

What's Catching Fire?

A brief overview of prescribed fire
and first steps to get involved



EAST GULF COASTAL PLAIN
JOINT VENTURE

Exciting things are happening across the pine forests and grasslands of the South . . .



Winds of change are sweeping over the landscape . . . bringing renewal



Perspectives are shifting and new understandings are coming into focus . . .



Birders



Foresters



Hunters



Endangered
species managers



Botanists



You?

Land owners & managers are reclaiming a proud heritage that had almost disappeared.



Longleaf pine prescribed
burn on private land in
Mississippi



2 months post burn



6 months post burn

Something amazing has been taking place all over the South over the past decade . . .

A diversity of public and private conservation partners are collaborating to conserve one of America's most endangered ecosystems: the longleaf pine ecosystem.



Something amazing has been taking place all over the South since circa 2011 . . .

They've been doing it using an unusual tool:

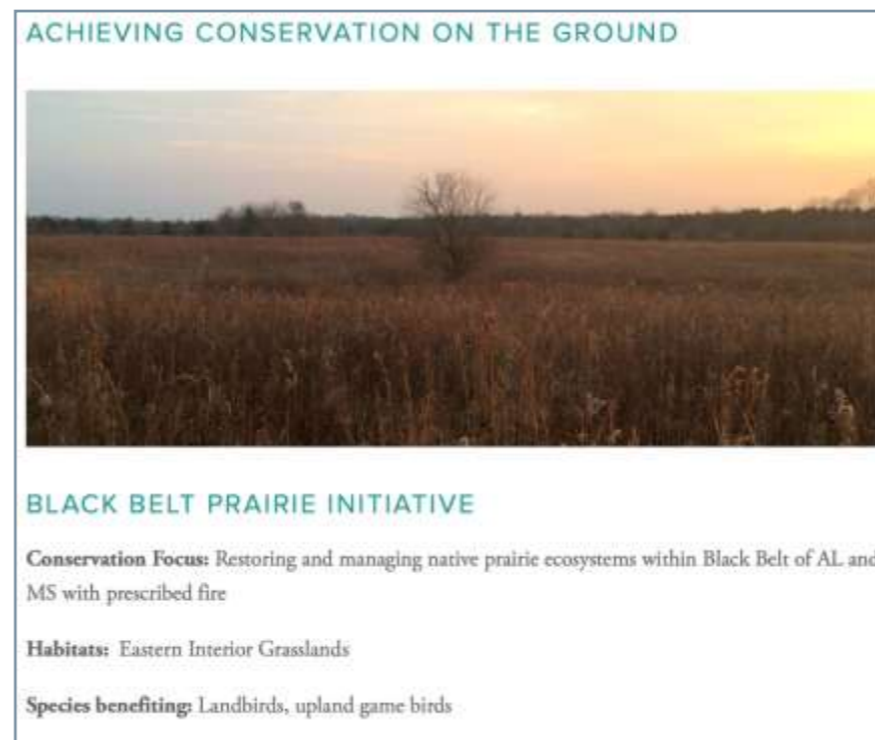
FIRE



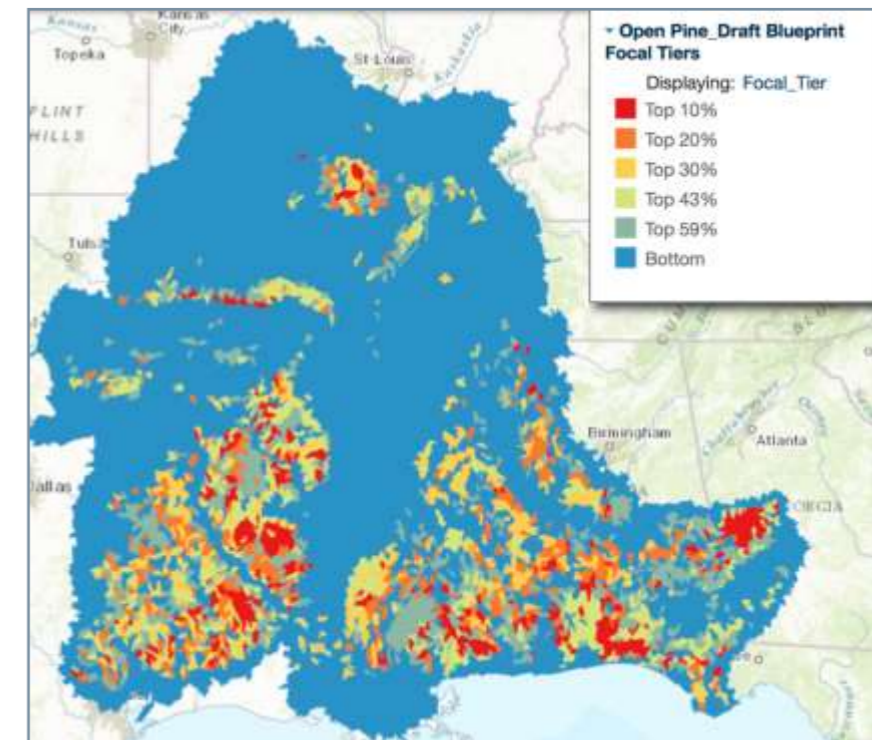
Now, others have taken notice and have begun similar efforts to restore other native Southern pine & prairie ecosystems



