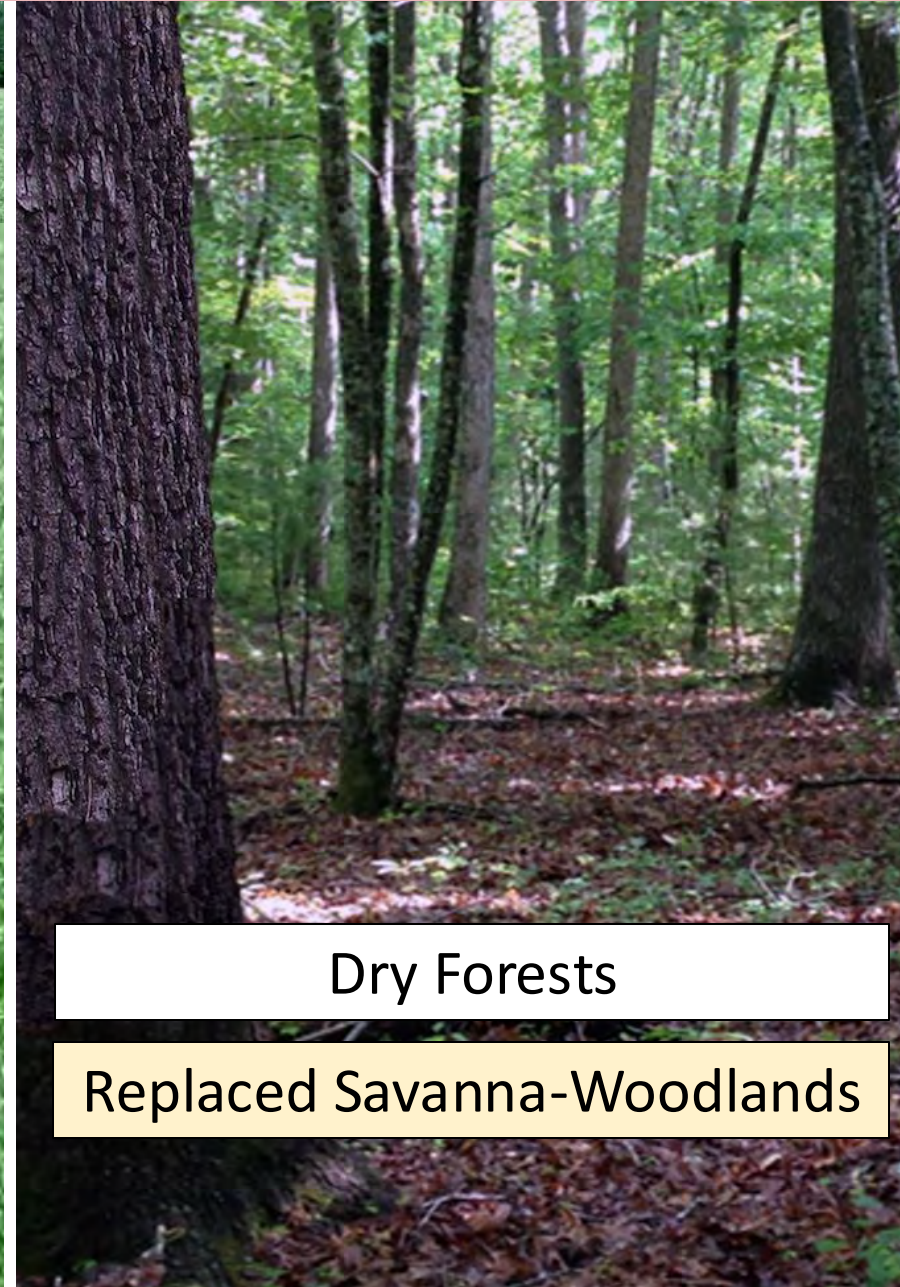
Crop fields

Replaced Prairies



Non-native Pastures

Replaced Meadows

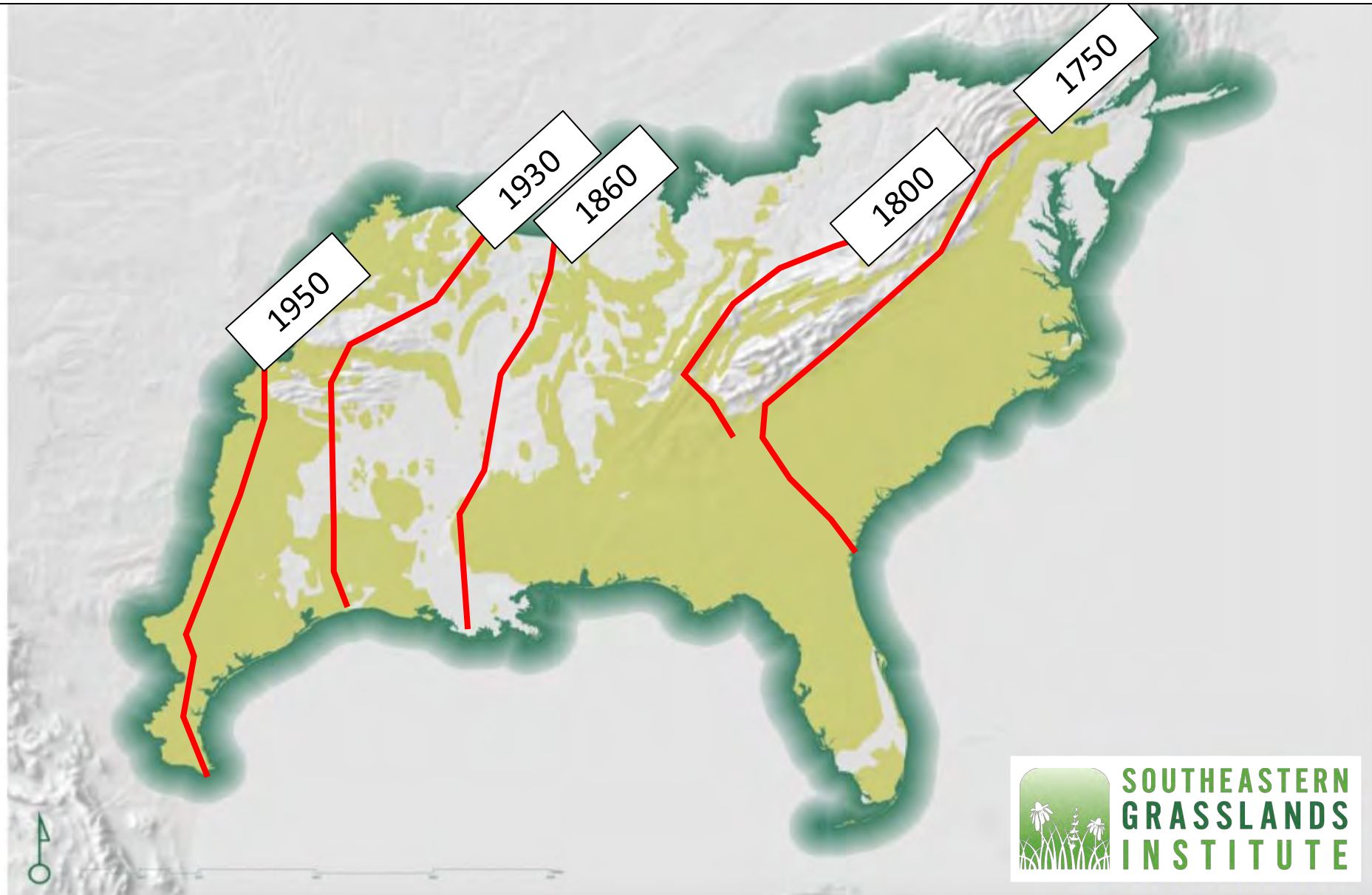


Dry Forests

Replaced Savanna-Woodlands



# The Wave of Grassland Loss





home to **>50% of the flora & fauna** of the Southeast



**52 species in 1 m<sup>2</sup>**

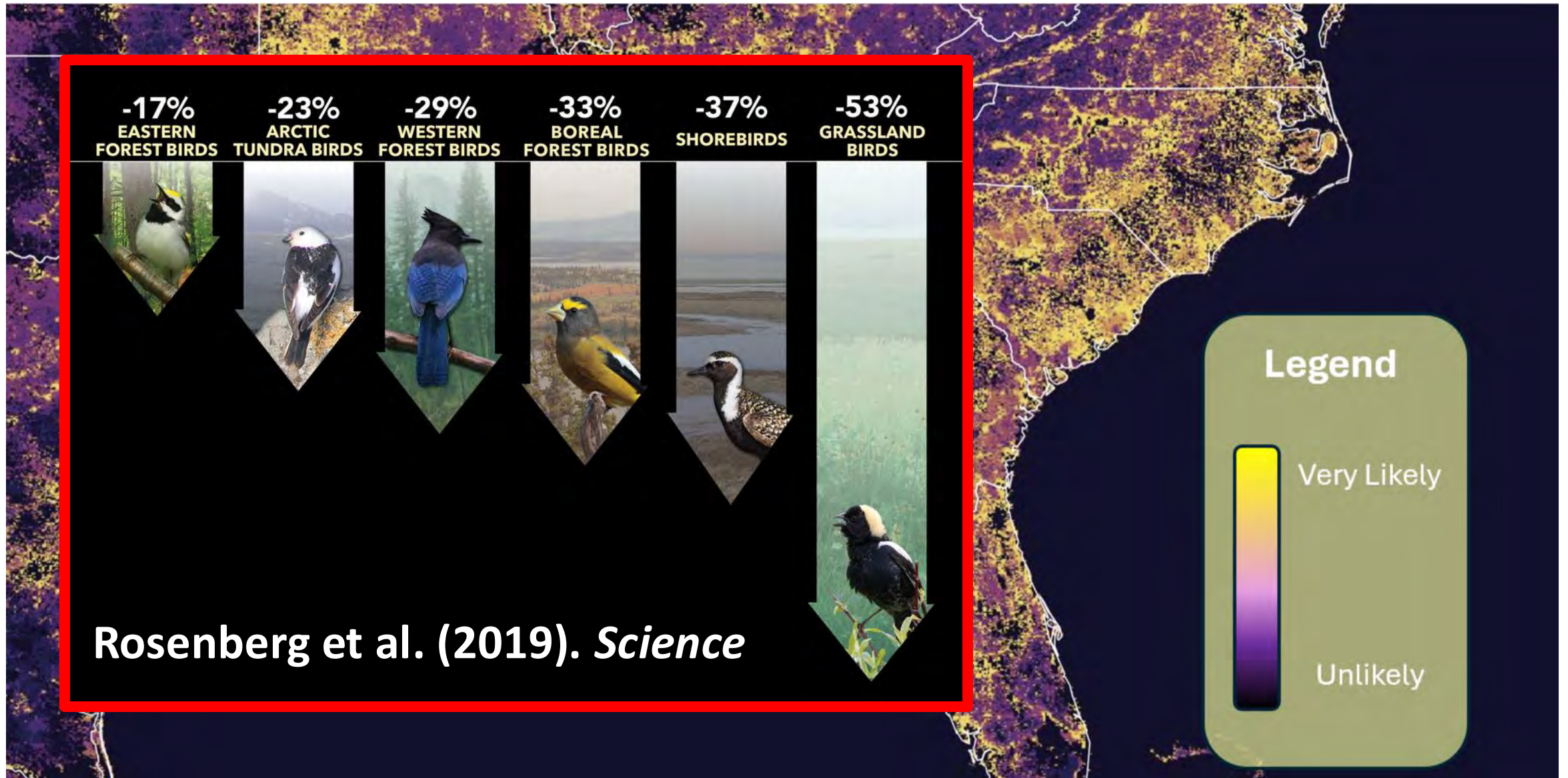


**90 bee species in one  
Mississippi prairie**

irie  
