

# *Fire in the Southland: The Natural and Cultural Heritage of Fire in the Southeastern United States*

Johnny Stowe

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

## *Managing Fire in Changing Times*

Wildland Fire Canada 2012

Kananaskis, Alberta, Canada

Life's Better OUTDOORS

[dnr.sc.gov](http://dnr.sc.gov)



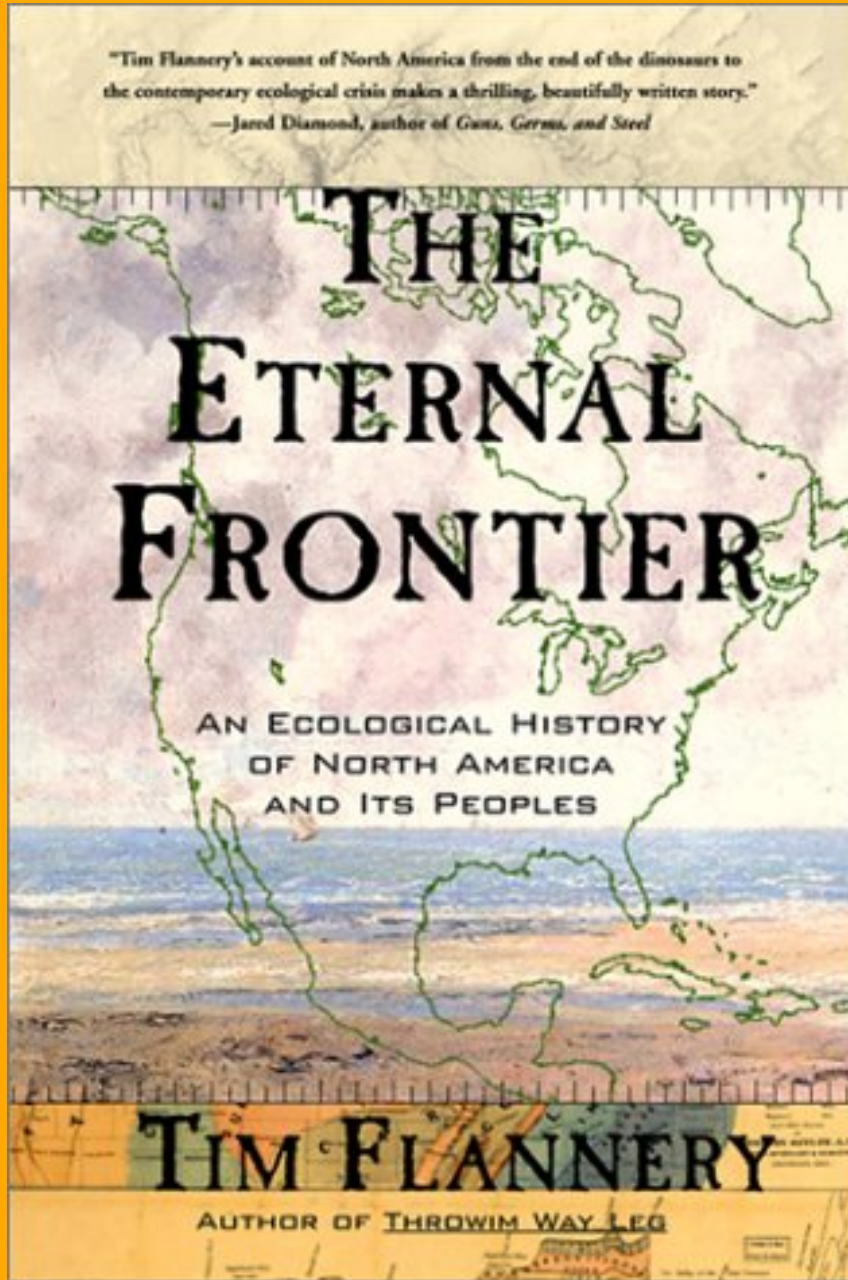
DNR



Fire and People in Southeastern North America (*The Southland*) have a rich and fascinating natural and cultural heritage that continues to evolve today. We are working to *Bring Fire Back* to the Southland.

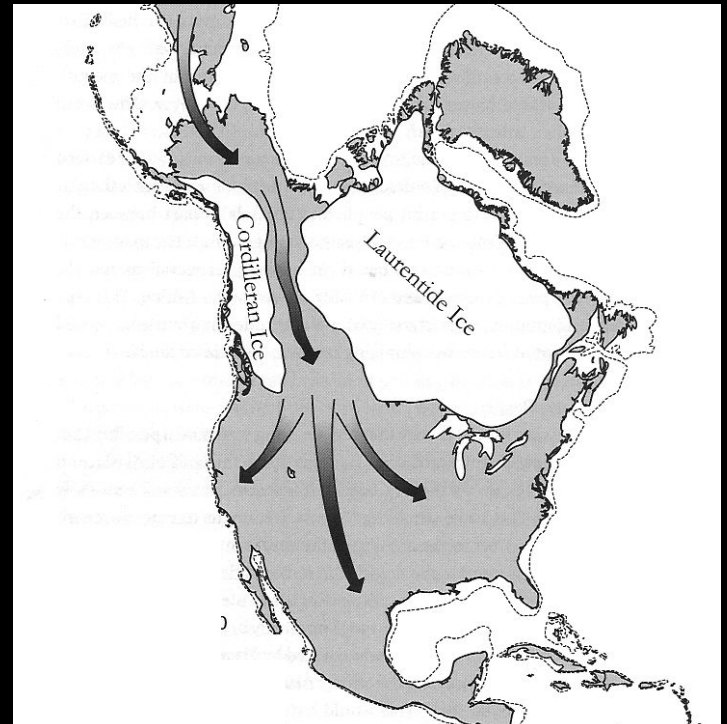
- How Man-Fire Came to the Southland.
- Humans Shape the Southland with Fire, and Fire Shapes Them. The Inextricable Nexus.
  - The *Longleaf Pine FireForest*
  - “Discovery” and Exploration ... the Pogrom
  - The Frontier: Mining the Southland
  - The Dixie Crusaders. Herbert L. Stoddard & Tall Timbers. Dr. John Shea
  - Smokey the Bear
  - “Development” and more “Progress”
  - Bringing Fire Back
    - Expanding Southerner’s Perspectives on Fire, & Bringing Fire Back
    - Public Safety Ecology
    - Economics Culture: Ritual, Ceremony and Celebration





*The worldview  
of a society is  
often written  
more truthfully  
on the land than  
in its documents.*