The Shortleaf Pine Initiative



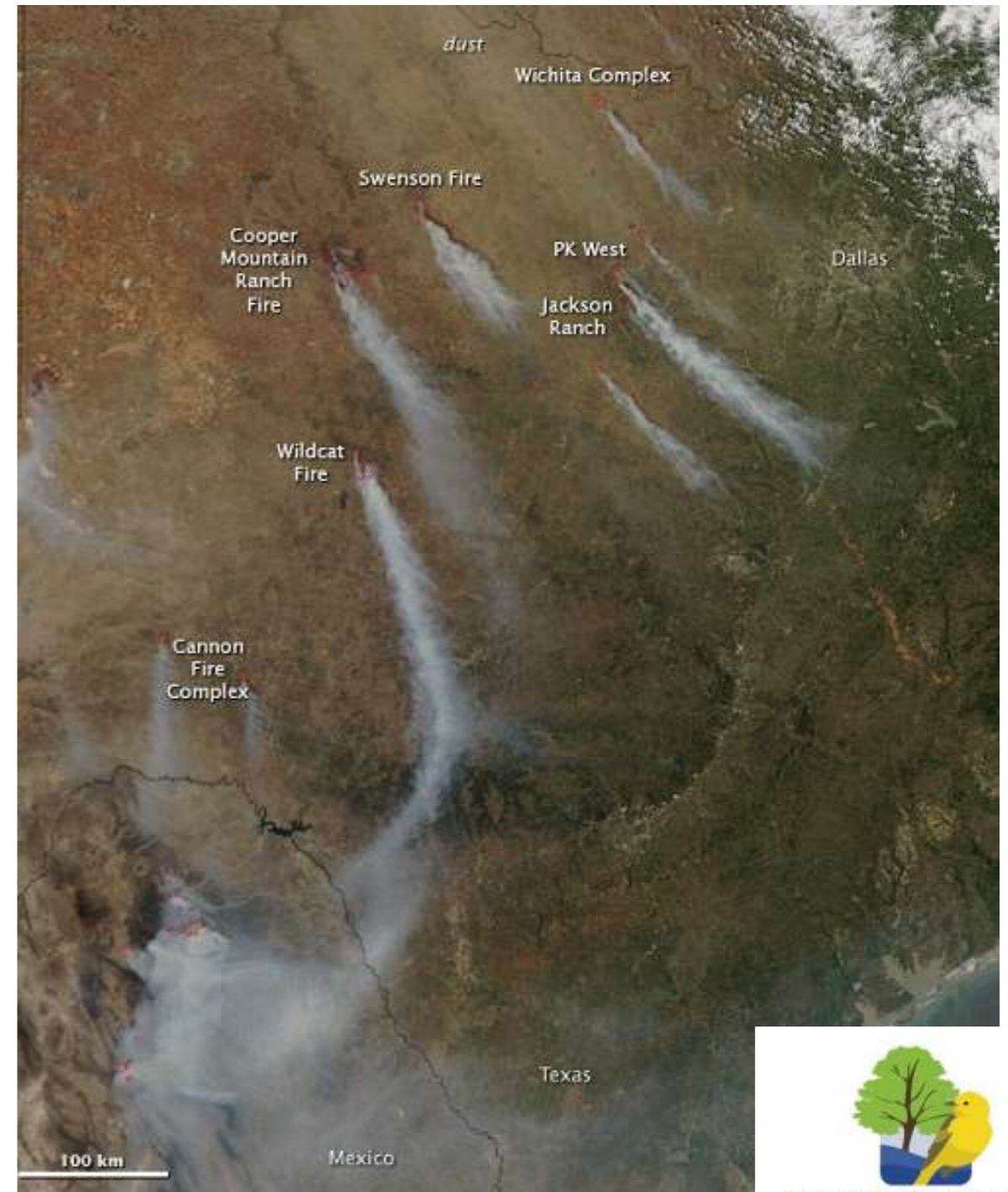
The EGCPJV Black Belt Prairie Initiative



The Open Pine Landscape Conservation Blueprint

Decades of research, fire suppression, and an understanding of history tell us:

Good fires prevent bad ones: frequent prescribed fire reduces fuel loads, thereby minimizing the risk of wildfire and protecting human communities.



