



## Spring News 2026

Welcome to SGI's Quarterly Newsletter. We invite you to explore how we're working together to protect the Southeast's disappearing grasslands.

### Program Updates



#### Conservation in the Community

Upcoming Events:

- Monthly - join SGI at the APSU Native Plant garden on select Fridays from 8:00 to 10:00AM in Clarksville.
- Guided Botany Hike at Guthrie Prairie - Wednesday, May 27th from 5:30PM to 7:30PM.

[Click here to see our events calendar with upcoming community engagement events across the region!](#)



## Traditional Management and Federal Advocacy

SGI's Tribal Program has been revamped to the Indigenous Land Stewardship Program. From trialing traditional drip torch methods to attending national Native seed conferences, our ILS Coordinators have been busy. SGI's [Katie Smith-Easter](#) spent time in Washington D.C. this spring advocating for investment in Indigenous conservation program support.

Read more about Katie's trip [here](#).



### Native Plant Materials in 2026

Scouting has begun in earnest this season, with focus on the Southwestern Appalachians, Ridge & Valley, and Interior Plateau Ecoregions of Tennessee and North Alabama. [Seeds of Success](#) remains a primary objective in our conservation collection efforts; however, this season, we are branching out to include more SGI focused collections. These seeds will go into storage and be used for restoration, reconstruction, production and cultural projects for SGI and partners.

Want to contribute to the Native Plants Materials Program? We are in need of paper bags for collection and nursery pots in good shape. 3-7 gallon shrub and tree pots are ideal! You can drop off bags and pots at the bottom level of 311 College Street, Clarksville, TN 37040.



### Cumberland Plateau Grasslands Status Assessment & Conservation Plan

SGI's field research teams have hired technicians and begun vegetation plot sampling in remnant grasslands across the region as part of SGI's Grasslandia project.

We have also started inventory work in two National Park Service units in Tennessee and Mississippi: grassland inventory and assessments for the Natchez Trace Parkway and ecological and botanical inventories of several tracts at Shiloh National Military Park.

SGI is pleased to announce the publication of a [Comprehensive Status Assessment and Conservation Plan for the Grasslands, Savannas, and other Open Ecosystems of the Cumberland Plateau](#). Scroll down to learn more about the report.

[Check out the full scope of our Research program.](#)



## Scientific Publications and Reports



- 1) [Cumberland Plateau Status Assessment and Conservation Plan for Grasslands, Savannas, and other Open Ecosystems](#). Report for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.
  - 2) [Fire History and Tree Invasion in an Ozark Glade, Barrens, and Woodland Complex](#). Scientific article in the journal Fire Ecology, co-authored by SGI's Chief Conservation Officer Theo Witsell.
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## SGI in the News



- 1) [Austin Peay institute secures \\$10M grant to restore Middle Tennessee's lost grasslands](#). by Patsy Montesinos, News Channel 5 Nashville.
  - 2) [Grasslands are vulnerable in the Appalachians. New research shows a path for conservation](#), Caroline Eggers, WPLN News Nashville.
  - 3) [Clarksville organization working to stop the loss of southern grasslands](#). by Will Darnall, WKMS Murray State Public Radio.
  - 4) [Alabama lost 90% of its grasslands. Now researchers have \\$800,000 to bring them back](#). by Margaret Kates, AL.com.
  - 5) [The race to restore Alabama's grasslands](#). by Holly Swafford, SoulGrown.com.
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## SGI Blog



- 1) SGI Partner Spotlight: [Roundstone Native Seed](#)
- 2) Tribal Fly In - [Indigenous Advocacy for Grassland Conservation](#)

# Partner Spotlight



Image of the logo of Roundstone Seed LLC made entirely of seeds and plant materials.

SGI is a proud partner with [Roundstone Native Seed, LLC](#), a farm growing native plants and providing essential native seed resources to the Southeast. Roundstone is an important part of the SGI origin story, and still works closely with our programs today. Click the button below and read our blog to learn more about Roundstone's story and get inspired by what hard work can accomplish!