AR



# For the Southeast - 25 Years Will Be Too Late!



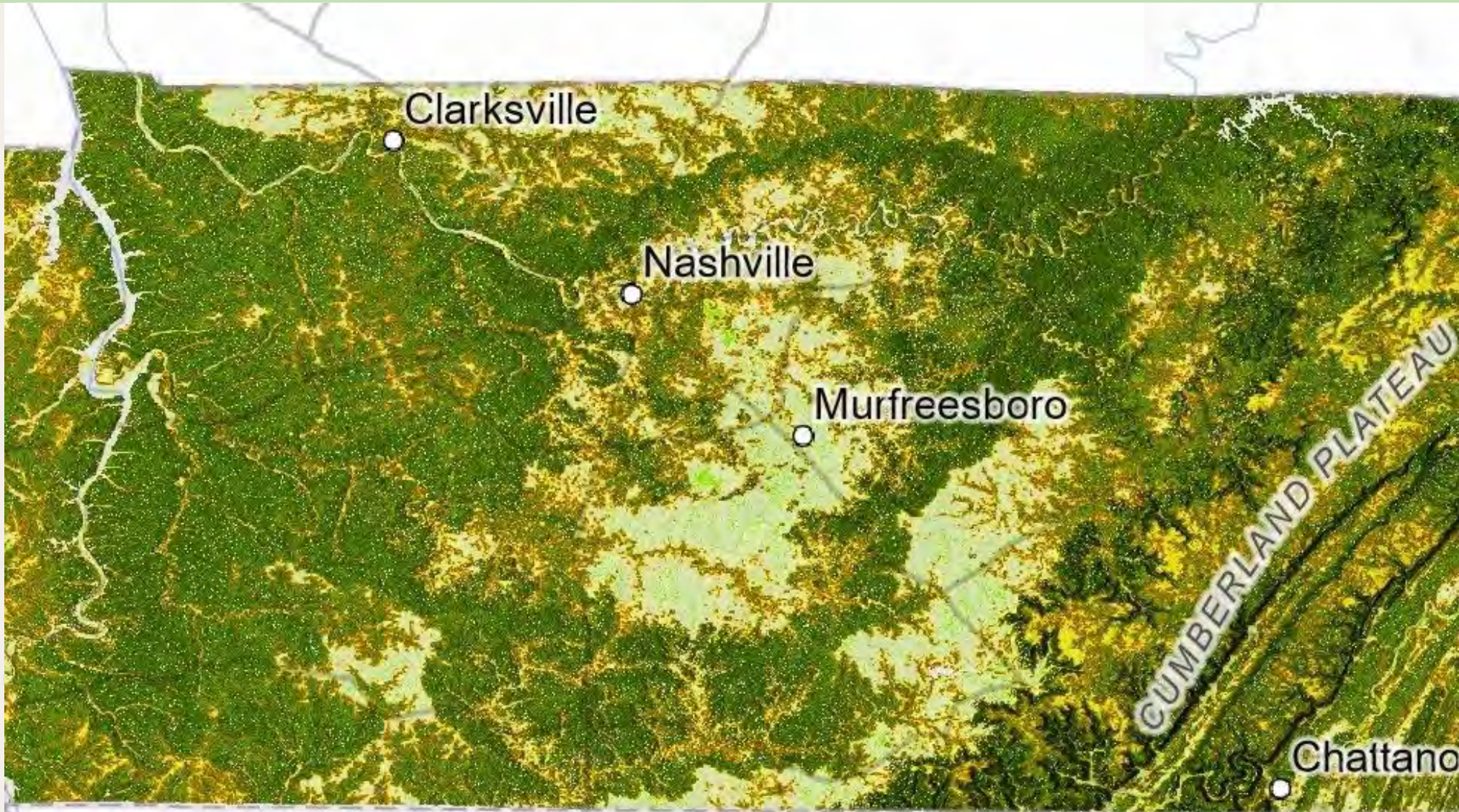


# *The Southeastern Grasslands Institute*





# Mapping the Southern Grassland Biome



Natural Resources Conservation Service



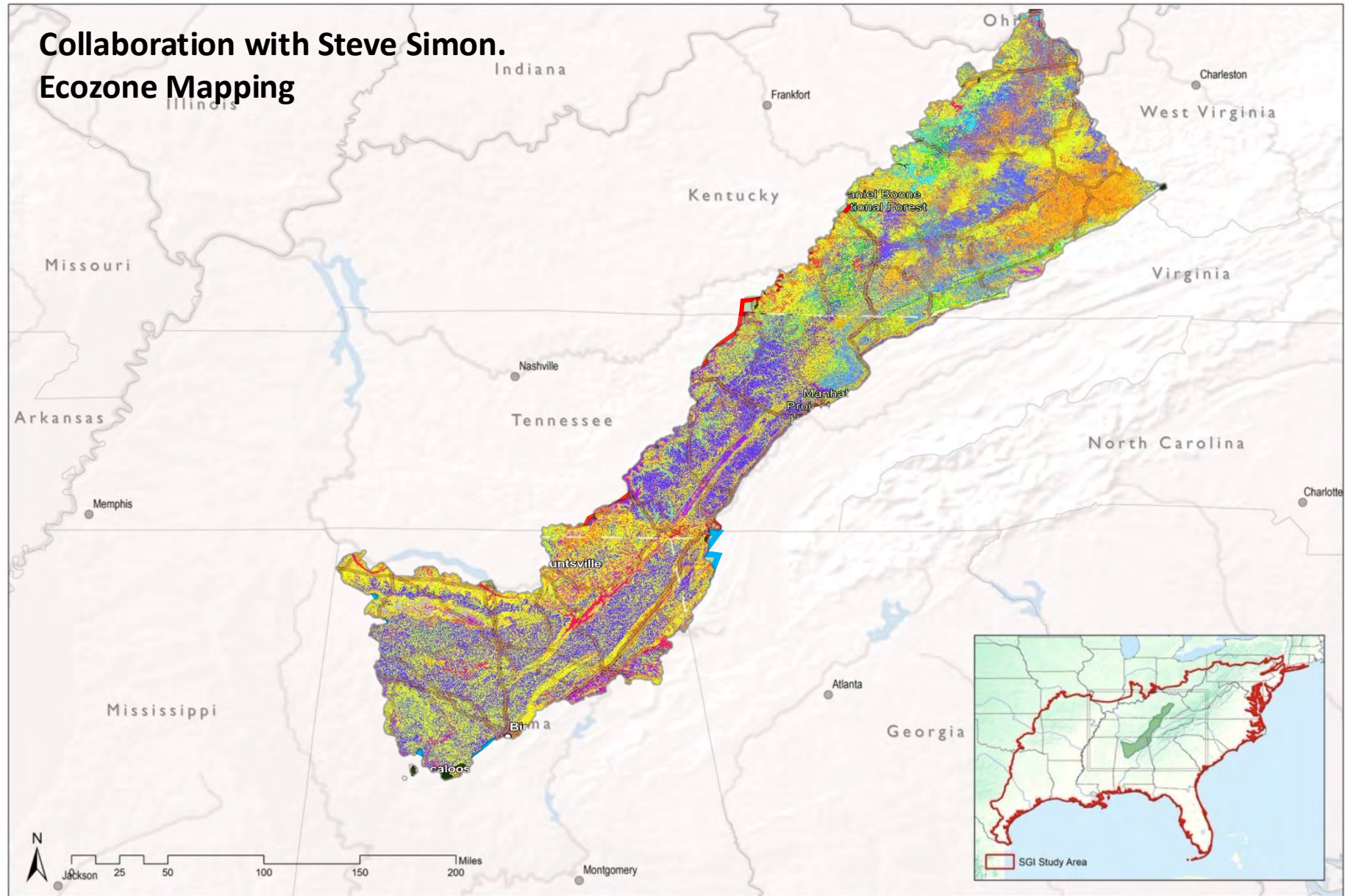
Farm Service Agency







## Collaboration with Steve Simon. Ecozone Mapping



# Regional Conservation Planning



# Science + History = Full Picture

No Historical Data