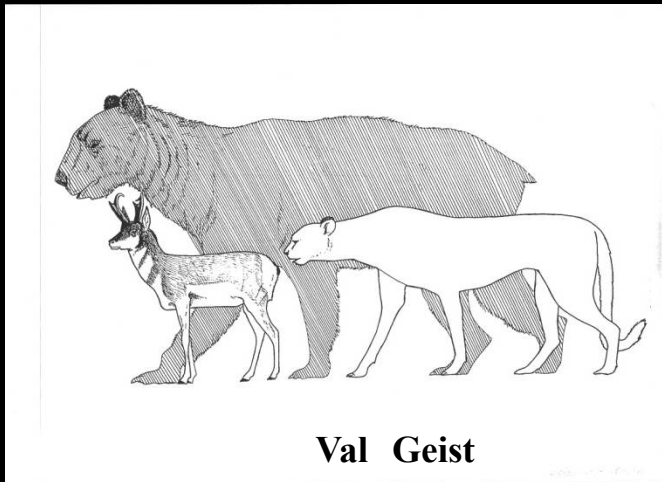
Kimmerer and Lake



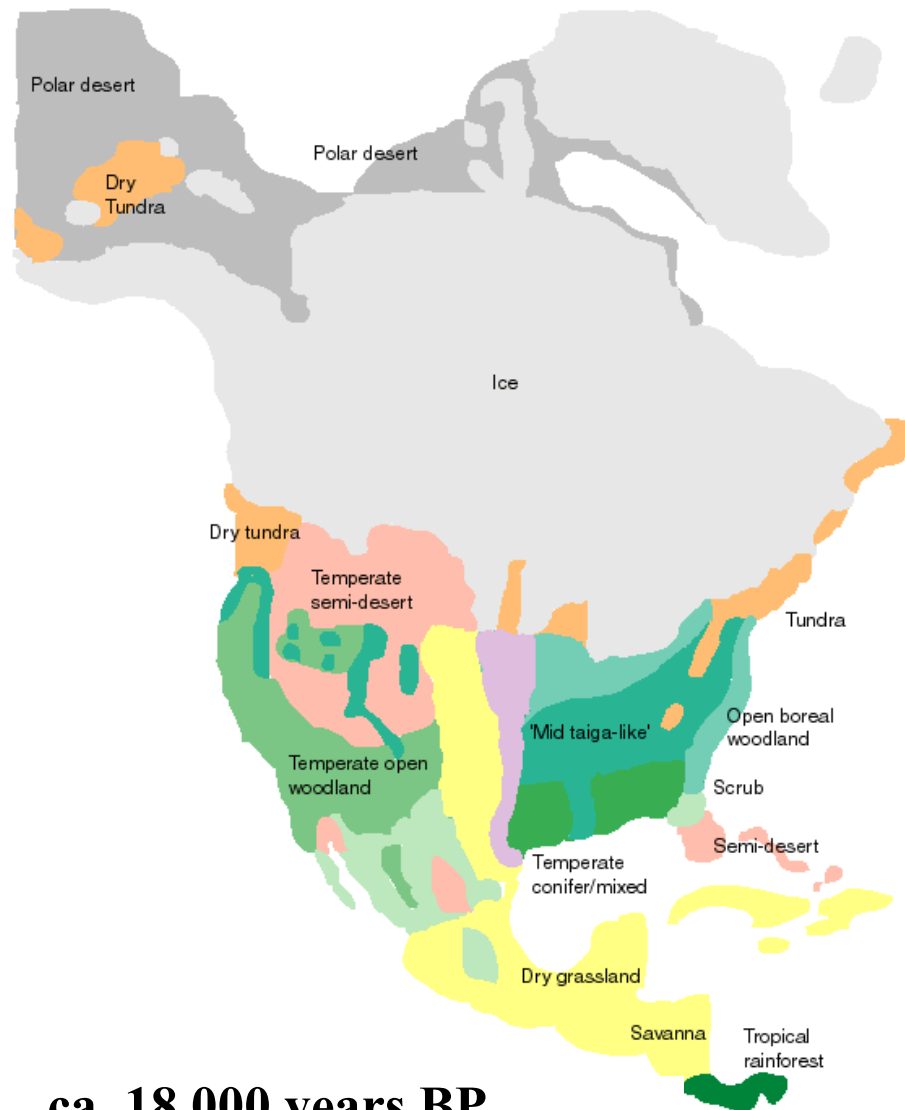
**ca. 12,000 years BP**

# The First Nations





Val Geist

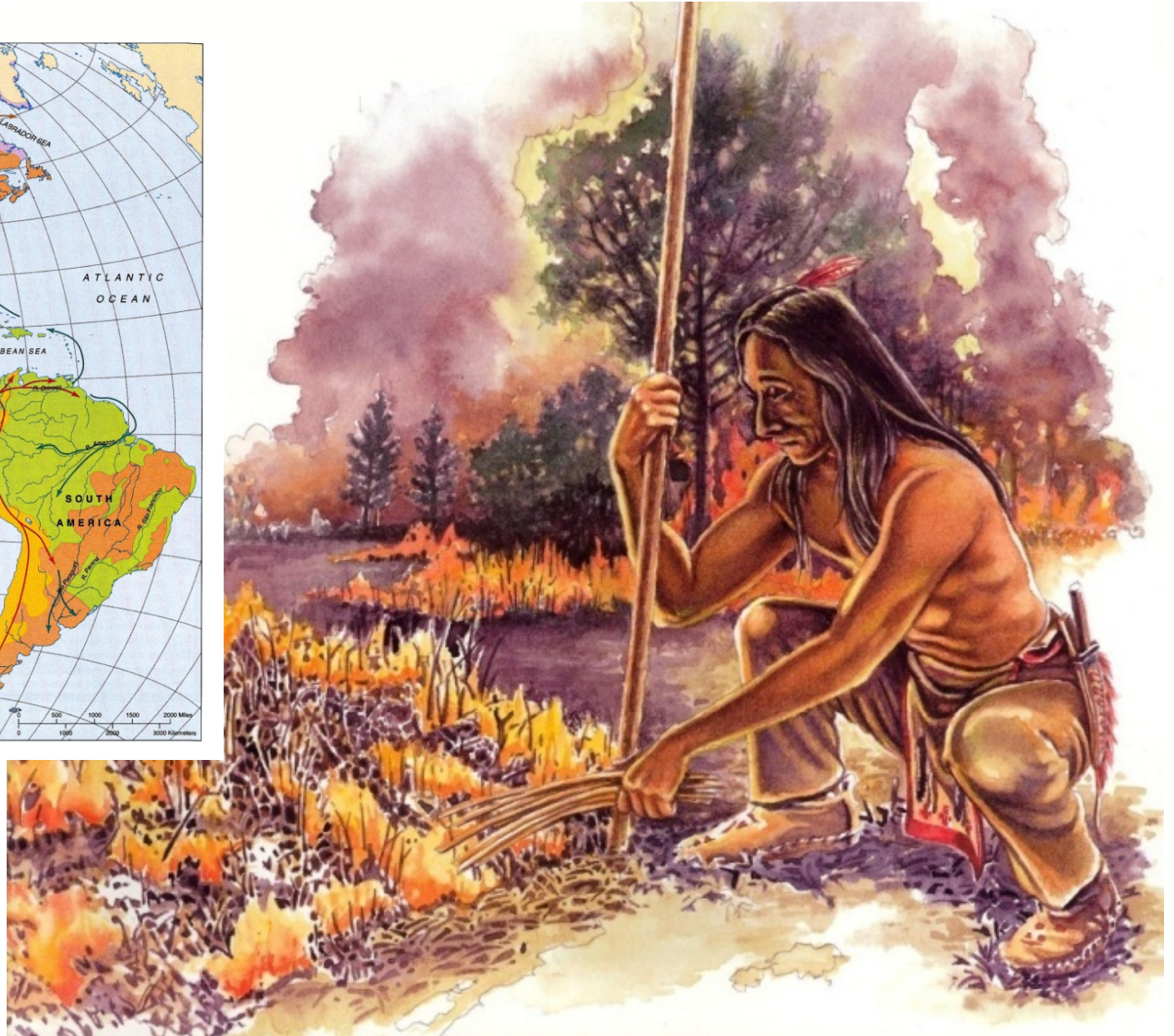


ca. 18,000 years BP

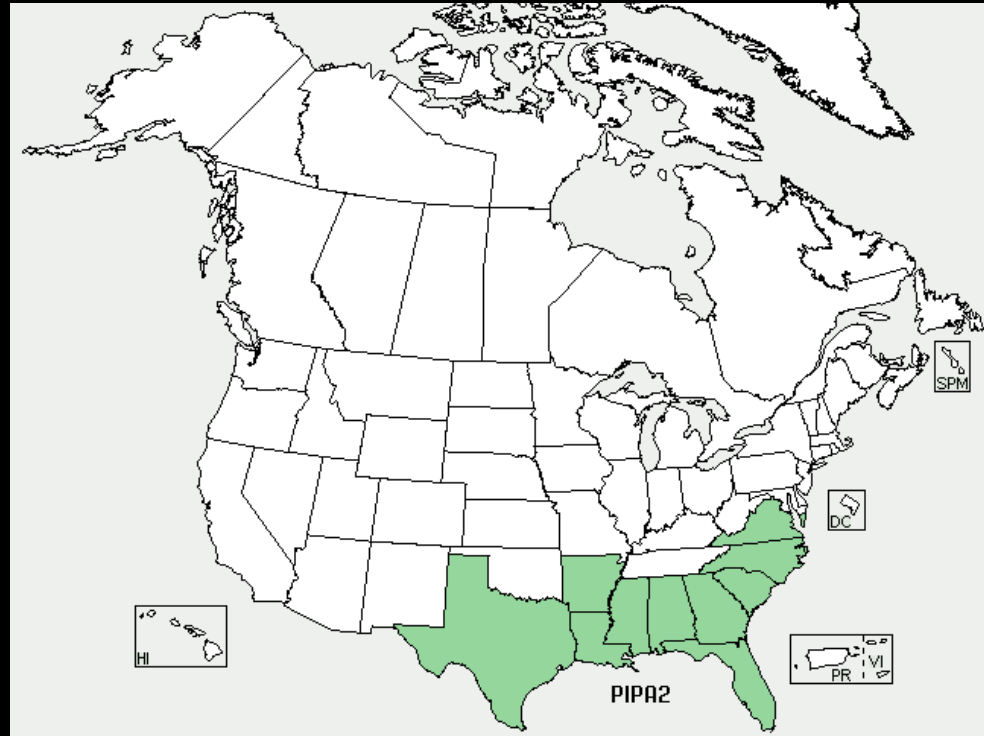


# Toting the Firestick ....

## From Berengia to *Tierra Del Fuego*, the Land of **Fire**



# Humans Shaped the Southland with Fire, and Fire Shaped Them.

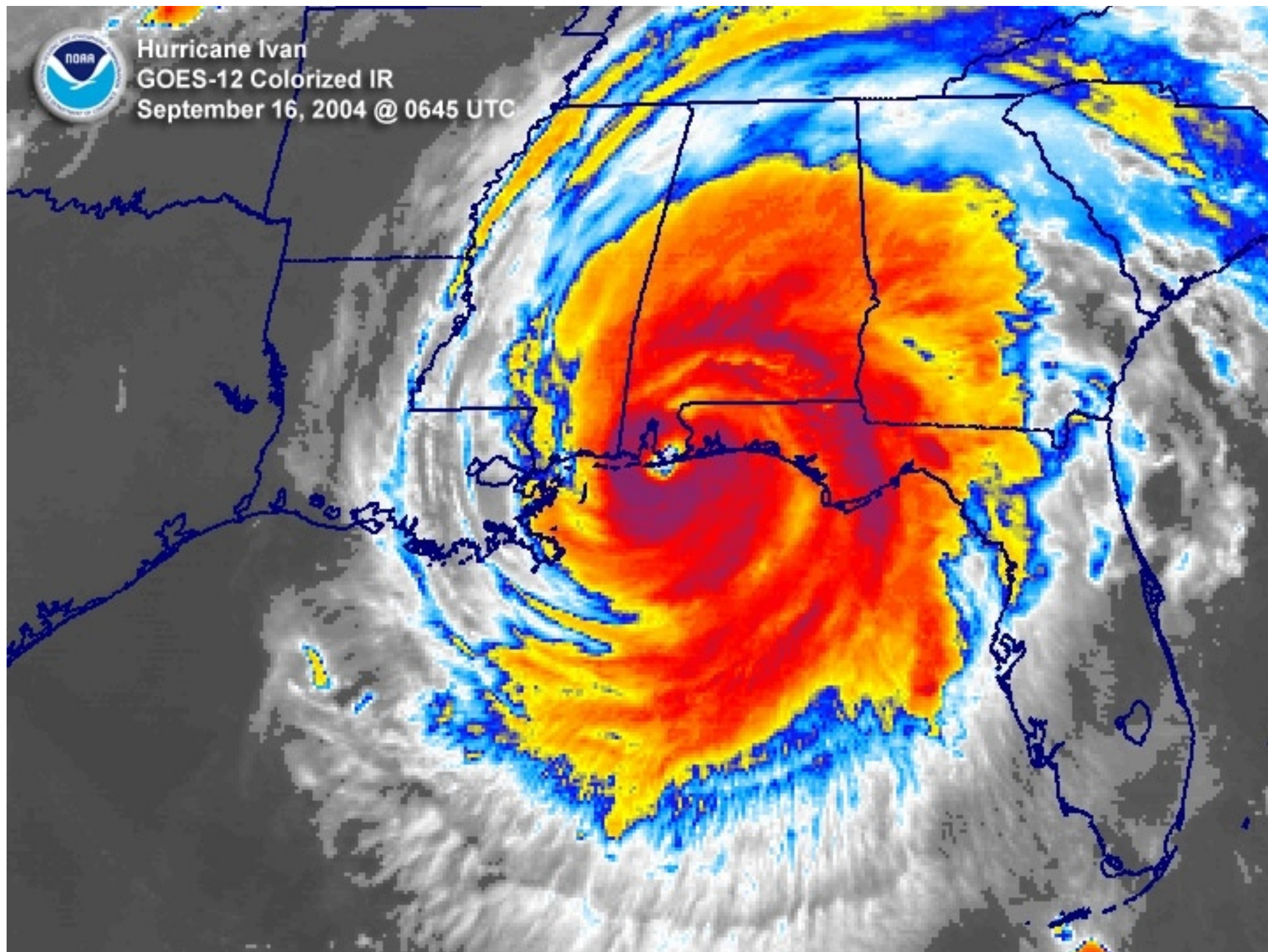


The First Nations and Lightning Sculpt The  
Longleaf Pine *FireForest*





Hurricane Ivan  
GOES-12 Colorized IR  