[Roundstone Native Seed – Growing a Legacy of Native Grasslands](#)

## Find Us in the Community



SGI's upcoming Volunteer events and workdays are always posted here

[segrasslands.volunteerhub.com](http://segrasslands.volunteerhub.com)

[Volunteer Calendar](#)

[Event Calendar](#)

Explore our [Events Calendar](#) to see upcoming events across our focal region, from community programs and field days to talks and presentations led by SGI experts. Join us to connect, learn, and celebrate the beauty and importance of the Southeast's grasslands.

## Events

14<sup>th</sup>  
EASTERN NATIVE GRASSLANDS  
Hosted by Southeastern Grasslands Institute (SGI) | Austin Peay State University Symposium

**Keynote Speakers**

 Dwayne Estes, Ph.D.  
Southeastern Grasslands Institute

 Jeremy French,  
Southeastern Grasslands Institute

 Elizabeth "Betsy" Boughton, Ph.D.  
Archbold Biological Station

 Jan Thompson, Ph.D.  
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

 Chris Heltzer  
The Nature Conservancy Nebraska

14<sup>th</sup>  
EASTERN NATIVE GRASSLANDS  
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**Call for Presentations!**

Deadline to submit presentations:  
**June 5, 2026**

**Session Tracks:**

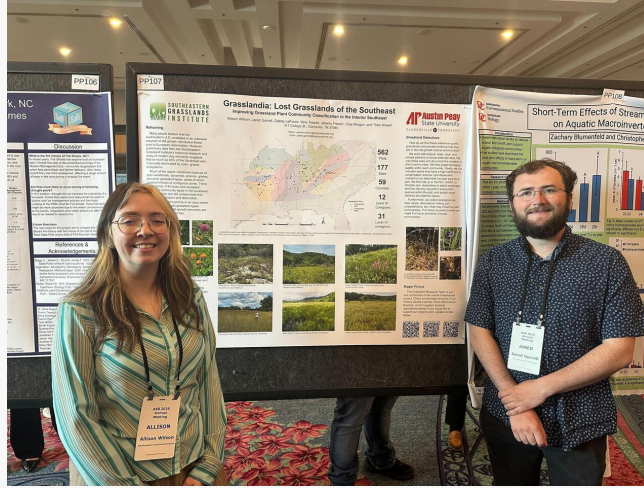
- Wildlife & Conservation
- Regenerative Agriculture
- Landscape Architecture
- Production



**Save the Date:**  
October 13-16, 2026  
Bruce Convention Center Hopkinsville, KY

SGI is pleased to host the 14th Eastern Native Grasslands Symposium! Our Request for Presentations is now **live** on the symposium website. Session tracks include wildlife & conservation, regenerative agriculture, landscape architecture, and native plant production. The deadline for presentation submissions is **June 5, 2026**. We hope to see you in Kentucky October 13-16 at this year's symposium! [Submit a presentation topic here](#).

SGI's Biologists [Allison Wilson](#) and [Jared Gorrell](#) attended the Association of Southeastern Biologists Meeting this spring in Mobile, AL, where they presented their work on SGI's Grasslandia project. Our Grasslandia field research teams travel across the interior Southeast to document the most intact remnants of grassland community types in order to improve community descriptions and compile reference site data for broader restoration efforts across the SGI focal region.



SGI's Executive Director [Dwayne Estes](#) and Chief Conservation Officer [Theo Witsell](#) gave a virtual talk to Lees-McRae College natural and health science students. Joined by Dr. Jennifer Geib, students watched the Emmy Award winning documentary about SGI, [The Prairie Preacher](#), and learned about the importance of grassland ecosystems and the biodiversity of the habitats of the southeastern U.S. Many thanks to Dr. Shinkini Goswami, Dr. Cassie Thompson, and Ms. Anna Bigler for hosting this event!

SGI will be a featured organization at the Esri User Conference this July 13-17, 2026 in San Diego, CA.

### FEATURED QUOTES

This page highlights quotes that are particularly illustrative of the history of grasslands in the Southeast.

Select a quote to view details.