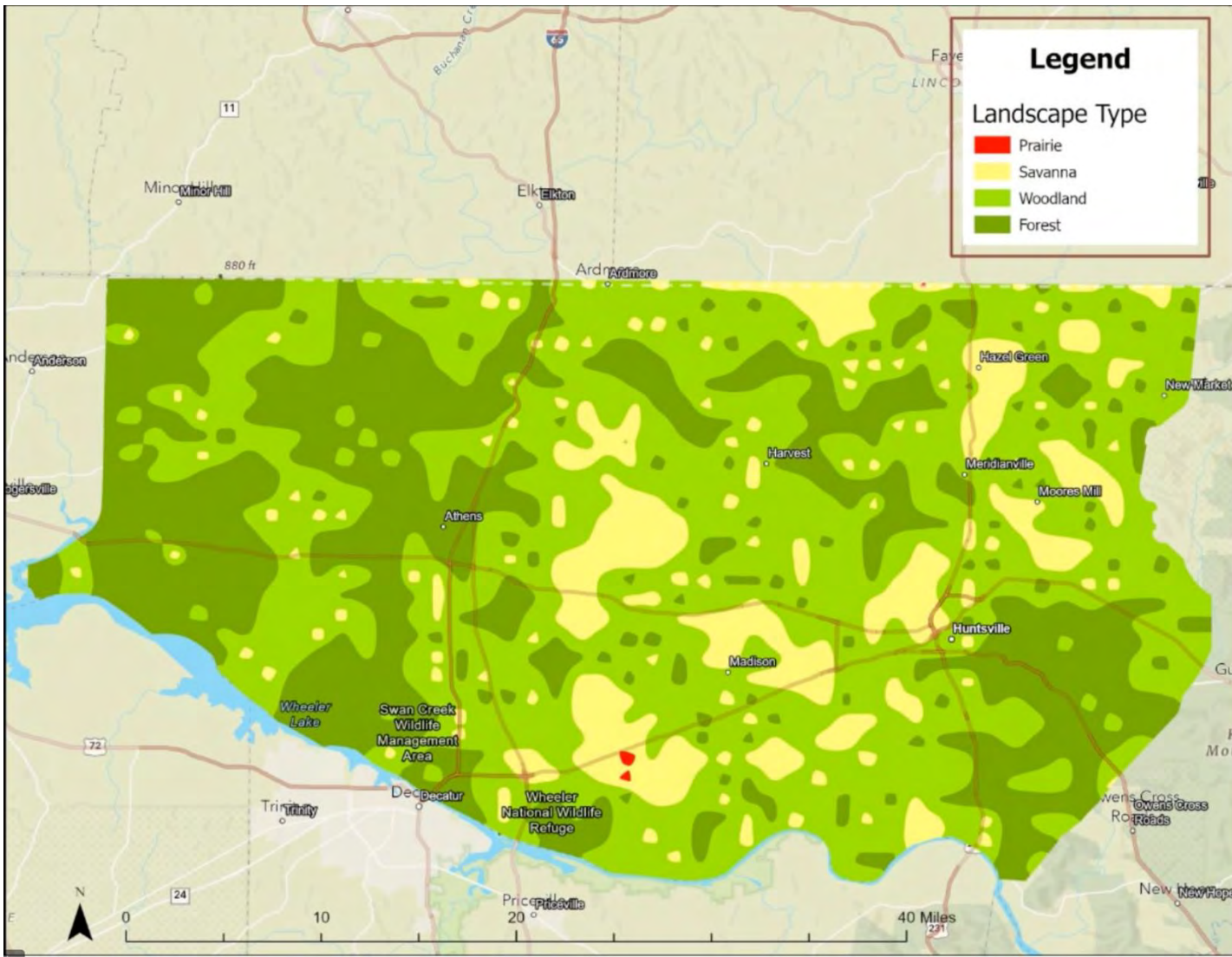
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With Historical Data



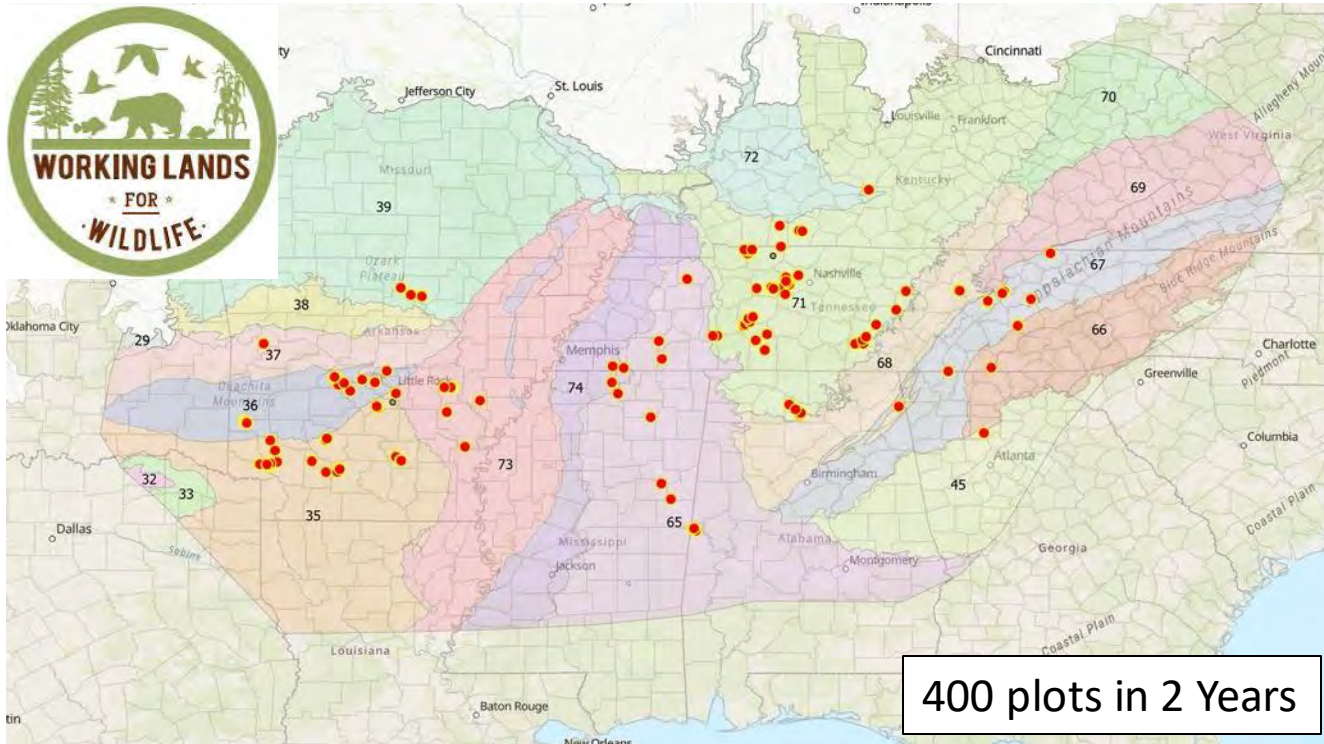
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Indian Paintbrush  
(*Castilleja coccinea*)C



Pink Milkwort  
(*Polygala incarnata*)



Dwarf Iris  
(*Iris verna smalliana*)



Yellow-fringed Orchid  
(*Plantanthera ciliaris*)



Blue Hearts  
(*Buchnera americana*)



Soapwort Gentian  
(*Gentiana saponaria*)



Striped Gentian  
(*Gentiana villosa*)



Culver's Root  
(*Veronicastrum virginicum*)



Canada Lily  
(*Lilium canadense*)



Silvery Aster  
(*Symphyotrichum concolor*)





## Improving Grassland Classification

*Shortleaf Pine – Post Oak Savanna*  
*Bridgestone-Firestone Wildlife Management Area*  
*Cumberland Plateau of Tennessee*