September 16, 2004 @ 0645 UTC



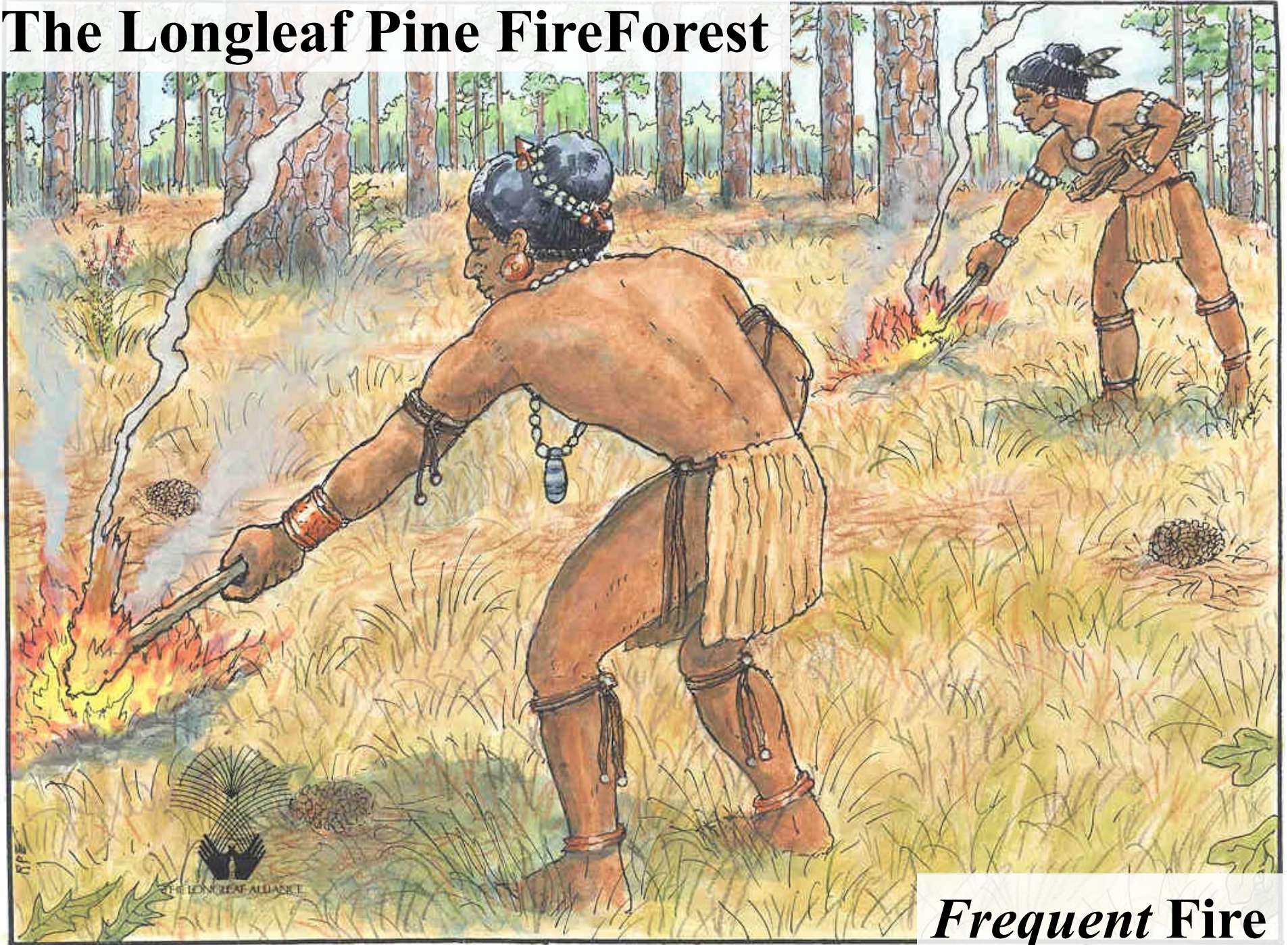




**Tampa,  
Florida**

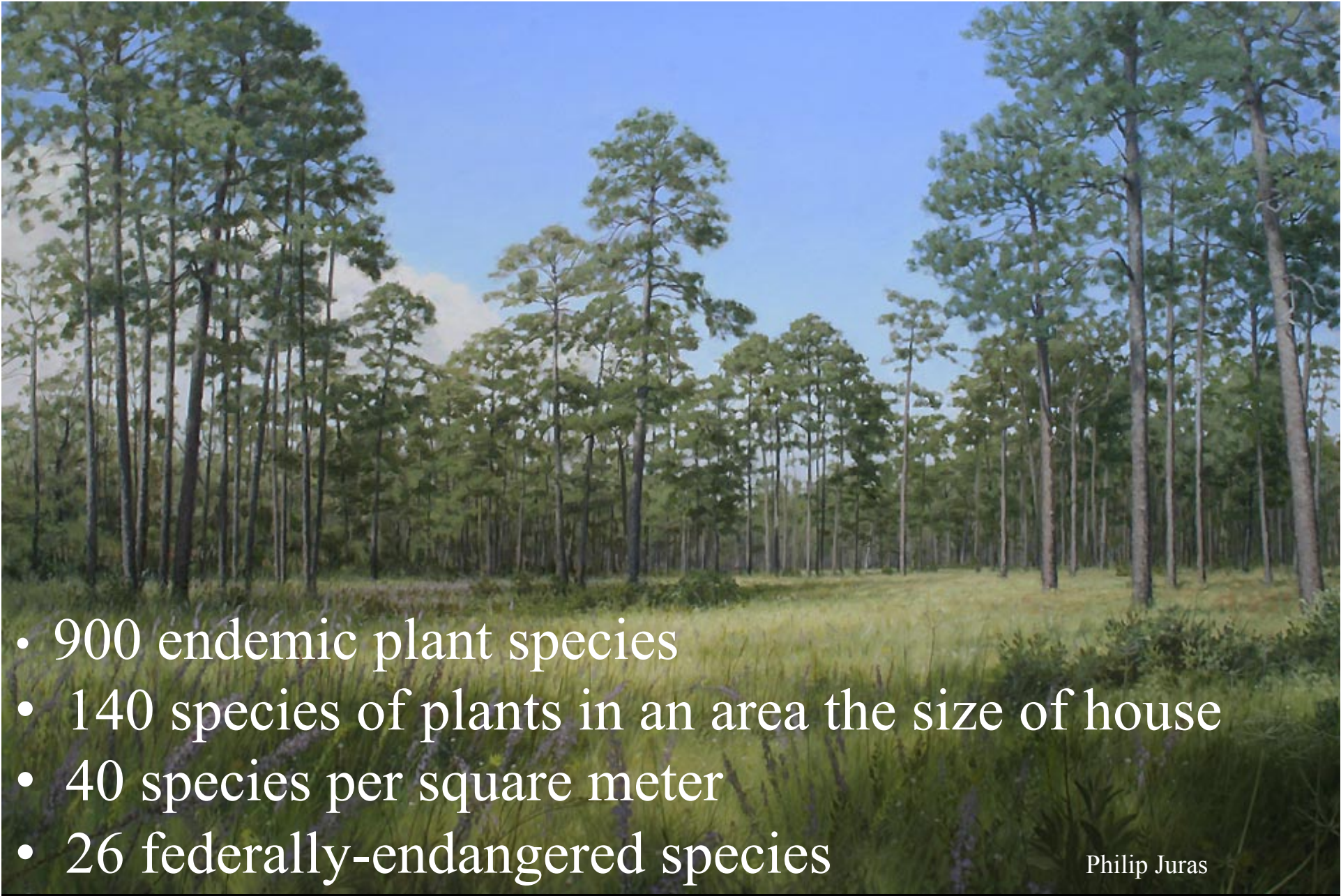


# The Longleaf Pine FireForest



***Frequent Fire***



- 
- A photograph of a tall pine forest with a grassy clearing in the foreground. The trees are tall and slender, with green needles. The ground is covered in green grass and some low-lying plants. The sky is blue with some light clouds.
- 900 endemic plant species
  - 140 species of plants in an area the size of house
  - 40 species per square meter
  - 26 federally-endangered species