Decades of research, fire suppression, and an understanding of history tell us:

Prescribed fire is not destruction but renewal, providing nesting, brood-rearing, and fawning habitat as well as forage for a wide variety of wildlife species and plants. In pine and grasslands, there is scientific consensus on this.



Decades of research, fire suppression, and an understanding of history tell us:

Fire is as natural as rain storms, wind, sunshine and blue skies. Fire keeps pine forests healthy by preventing the spread of disease and pests and recycling nutrients back into the soil.



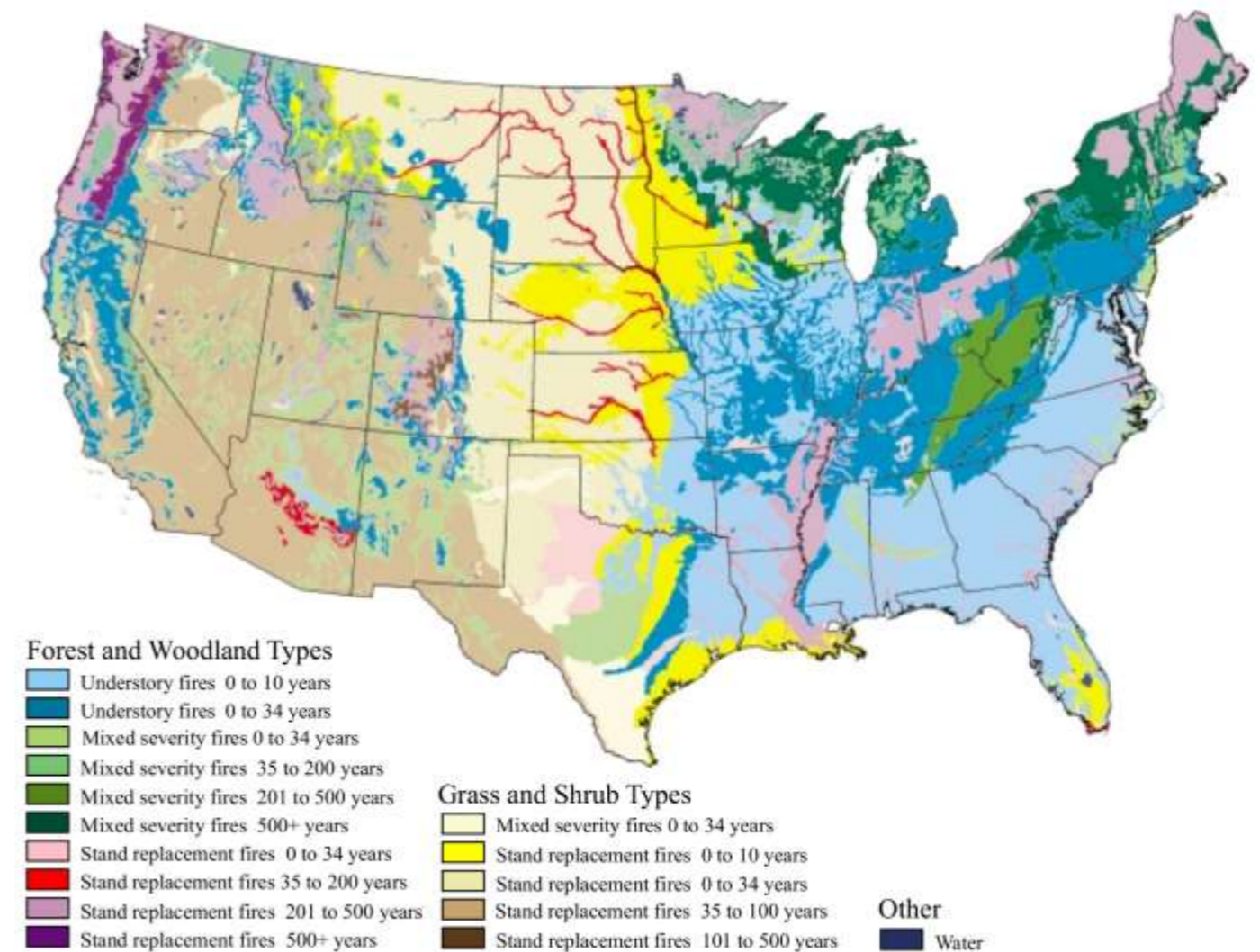
Decades of research, fire suppression, and an understanding of history tell us:

The effects of prescribed fire in a prairie are kind of like mowing the grass . . .
fire maintains grasslands by preventing woody encroachment and promoting the growth of many wildflowers and grasses.