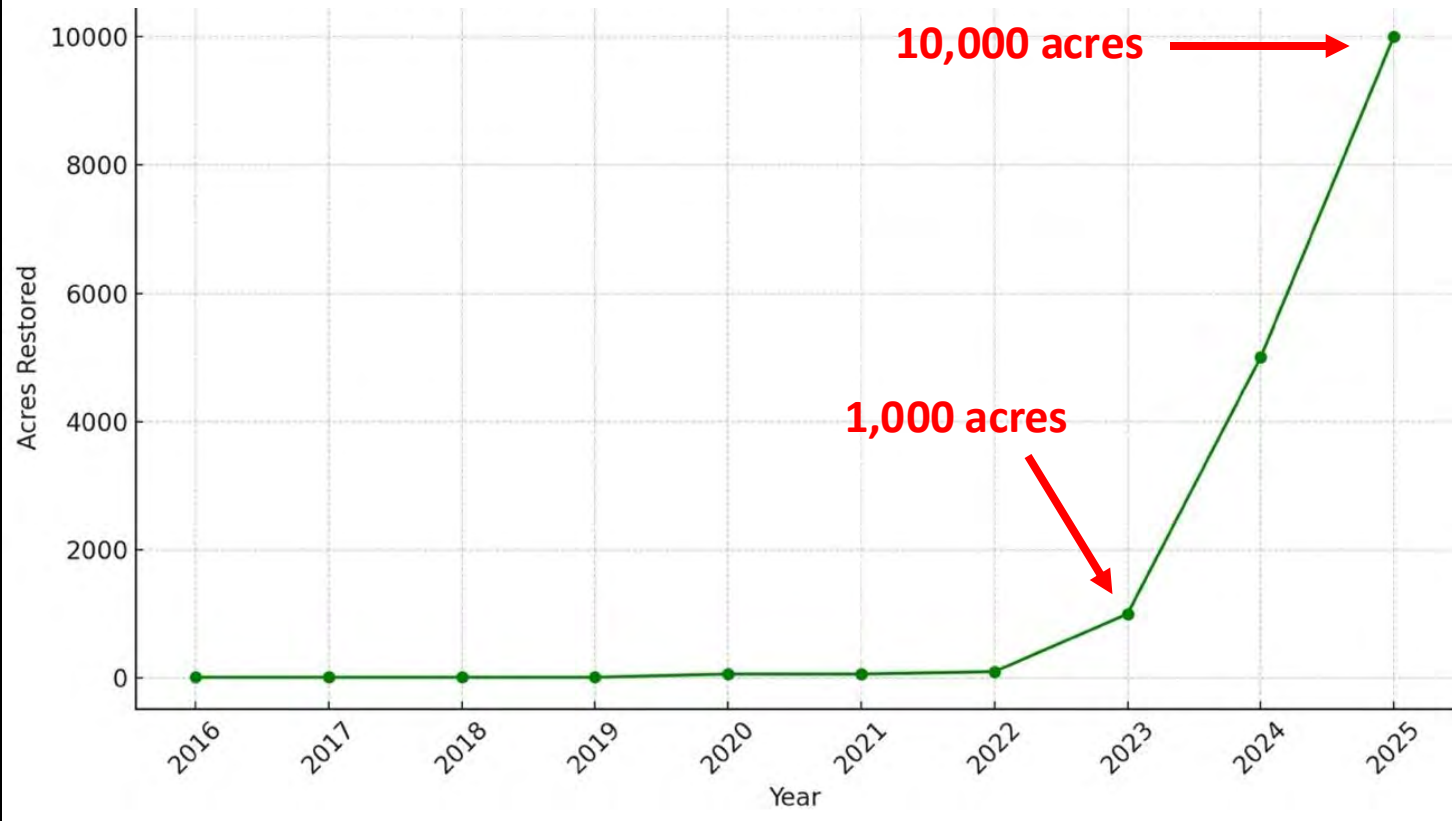


118 ecological systems  
Noss et al. (2021)