Philip Juras

**This is What We are Burning to Bring Back**







# **Humans Shaped the Southland with Fire and Fire Shaped Them.**

**“Discovery” and Exploration ... The Pogrom**

**The Frontier:**

**The Celts: Burning and Grazing**

**Africans**

**Mining the Southland: Deerskins, RR & Cotton**

## De Soto 1540



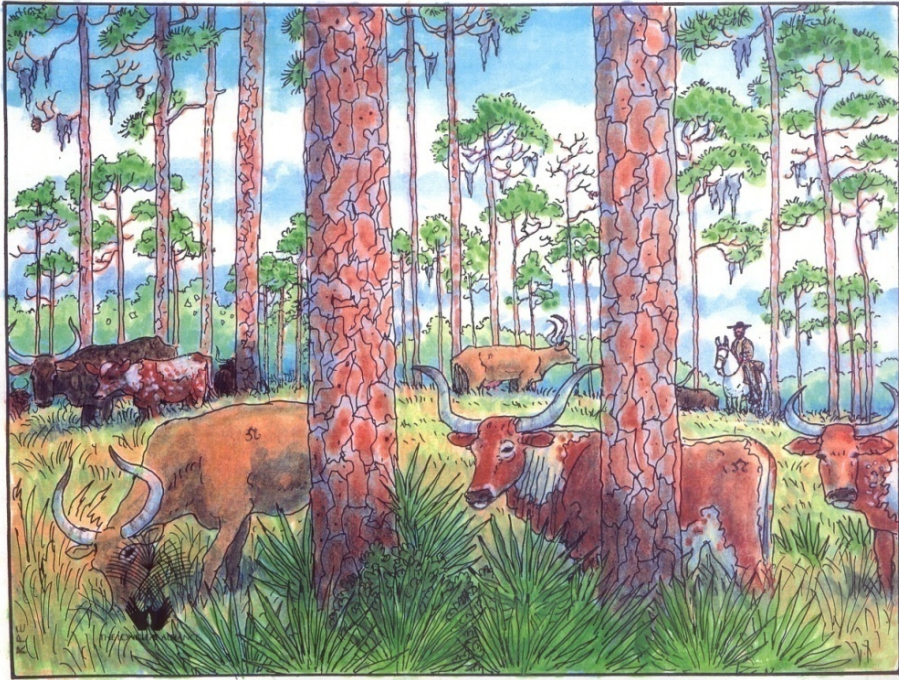
**Stealing Gold and “Saving” Souls**





**Celts, Crackers and Rednecks**





# Herding

**Huntin-n-Fishing,**

**Making and Drinking Whiskey,**

**Music, Dancing & Horse-racing**







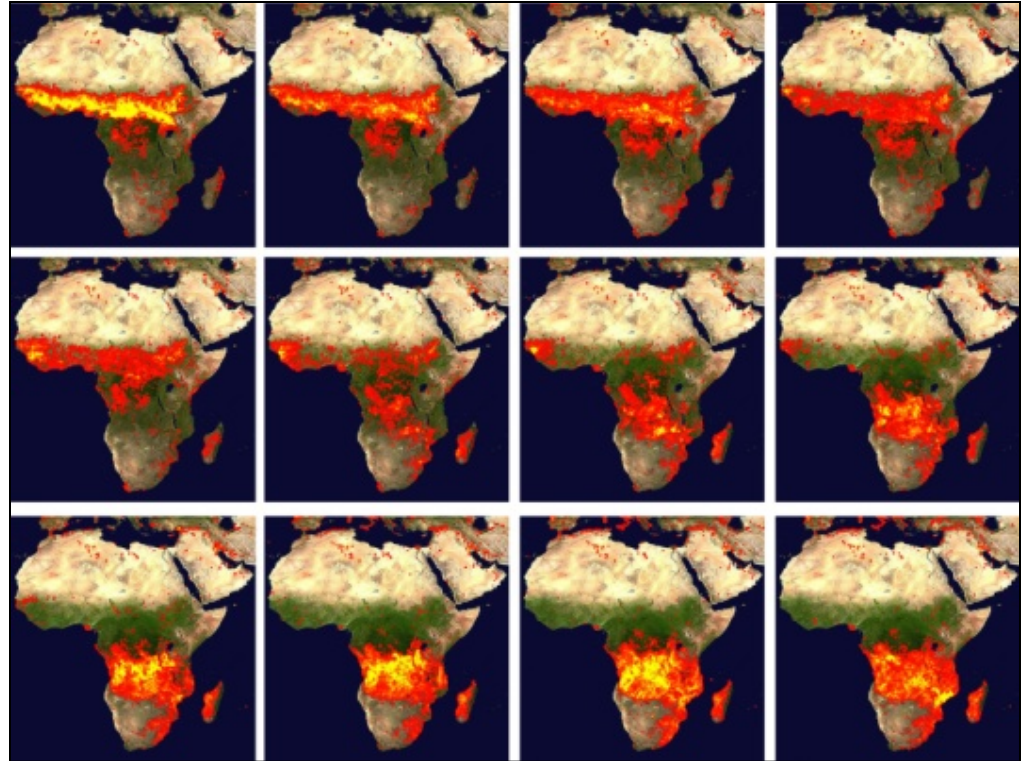
In case y' all are  
wondering ...

Far-Tar

fire tower



# The African Contribution to Prescribed Fire in the Southland: An Unrecognized and Underappreciated Phenomenon







# Settin' The Woods On Fire

Comb your hair and paint and powder

You act proud and I'll act prouder

You sing loud and I'll sing louder

**Tonight we're settin' the woods on fire!**

You're my gal and I'm your feller dress up in my frock and yell

I'll look swell but you'll look sweller settin' the woods on fire

We'll take in all the honky tonks tonight we're having fun

We'll show the folks a brand new dance that never has been done

I don't care who thinks we're silly you'll be daffy I'll be dilly

We'll order up two bowls of chili

Settin' the woods on fire!

I'll gas up my hot rod stoker we'll get hotter than a poker

You'll be broke but I'll be broker

Tonight we're settin' the woods on fire!

We'll sit close to one another up our street and down the other

Tonight we'll have ball oh brother, settin' the woods on fire

We'll put aside a little time to fix a flat or two

My trey and tubes are doin' fine but the air is showin' through

You clap hands and I'll start howlin' **we'll do all the law's allowin'**

Tomorrow I'll be right back plowin'

Settin' the woods on fire!



