

The Cherokee Relationship to Land and Relating that to Land Stewardship

Josh Parris CWB®

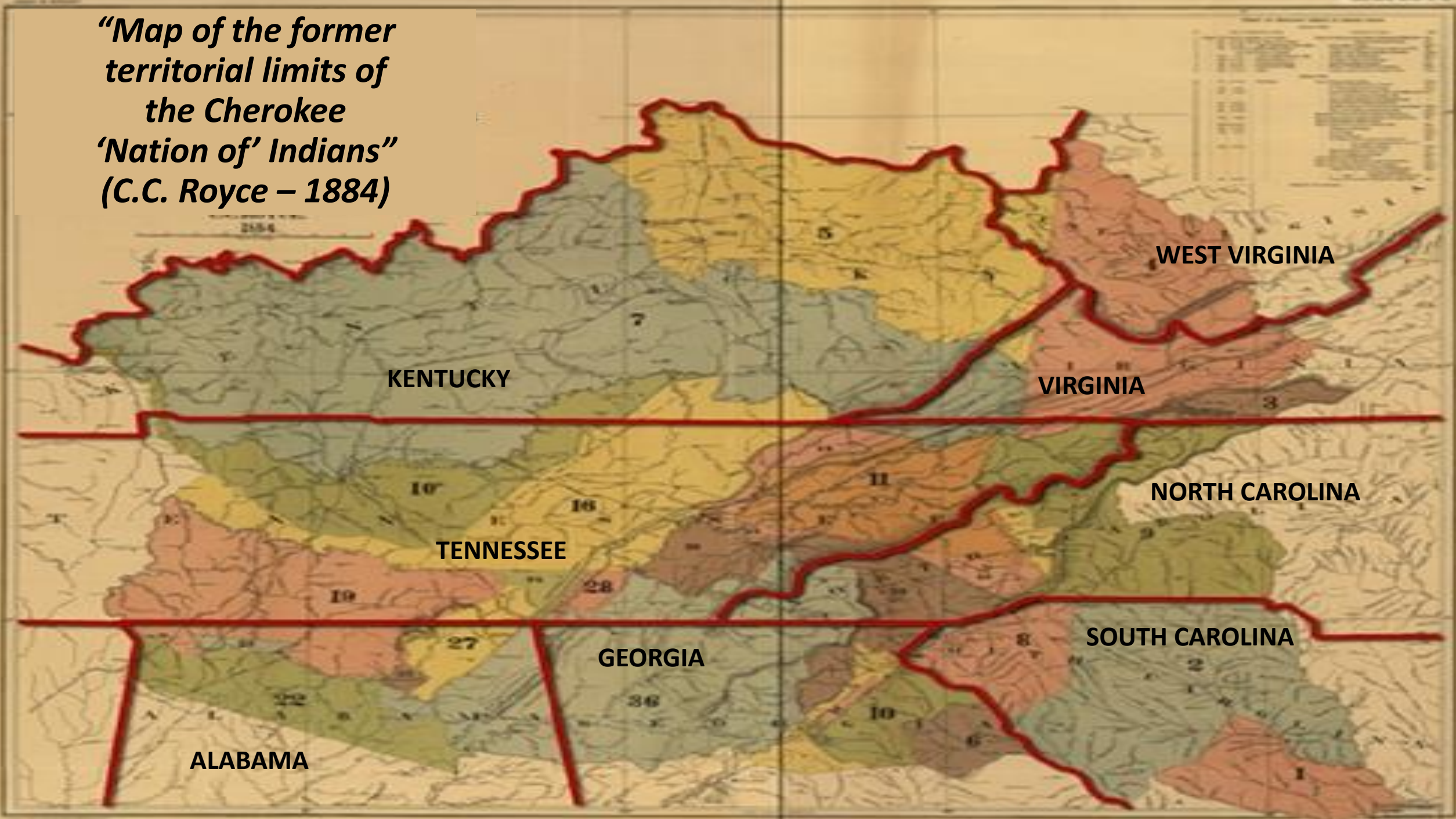
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