# Restoration & Management

## 30,000 acres by 2030







## Outreach & Community Building





Orchard Knob Grassland Preserve, Chattanooga, TN









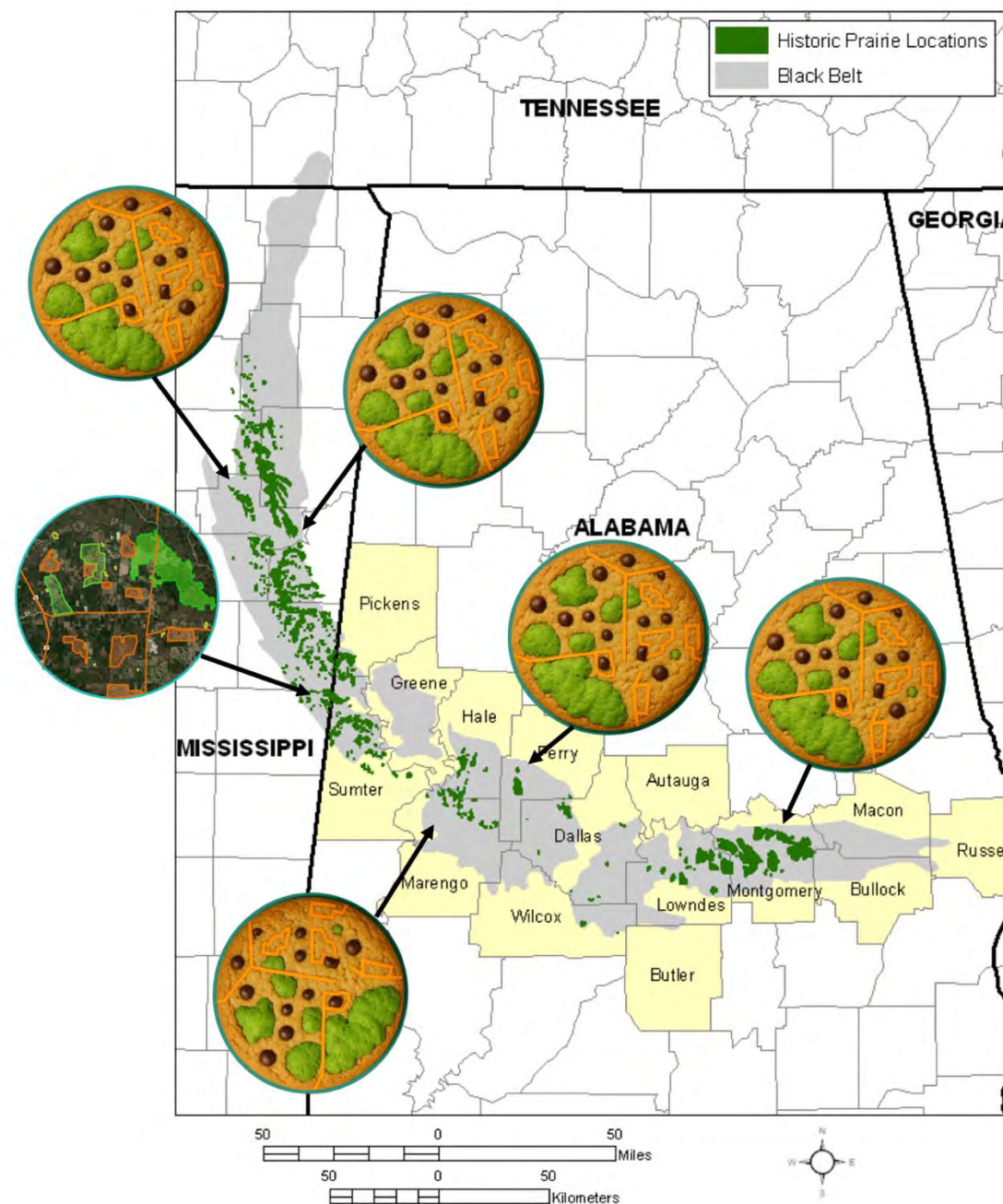
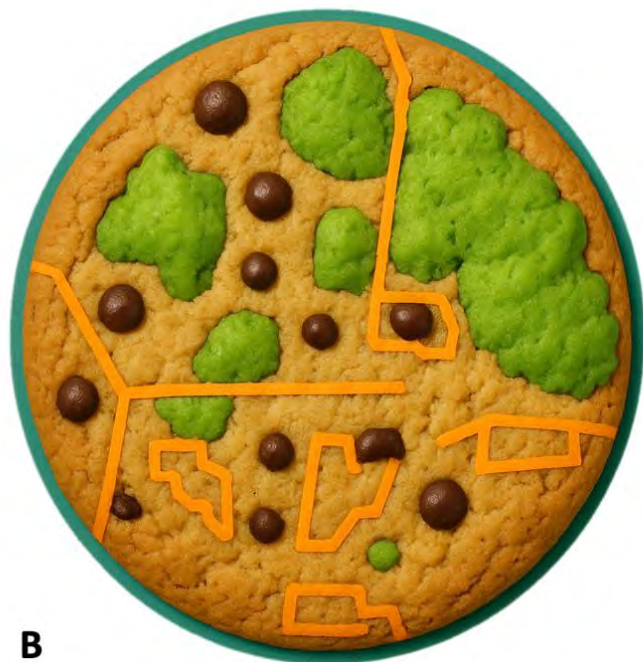
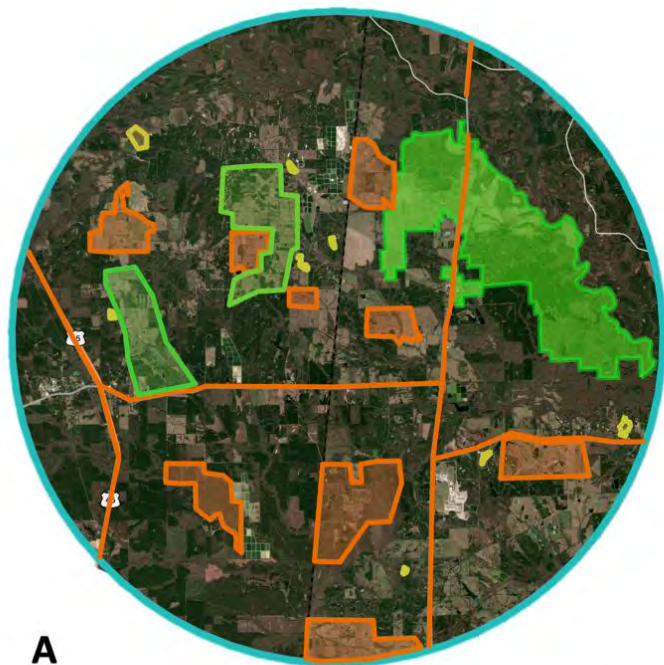