**Hank Williams, Sr.**



# Humans Shaped the Southland with Fire, and Fire Shaped Them.

**The Dixie Crusaders**

**Herbert L. Stoddard's Heresy**

**Tall Timbers: Fire Science**

**Dr. John Shea**

**Smokey Bear**

**Disintegration and Fuel Build-Up**

# The Dixie Crusaders



The Southern Forestry Education Project



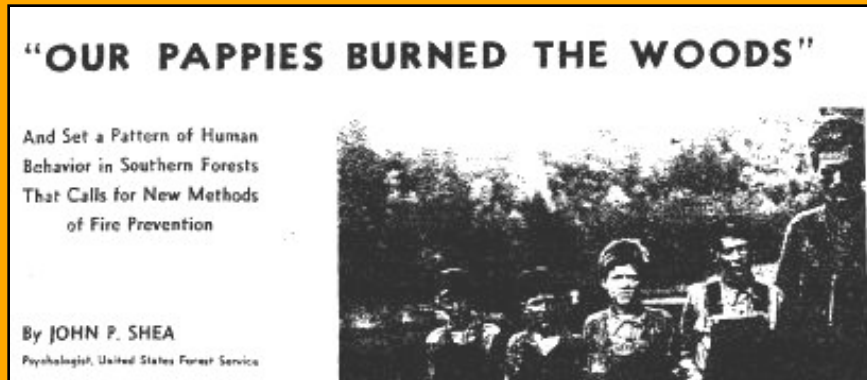
# The Bobwhite Quail & Tall Timbers



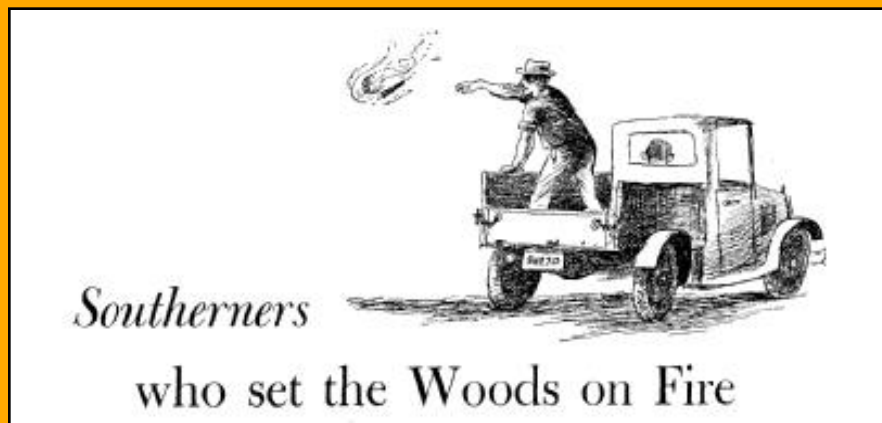
**Mr. Herbert L. Stoddard**

# Fire Science





“Fire gives them (Southerners) distinct emotional satisfactions which they strive to explain away by pseudo-economic reasons. Their explanations that woods fires kill off the boll weevil and serve other economic ends are something more than mere ignorance. They are the defensive beliefs of a disadvantaged culture group.”

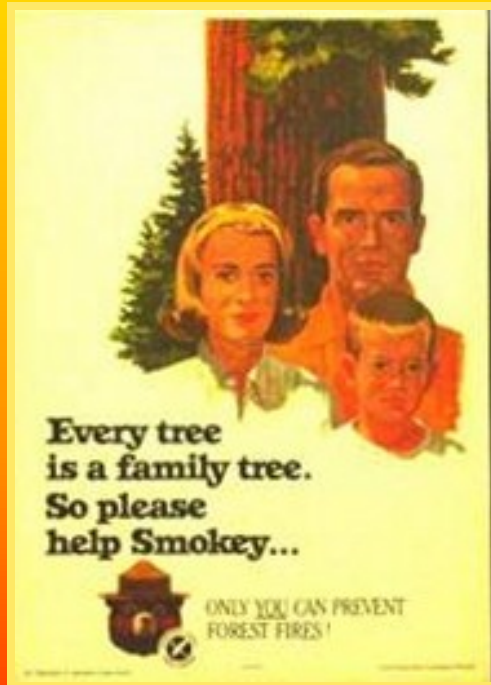


Dr. John P. Shea 1940

Columbia University Psychologist

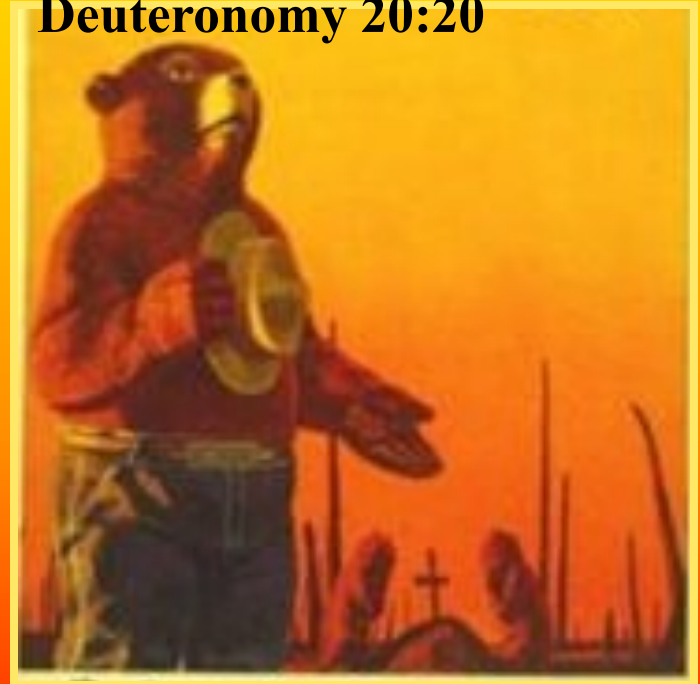


Forest fires burn  
more than trees.

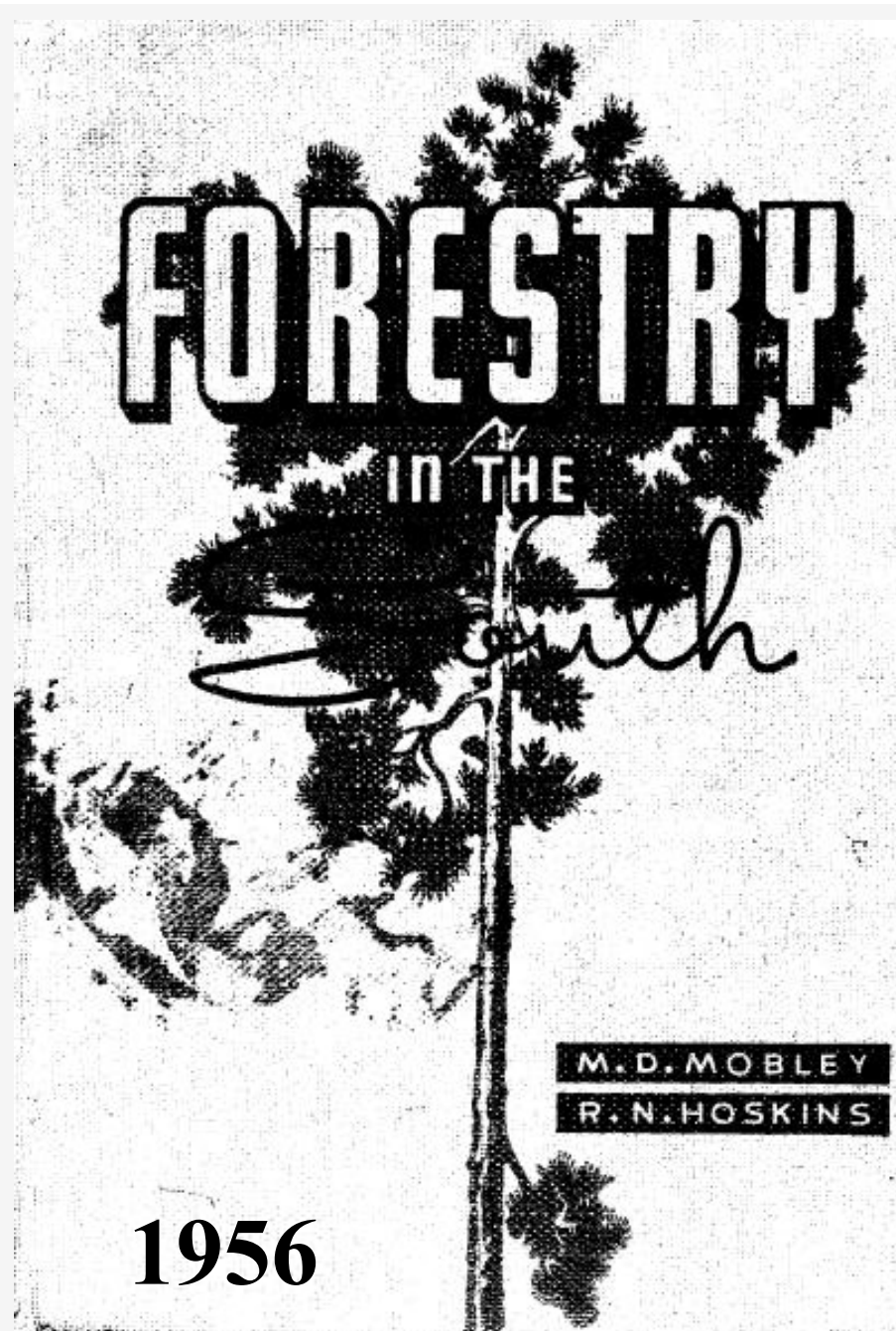


*For the tree ... is  
man's life.*

Deuteronomy 20:20



**Smokey the Bear**



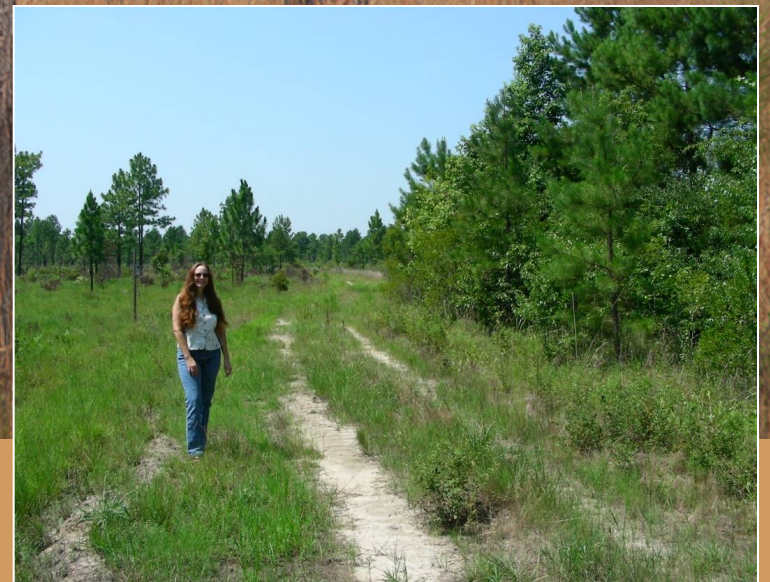
A Fire Fighting Crew Using One-Half Ton Pumper Truck and Hand Tools