Decades of research, fire suppression, and an understanding of history tell us:

People are a **part** of nature, not *apart*, and we have a role in choosing the kind of landscape we live in. The culture of burning began with Native Americans and continues in many parts of the South to this day.



Pre-settlement fire regimes of the U.S. showing fire severity and fire return intervals.

The Problem:

Decades of fire suppression have . . .

- Degraded fire-dependent ecosystems
- Made people afraid of fire and contributed to loss of their “fire culture”
- Made it more difficult for landowners to burn on their property



The Good News: Things are changing, making burning more accessible

There are public programs that provide cost-share for prescribed fire, which is also very cost-effective compared to mowing, mechanical thinning, and herbicides.



The Good News: Things are changing, making burning more accessible

Landowners can learn to conduct their own prescribed burns safely by getting training or certification.



The Good News: Things are changing, making burning more accessible

**Landowners can form
Prescribed Burn
Associations and
increase their capacity
to burn:**

- share knowledge
- share manpower
- share equipment
- cut costs



The Good News: Things are changing, making burning more accessible

Policy changes are making it more feasible to burn:

- “right to burn” laws
- clear guidelines on liability
- more affordable insurance
- recognition of fire’s benefits



Wildlife enthusiasts & private landowners are crucial allies in bringing fire back to the land!

Landowners can choose whether to use prescribed fire based on the benefits they desire from their land.

Wildlife enthusiasts must understand fire's role in the ecosystem: many species of birds, including quail, respond to the plants that follow fire.



What should you do?

“Catch fire!” Learn more
about “Rx” fire!



Consult:

goodfires.org

Your state wildlife agency

Your state forestry agency

Your state prescribed fire
council

Your local “firewise”
program for wildfire safety

East Gulf Coastal Plain
Joint Venture

The Longleaf Alliance

The Shortleaf Initiative

Google “prescribed fire”

Google “prescribed burn
association”



Thank You

Contact us . . .

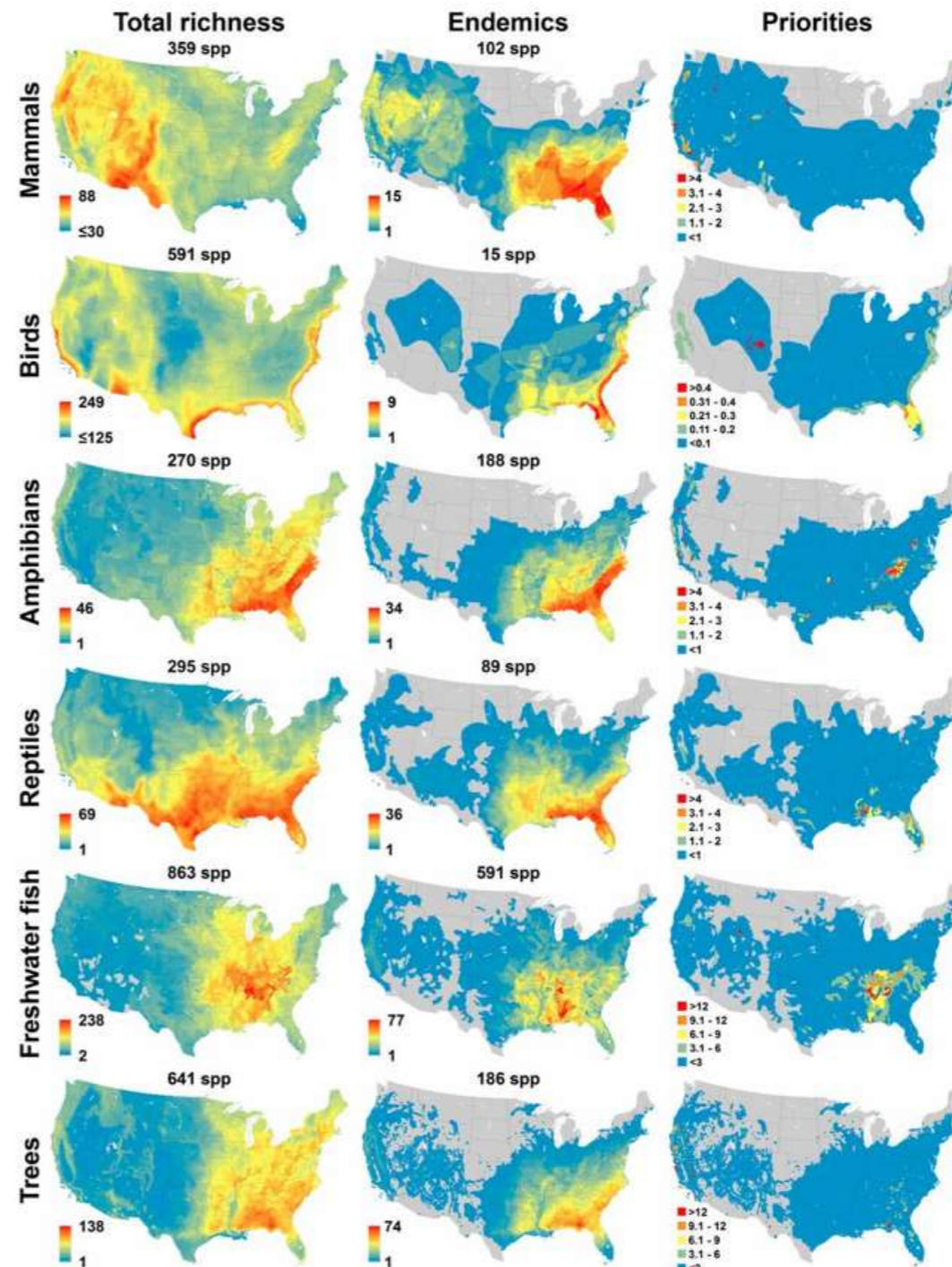
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The Southeast is a “hotspot” for biodiversity