**Prior to 1832**  
Sumter County, Alabama

"That portion of the frontier country of western Alabama on the right bank of the Tombigbee River, now known as Sumter County, in the period prior to 1832, was Indian country. It was held by the Choctaw nation, which was essentially a peaceful..."

**1792**  
Unknown County, Alabama

"Upon Little river, dividing the modern counties of Baldwin and Monroe, lived many intelligent and wealthy people, whose blood was a mixture of white and Indian. This colony was formed at an early period, for the benefit of their large stocks of cattle..."

**1818**  
Hale County, Alabama

"The region where the French emigrants had resolved to establish themselves, was an immense forest of trees and cane, interspersed with prairie, and near the present town of Grasshorn was Breckell's settlement of Tennessee and

### QUOTE DETAILS

Learn More About Quote Precision

State: **Alabama** | Region: **Sumter County** | Visibility: **Local** | Exact Location: **Sumter County, Alabama**

**Prior to 1832** | 19th century

**Marylee Reynolds**

05

"That portion of the frontier country of western Alabama on the right bank of the Tombigbee River, now known as Sumter County, in the period prior to 1832, was Indian country. It was held by the Choctaw nation, which was essentially a peaceful, agrarian race. This territory was a fertile region well watered, slightly rolling to flat and comprised of prairie lands, in the northern half, river and creek bottom lands throughout, and extensive virgin forests in the south."

SGI's Notes  
p. 1

Citation:  
Reynolds, M. (1953). A Social and Economic History of Sumter, County, Alabama, in the Antebellum Period. The University of Alabama. <https://ir.ua.edu/items/aa82849e-5d53-4aee-8b1c-391f18b77d05>

# POT DRIVE

**We Want Your Pots!**

Old or New

Big or Small

**SGI Wants Them All**

Please consider donating any garden pots destined for the landfill this spring

**- Our main focus this season will be on shrub and tree pots -**

Any contribution will be greatly appreciated and help us kickstart Native Plant Production!

Drop off point located on the bottom level of 311 College Street Clarksville, TN 37040



**Follow Us on Social Media**



**Support SGI**



Dry Shortleaf Pine–Oak SavannaWoodland, showing recently restored high-quality examples or remnant sites. Savanna landscape, Bridgestone-Firestone Prescribed Fire Demonstration Area (BPFDA), White Co., TN. Photo by Dwayne Estes.

There are many ways to help SGI protect and restore the Southeast’s native grasslands. From volunteering your time to providing in-kind support or making a donation, every contribution makes a difference. Thank you for being part of this growing movement and for joining us on the journey to restore the region’s grasslands. Please contact Chris Oberholster at [chris.oberholster@segrasslands.org](mailto:chris.oberholster@segrasslands.org) with questions about supporting SGI.

Donate

## Team Updates





**Mason Tomlinson - Seasonal Restoration Technician** Mason joins SGI as a seasonal restoration technician for our America's Ecosystem Restoration Initiative (AERI) project in Middle Tennessee.

**Blake Moss - Restoration Technician** Blake joins SGI as a restoration technician for our America's Ecosystem Restoration Initiative (AERI) project in Middle Tennessee.

**Ethan Shepherd - Restoration Technician** Ethan joins SGI as a restoration technician for our America's Ecosystem Restoration Initiative (AERI) project in Middle Tennessee.



**Cody Gallivan- Seasonal Restoration Technician** Cody joins SGI as a seasonal restoration technician for our America's Ecosystem Restoration Initiative (AERI) project in Middle Tennessee.

**Virginia Betbeze - Grassland Monitoring Technician** Virginia joins SGI as a Grassland Monitoring Technician out of our Arkansas office.

**Sarah Majewski - Restoration Technician** Sarah joins SGI as a restoration technician for our National Park Service project across the Eastern United States.



# We Are Hiring!

Our team is growing across our focal region.  
Check out our current open positions!

**Dakota Parish - [Grassland Monitoring Technician](#)** Dakota joins SGI as a Grassland Monitoring Technician out of our Clarksville office.

[SGI Job Board](#)



The Southeastern Grasslands Institute is a grasslands-focused research, conservation, and education branch of the college of STEM at Austin Peay State University.

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