<http://www.bethyoung.net/>

## The Longleaf Pine *Fireforest*











“Progress”

&



“Development”





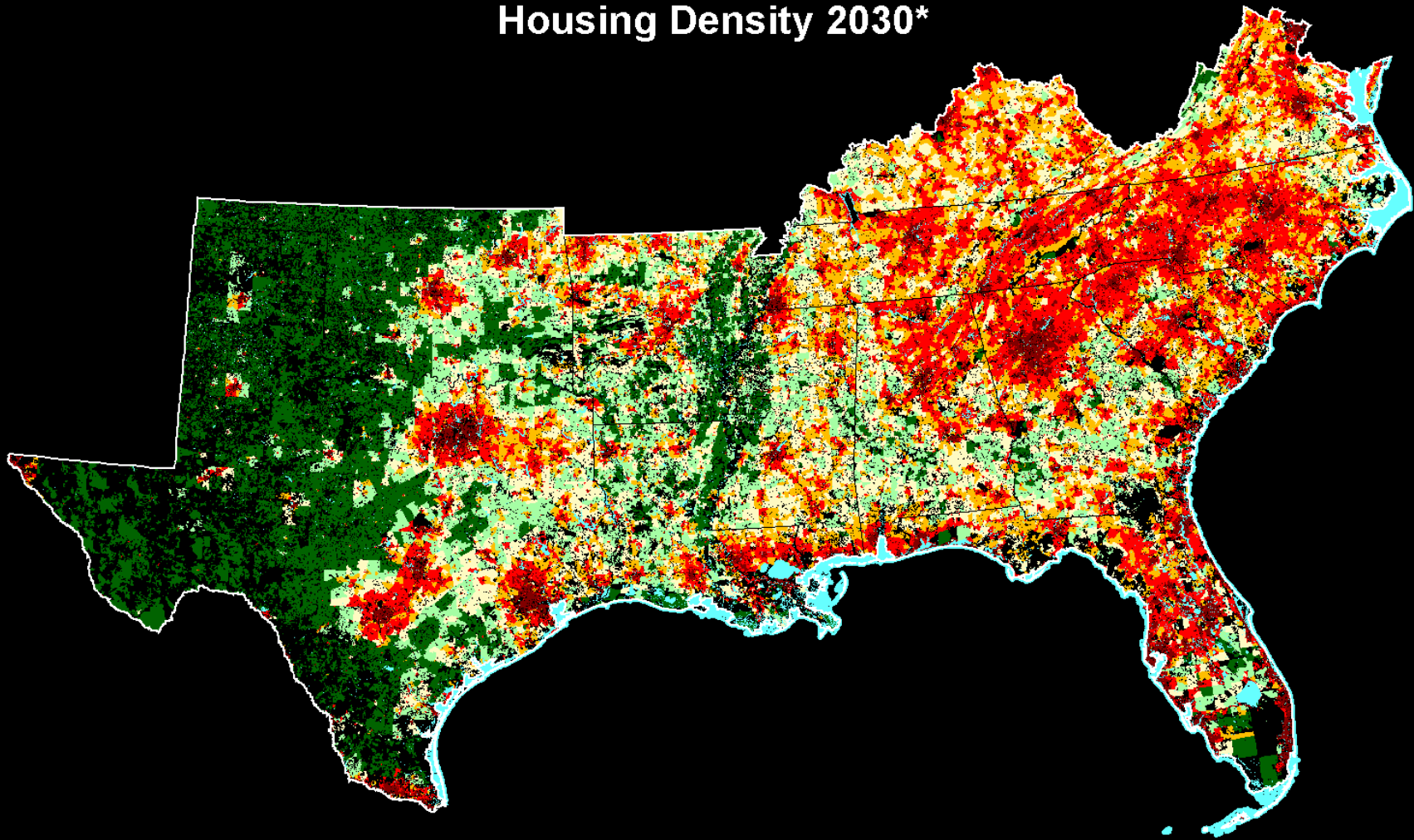


# Challenges and Opportunities to Return Fire to the Southland



# Southern Region

Housing Density 2030\*



Housing Units per Km<sup>2</sup>

\*Linear projection of 1990s growth



Copyright 2004 R.B. Hammer and V.C. Radeloff  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

# Along The Southland's Roadsides Today







*We Have Met the Enemy and He is Us*





"Well, I seen all the commotion, with that there monster destroyin' half the city and whatnot, and I says to myself, 'Hell! Why don't someone just shoot the varmint?'"

## *Are Rednecks the Unsung Heroes of Ecosystem Management?*

by Francis E. Putz

from



Vol. 13, No. 2/3 Summer/Fall 2003 pp. 10-14

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# PyroPossum

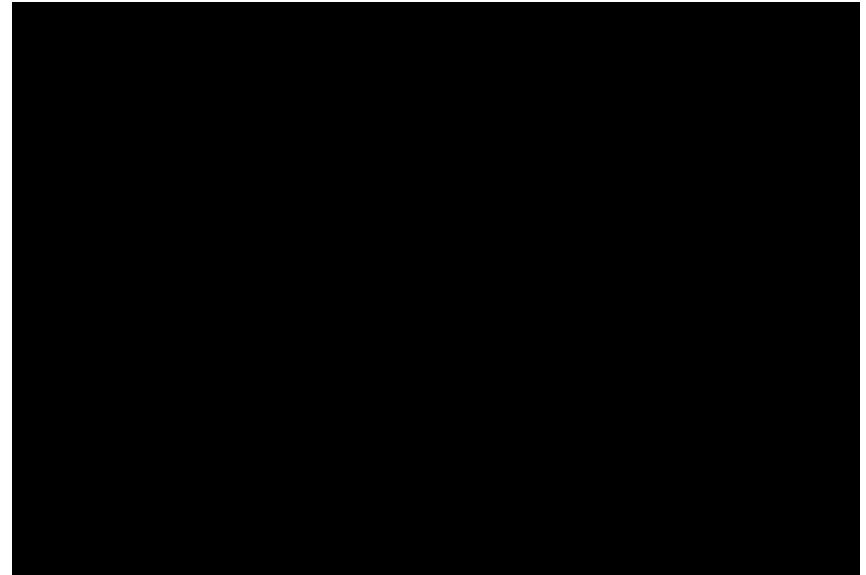


is not the answer

# Perspective Matters



**Allen & Starr 1982**





# Bringing Fire Back

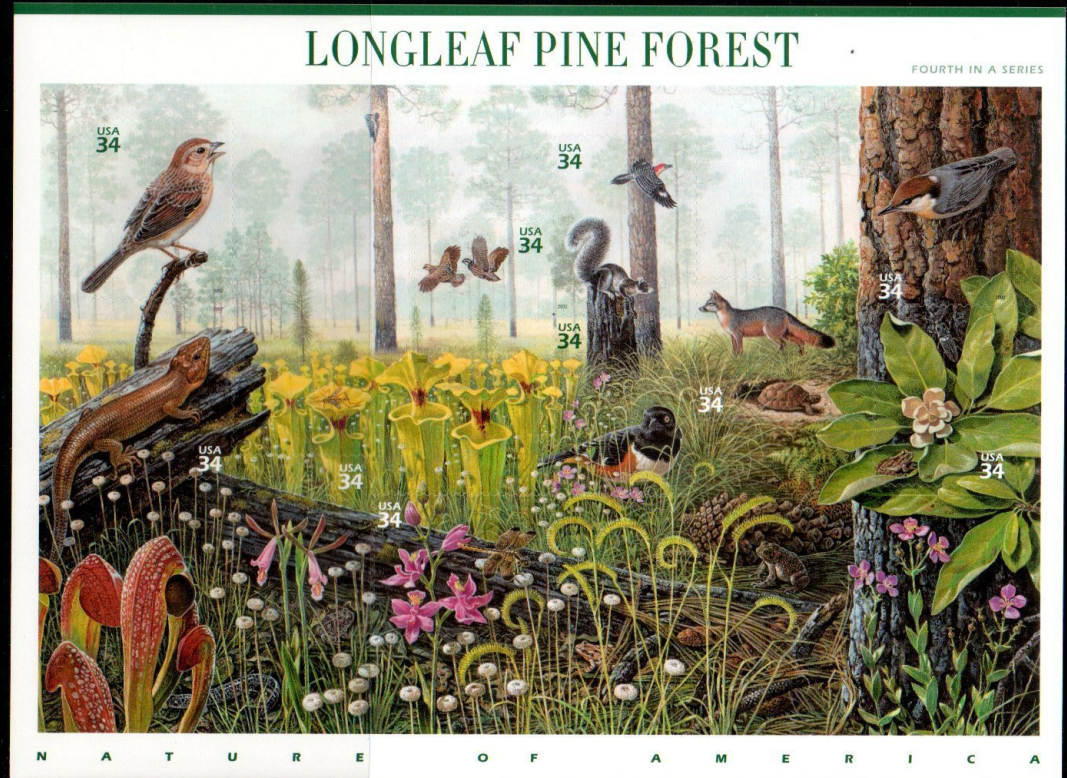
- Jones Ecological Research Center at Ichuaway
- The Longleaf Alliance
- Multicultural Heritage: Pride of Place and *Wild Life*
  - The Elders and the Children
  - Cool Critters and Plants
  - The Humanities
  - Emotions
    - Ritual, Ceremony & Celebration