It's likely that fire-dependent plant diversity in the understory of pine forests and native prairies is habitat that contributes significantly to the Southeast's high rates of endemism and diversity.



Clinton N. Jenkins et al. PNAS 2015;112:5081-5086

The Southeast is a “hotspot” for biodiversity

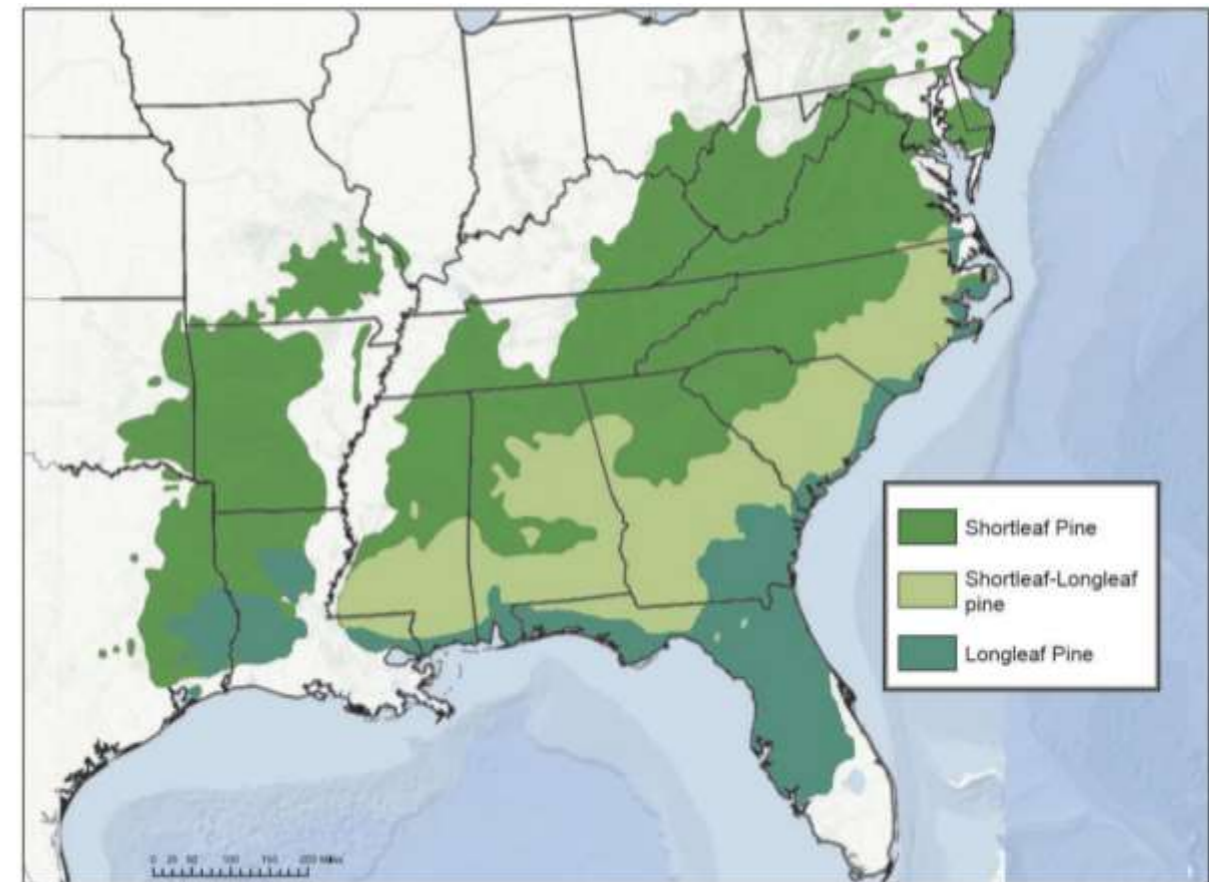
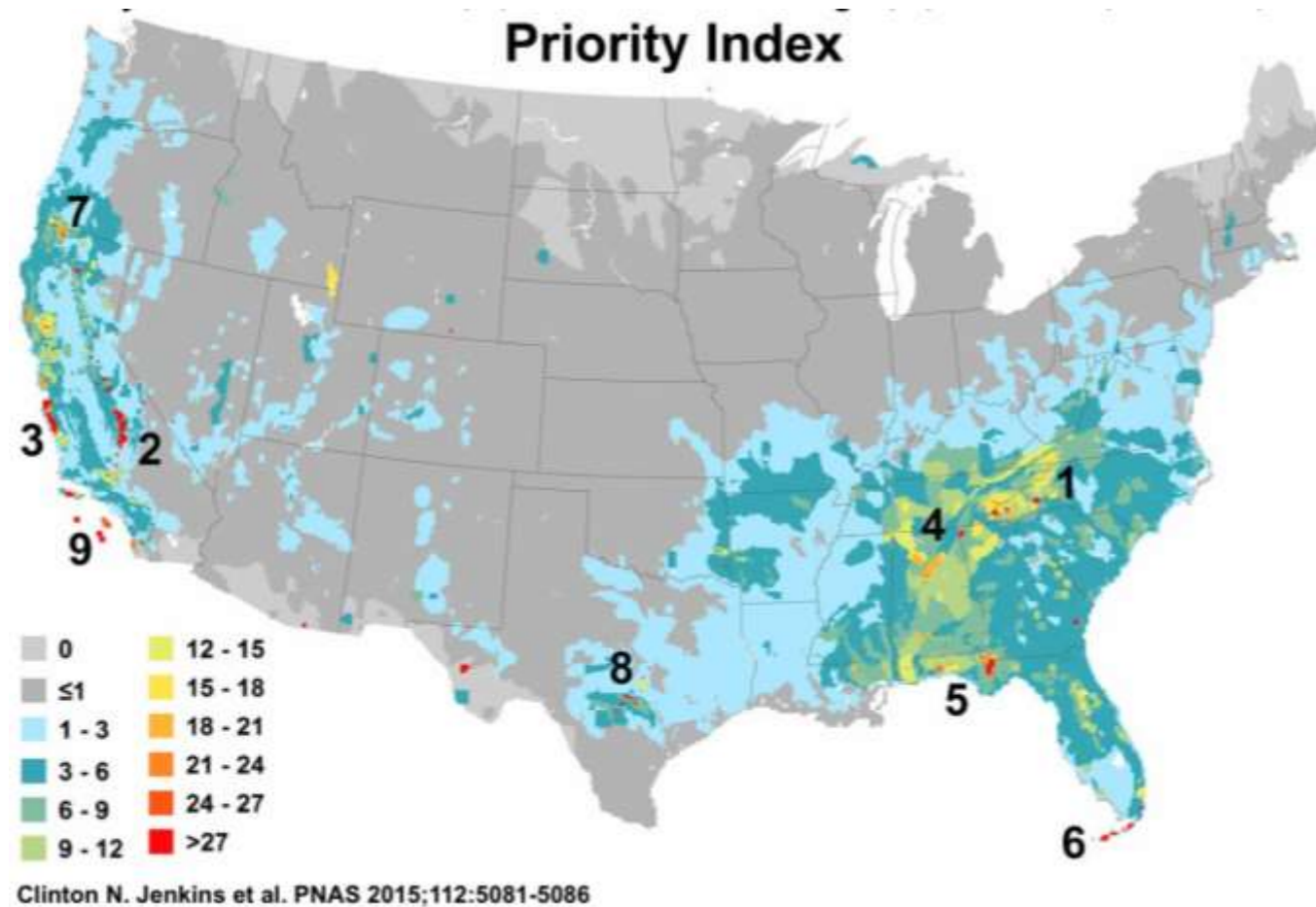
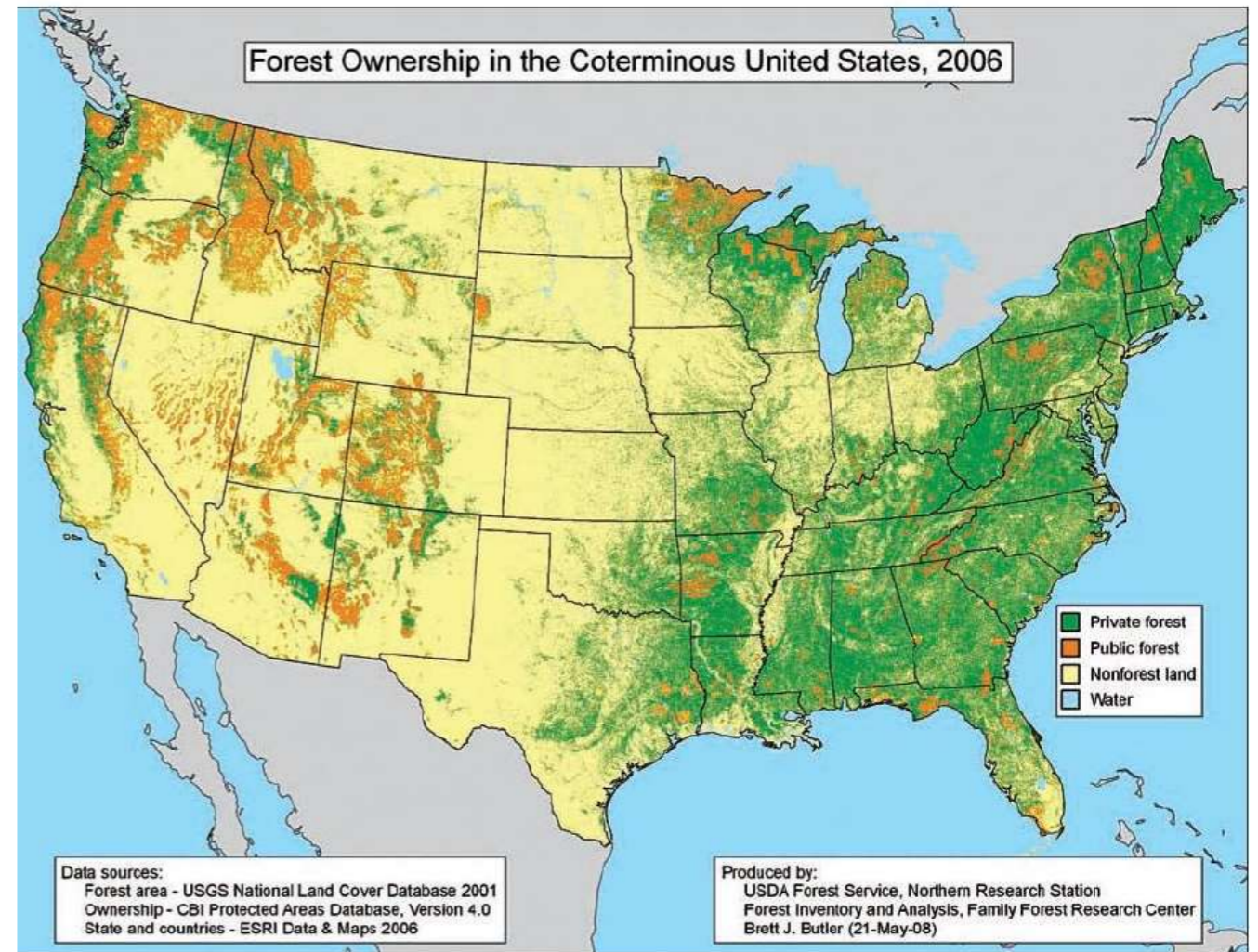