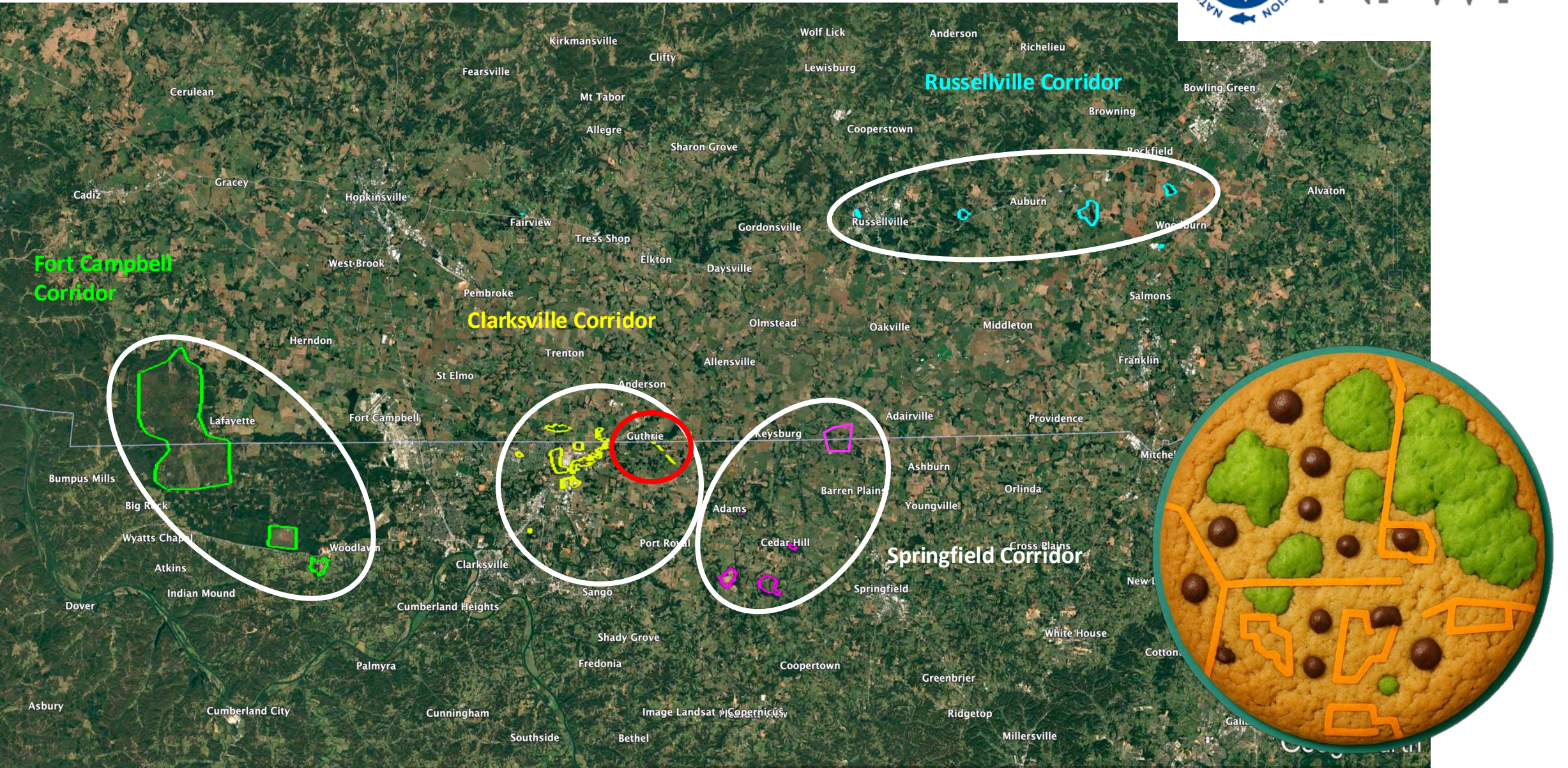
Remnants = Chocolate Chips



Guthrie Prairie, Montgomery Co., Tennessee



## Chunks = Anchor Grasslands





# Southeastern Native Seed Program





# Restoring & Rebuilding Grasslands

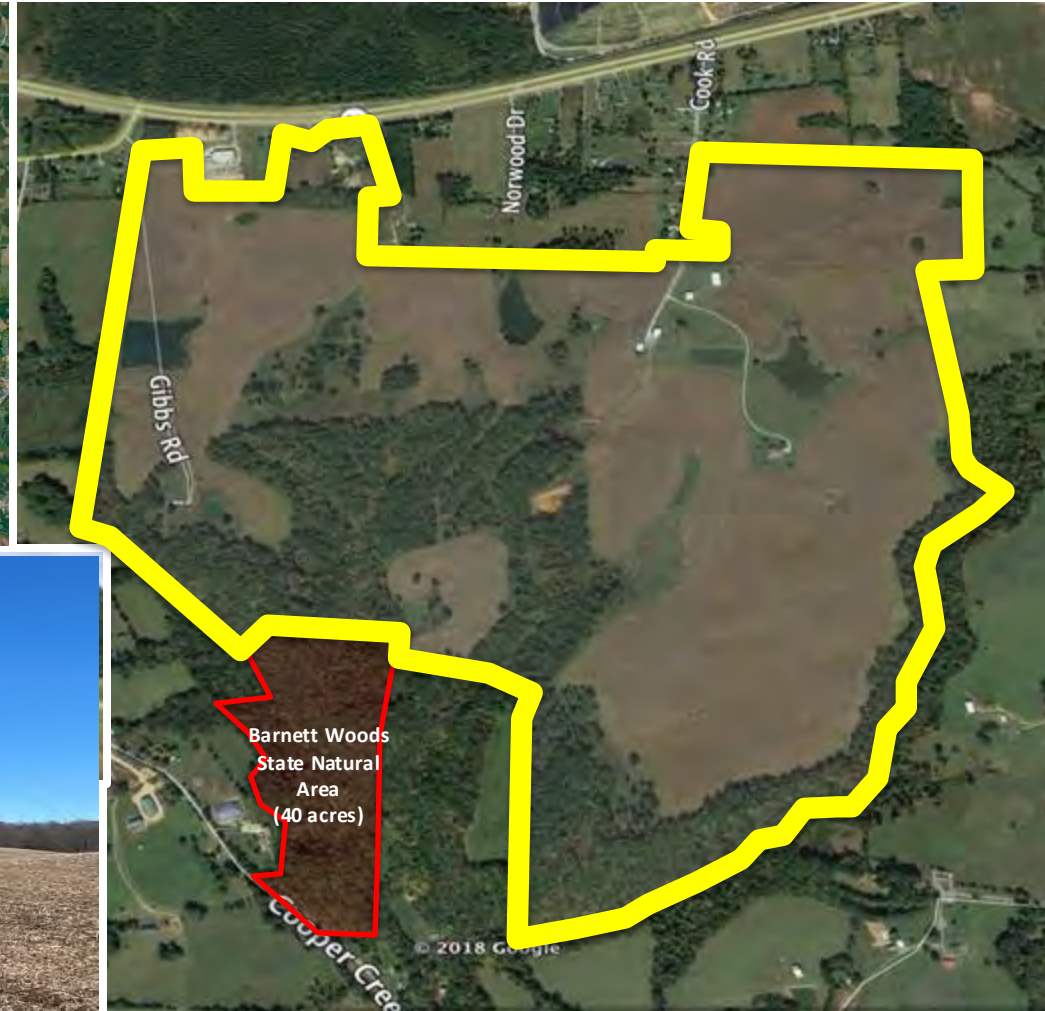
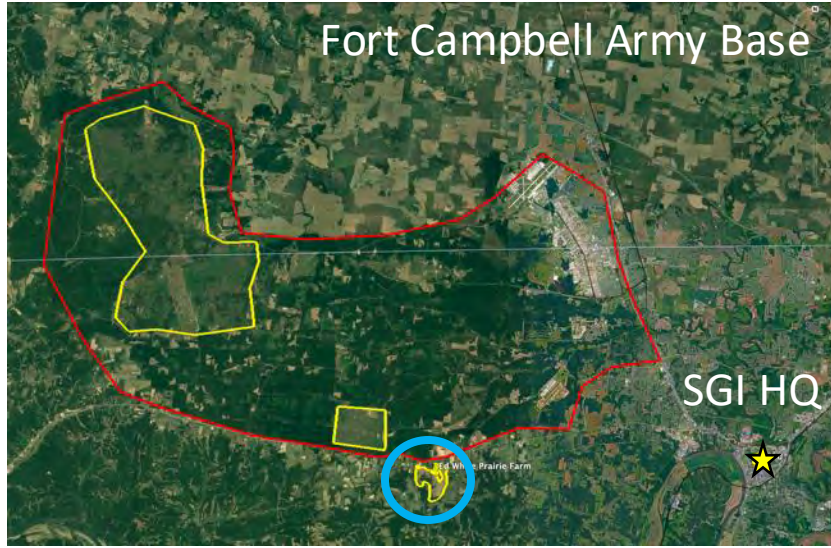








# 500-ac Barnett Woods & Prairie State Natural Area







\$12 million in new grants to support 4,000 new acres of grasslands restoration in 40 US National Parks across 17 states