*We have a dream.*



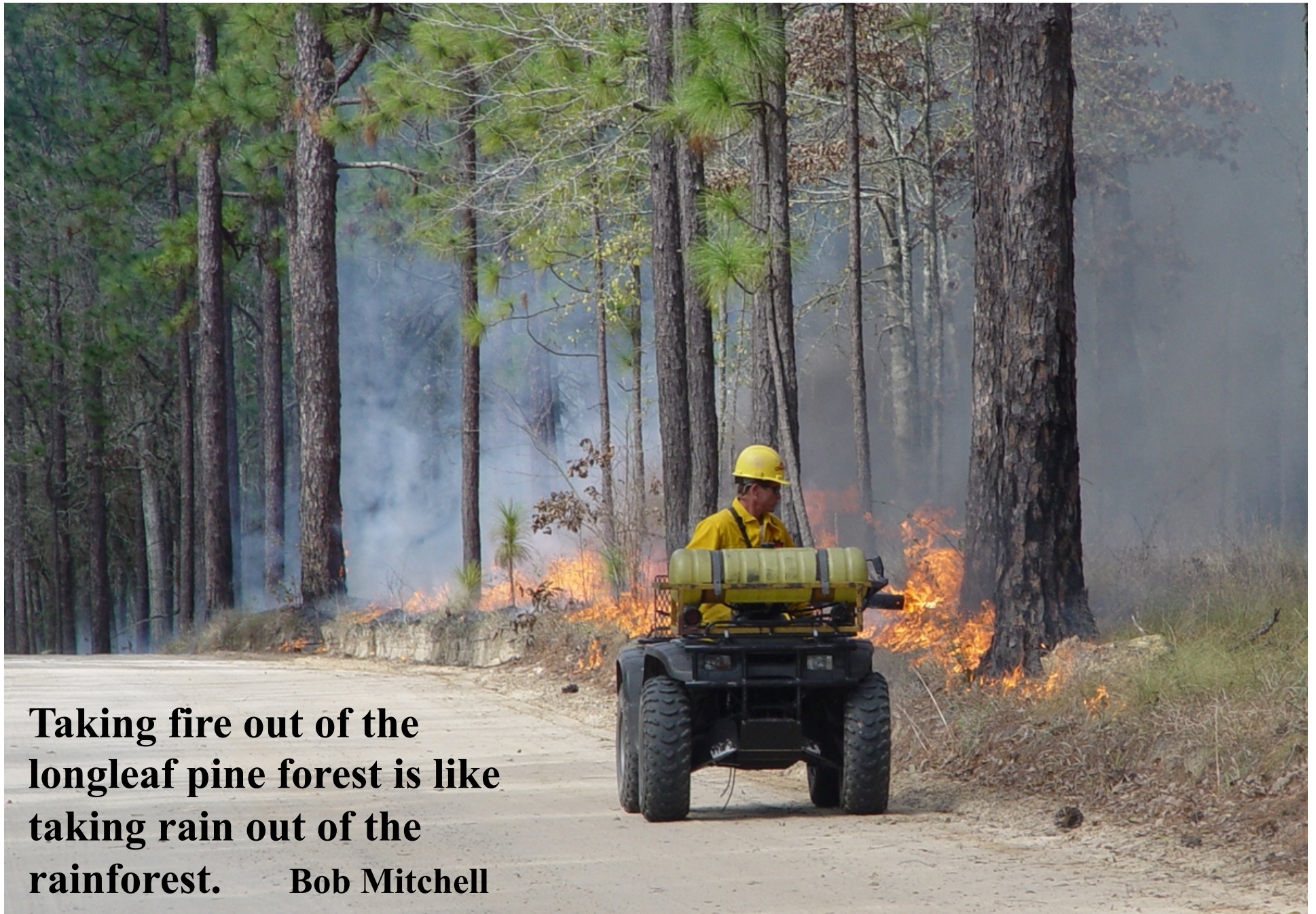
# The Paragon



**Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens  
can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.**

Margaret Mead





**Taking fire out of the  
longleaf pine forest is like  
taking rain out of the  
rainforest.      Bob Mitchell**

**A Paragon: Joseph W. Jones Ecological Research Center at Ichuaway**





**Restoring Appreciation for and On-the-Ground  
Implementation of Multicultural Heritage**





Our fellow Southerners will come around eventually to conservation, and big-time too – when they realize it's their *heritage*.

If we can't combine regional pride with conservation science, all is at peril.





## University of Central Florida

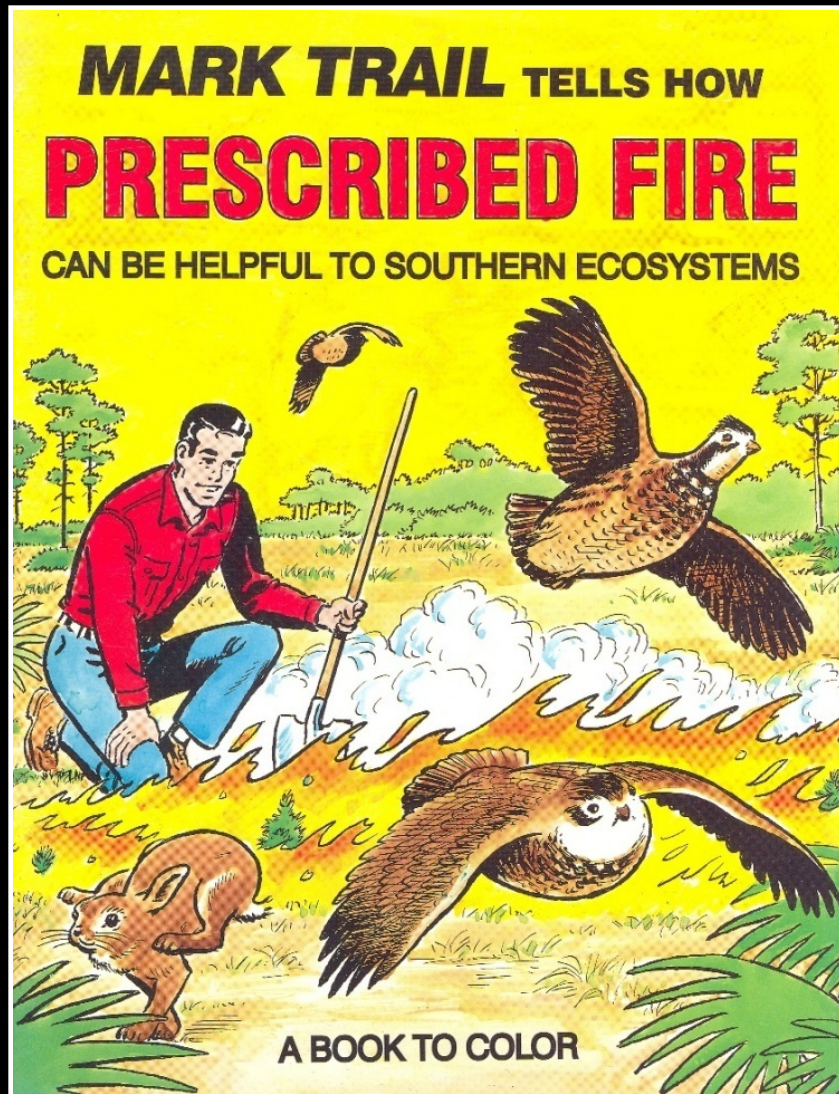


## Berry College

















V 360 species of animals spend all or part of their lives in gopher tortoise burrows



















# 150 thousand days old





# The Life of a Boy and His Family...



...and the Life of a Tree





**Emotions Bind  
People to the Land**



















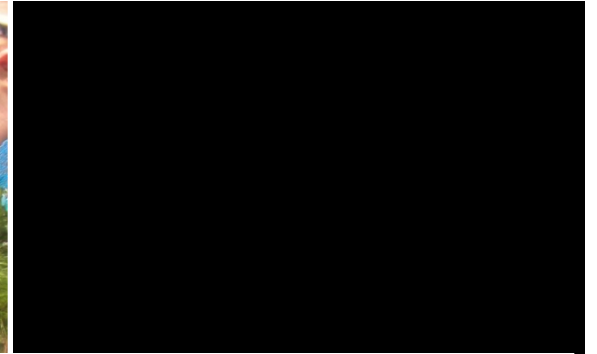


**Annual Busk Ceremony**





















Saturday, March 13, 2010  
Sprewell Bluff State Park ~ Thomaston, Georgia

Please visit [www.georgiawildlife.com](http://www.georgiawildlife.com) before March 13, 2010 for possible event cancellation and rain date (March 20) arrangements.  
Event Fee: State Park daily parking fee \$4.00 per vehicle.

## Fire On The Mountain!

Come together with your family and friends for a celebration of what makes the Pine Mountain Region at Sprewell Bluff State Park such a magnificent place: wildlife, ancient longleaf pine forests, bluegrass music and **FIRE!**

Join the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Resources and State Parks & Historic Sites Divisions, Georgia Forestry Commission, Flint Riverkeepers, The Nature Conservancy of Georgia, Callaway Gardens, Georgia Power, The Environmental Resources Network for this unforgettable event! Bring the entire family for the ultimate, close-up look at Mother Nature's fireworks set in the natural amphitheater of the Flint River Valley.