Figure 7. Distribution of shortleaf pine and longleaf pine.

Comparison of priority areas for biodiversity conservation (according to Jenkins et al. 2015) and the range of longleaf and shortleaf pine.

Prescribed Fire Makes Sense

Building and supporting capacity for private landowners to conduct their own burns is critical since lands in the Southeast are predominantly privately owned.

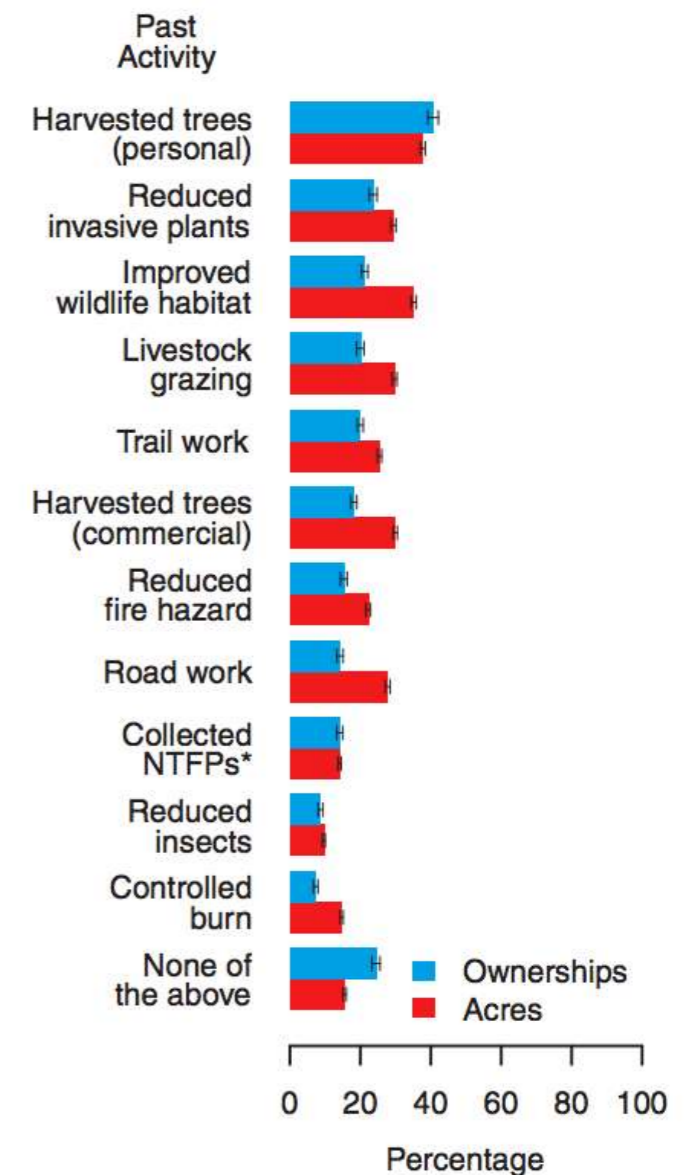
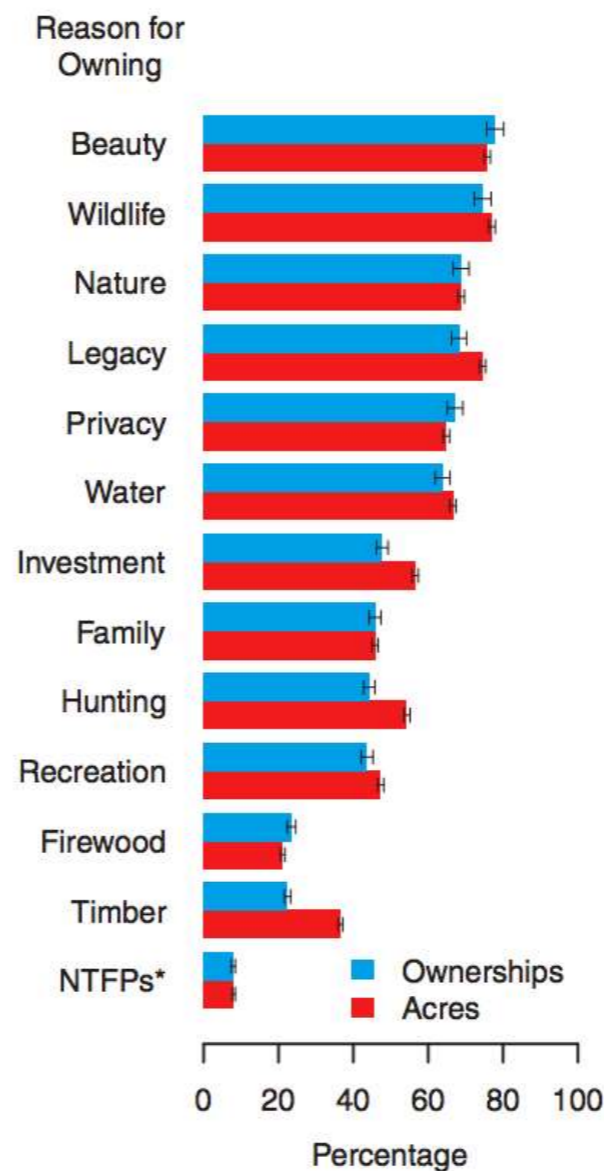


CBI = Conservation Biology Institute. ESRI = Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. USGS = U.S. Geological Survey.

Forest land ownership in the conterminous U.S.

Prescribed Fire Makes Sense

From 70 to 80% of all woodland owners rank wildlife on their land as “very important” or “important” - while <25% rank fire with the same importance - National Woodland Owners Survey of 2013



Prescribed Fire Makes Sense

Is this a business opportunity? “There need to be more people in the middle to talk wildlife and forestry to a person because landowners are changing, becoming almost as interested in wildlife as production on their land.” - quote from a young consulting forester



A landowner and consulting forester

Prescribed Fire Makes Sense

A well-managed consistent prescribed fire program can reduce the risk of wildfire, protect communities, and save dollars. Example: a 280-acre wildfire near Orlando over 6 days cost \$32,000 to suppress. A prescribed burn would have cost \$7,000 and taken one day.



A wildfire burning in Florida in 2014