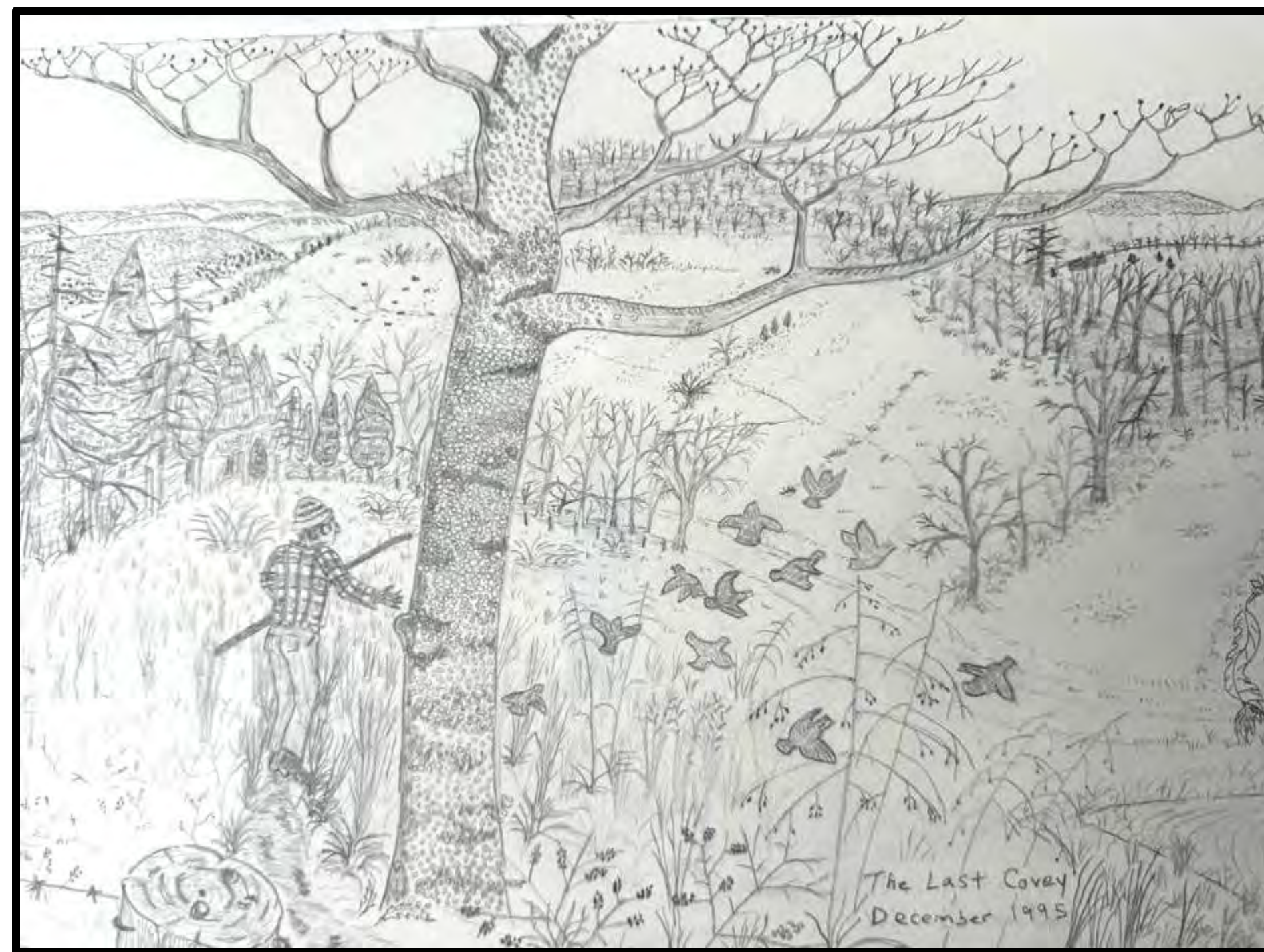
Chickamauga Battlefield, Georgia



Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania National Park, Virginia



“25 Years  
Will Be  
Too Late”









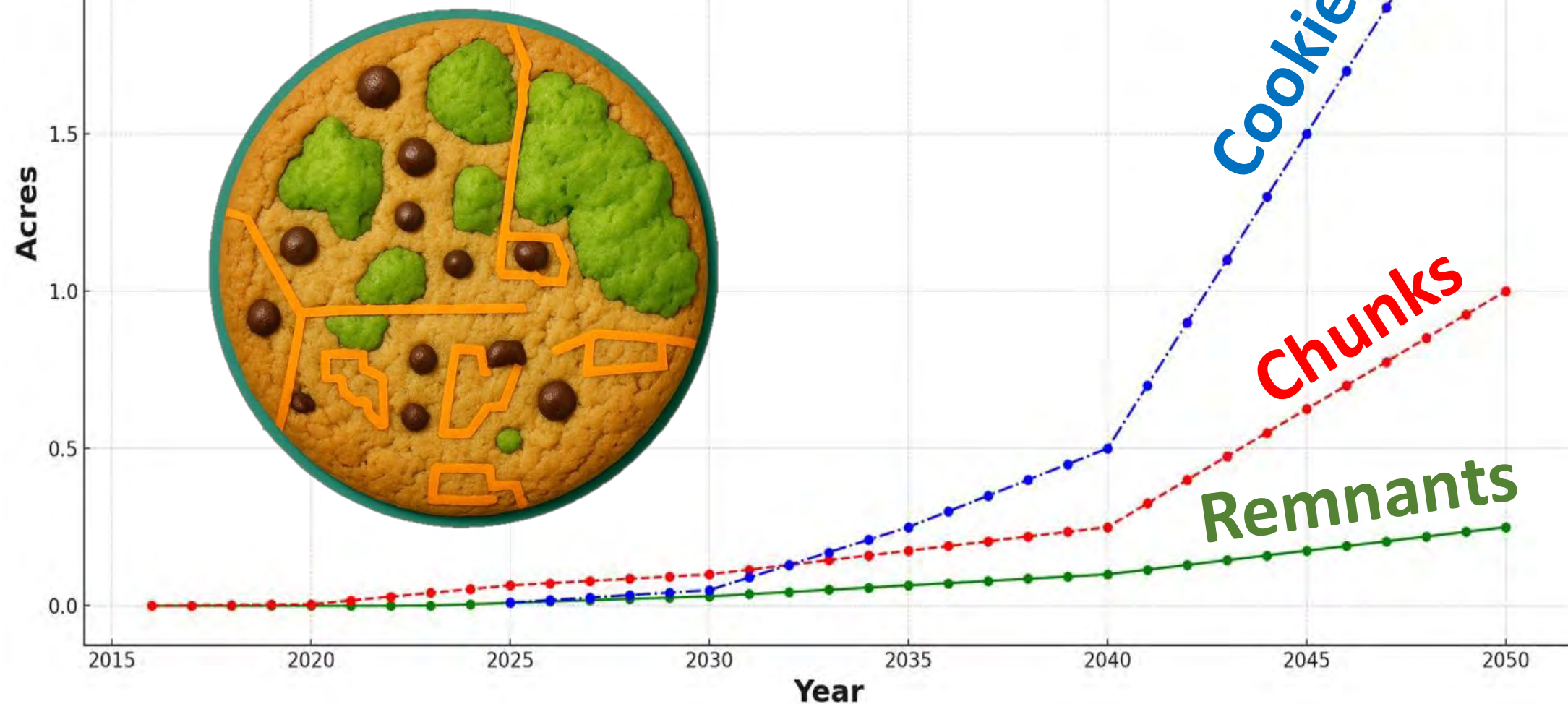








# Let's Use Science to Define What We Can Do & Set Goals



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# TAKE ACTION



[www.segrasslands.org](http://www.segrasslands.org)

Donate

Volunteer

Partner

Connections



# QUESTIONS ?

## Eastern Native Grasslands Symposium 2026



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