Beginning at noon, festival goers will enjoy the sounds of bluegrass music, the tastes of hot dogs, hamburgers and drinks, and the beauty of what makes Sprewell Bluff so special.

Natural resource agency staff will be on hand throughout the afternoon providing demonstrations on how prescribed fires are conducted and why, presentations on Georgia's unique and diminishing longleaf pine forests, and LIVE animal programs showcasing some of the wonderful wildlife that call Sprewell Bluff home!



When the winds begin to stay on course, the temperature just on cue, and the humidity is perfect, the professionals will begin...setting Fire on the Mountain!

Don't miss this amazing opportunity to share with your family the beauty and knowledge of prescribed fire. Help them experience this fascinating phenomenon while safely watching from the banks of the Flint River at Sprewell Bluff State Park.



Please visit [www.georgiawildlife.com](http://www.georgiawildlife.com) for further information and for possible rain date arrangements.

(Rain date: Saturday, March 20, 2010)

# Prescribed Fire can be Fun



# First Fire







**Which do we need more of ...?**



***A society is ultimately measured not by what it develops or consumes, but rather by what it has nurtured and preserved.***

**Jim Posewitz**

**Orion: The Hunter's Institute  
Helena, Montana**



**The hand that holds the brand is less likely to  
be burned by the fire.**

Tuareg Proverb









[We were branded as]... mavericks... criticized for even bringing up the subject.

Smokey Bear must have panicked during his fire. If he had taken time to think things over, in his cave, before he went to Washington, he might have realized that an aftermath of his fire might have been more berry patches in the years following. If you play with fire you can get burned, but with care fire is a friend, not an enemy. Xxxxxx

[Smokey]... has become a man in a false face... the Smokey mask... appeals to our sense of security in the guise of a bear. ...Smokey is not a last act, but a misstep, a caricature. Paul Shepard

I see no advantage in permitting a cartoon bear to brainwash us into thinking that a natural process is bad. Ed Komarek

Smokey Bear policies have done more to destroy the wildlife habitat and ecological balance of the... U.S. than any other human intrusion. George Wuerthner 1995

Smokey Bear was a false prophet. Leon Neil

The Legacy of Smokey's Message: Problems in Fire-Starved Longleaf Pine Forests. Smokey's message was quietly updated in 2001 to reflect the distinction between wildfires and forest fires. John McGuire 2007

Smokey is a very rich bear... [he] picked up \$31,610,000 worth of gratis advertising last year. Bill Gilbert

These lands were customarily burned either by nature or by the Indians, before the white man came. Smokey Bear and previous generations of white man have done some real damage by keeping fire out of the woods. Robert E. Reid – Colonel, USAF (ret.)



The first thing you do when you find yourself in  
a hole is to stop digging. Abraham Lincoln

[We were branded as]... mavericks... criticized for even bringing up the subject.

I see no advantage in permitting a cartoon bear to brainwash us into thinking that a  
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McGuire



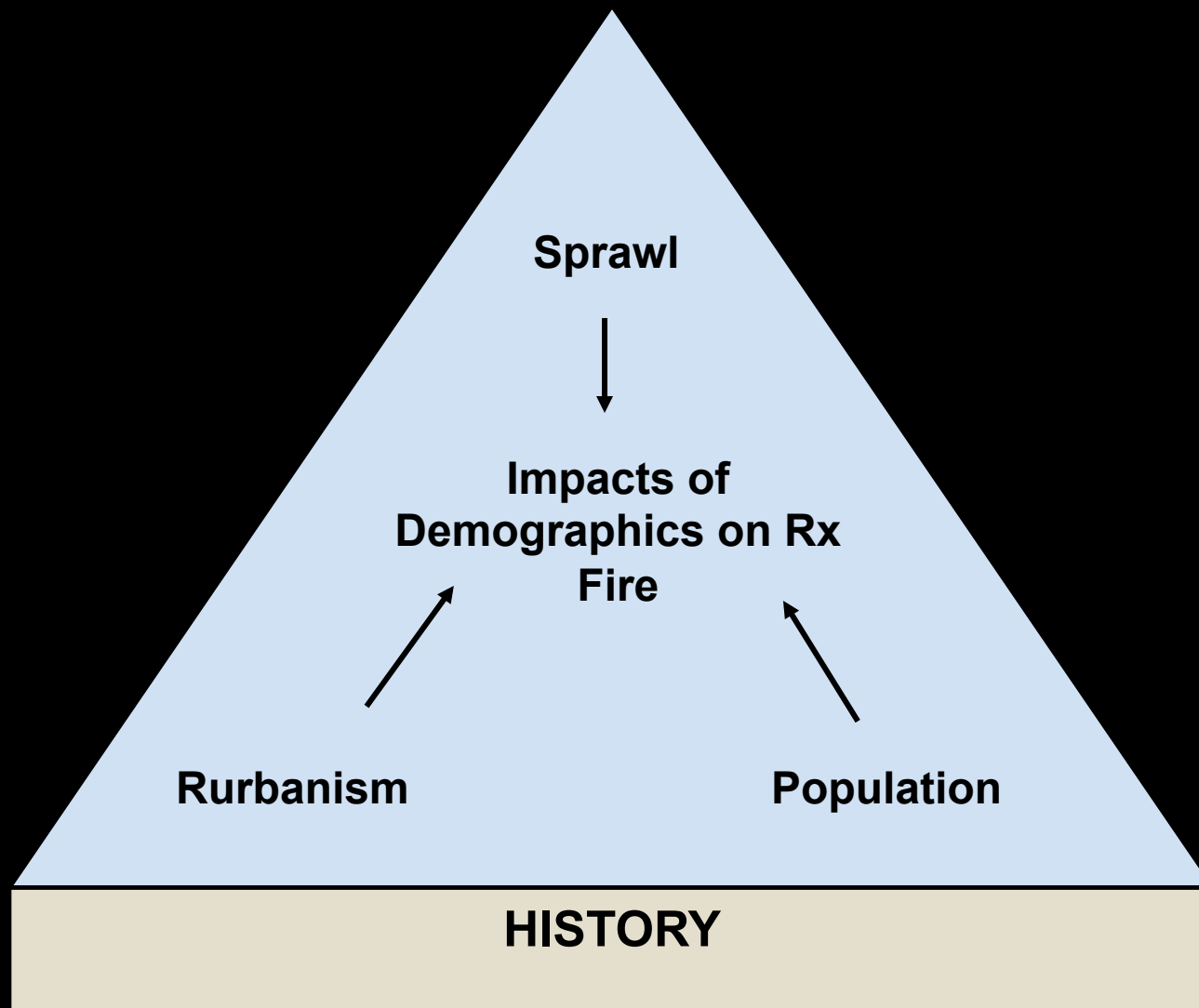
# And How?



## Values Continuum

**Deep Ecology** ..... **Utilitarian**







The background of the slide is a reproduction of the painting 'The Starry Night' by J.M.W. Turner. It depicts a turbulent, swirling night sky with a bright, glowing yellow sun or moon in the upper right corner. Below the sky, a dark, jagged, and twisted tree trunk rises from the left side. In the lower portion of the image, a small town or village is visible, featuring a prominent church with a tall, thin spire. The overall color palette is dominated by deep blues, greens, and yellows, with a sense of intense, swirling movement.

# BURNING IS AN ART ACQUIRED BY EXPERIENCE

Croker and Boyer (1975)

van Gogh (1889)



*Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* Janisse Ray

*Anthill* E.O. Wilson

*Longleaf*: Roger Reid

Philip Juras' Interpretive and Landscape Art

Reed Noss SE Grasslands Project

Longleaf Alliance Conferences 2008 & 2010  
“Teaching kids the Longleaf Story”

Eastern Native Grass Symposium 2008



Value of liberal arts exceeds material gain: James Wagner, President of Emory U.

*Barriers to Understanding the Influence of Use of Fire by Aborigines on Vegetation:*

Both anthropologists and ecologists look down their academic noses at me and they fail miserably in their intentions to hide their disgust at my effort! Omar Stewart 1963

Critical Thinking: Why is it so hard to teach?

Daniel Willingham *American Educator*

And so...

What *is* critical thinking ...? What is Scholarship ...?

Physical Sciences ... other “Natural” Sciences

Social Sciences ... Historical Research, Cultural, Ethics



*In the past I revolted against ceremony, ridiculing it as senseless, stupid, outmoded; but no more. Ceremonies serve a good purpose. The forms are prescribed, and through their performance give pleasure, security, identity, confidence in social relationships and, as such, an 'inner strength.' Many ceremonies permit persons to act out their feelings in a meaningful way. Ceremonies bind together those who participate; they delineate an in-group; a gathering of like minds. Ceremonies often arouse emotions, and ensure that we shall remember the occasion as well as the persons who participated. They help strangers become loyal friends. Ceremonies in war and peace, in marriage, birth, and death, unite families, communities, and nations; they help people to live in security and trust. It is not surprising that ancient philosophers of human nature expounded the need for ritual and order as a prerequisite to civilized life.*

*Val Geist*



THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF

# Parks AND Open Space

**How Land Conservation**

**Helps Communities Grow Smart  
and Protect the Bottom Line**



BY

STEVE LERNER

AND

WILLIAM POOLE





Fire enters humanity's moral universe, and thus into the scholarly realm of the humanities.

Prescribed fire doesn't need a policy. It needs a poet.

Stephen Pyne