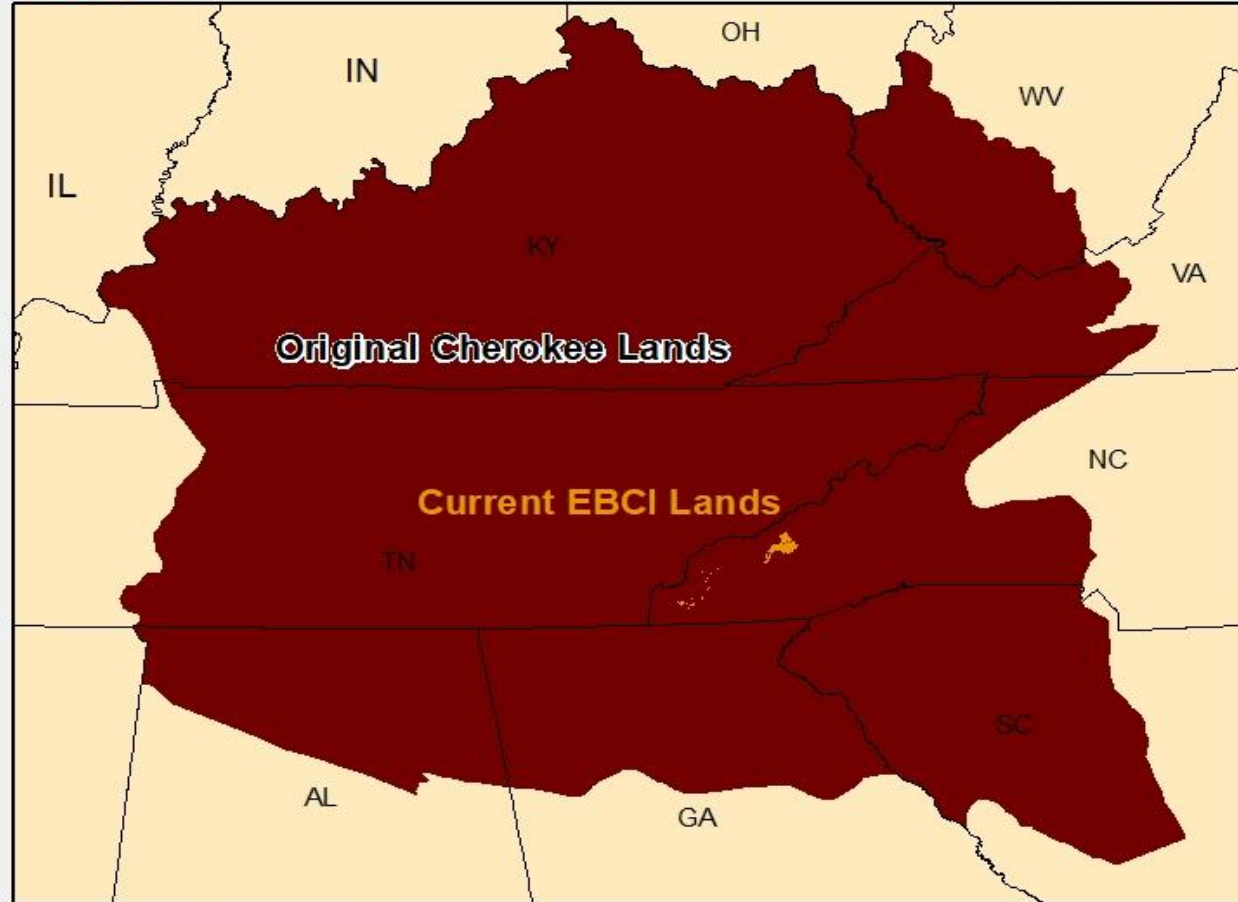
“Map of the former territorial limits of the Cherokee ‘Nation of’ Indians” (C.C. Royce – 1884)



Original Cherokee Lands Compared to Current Eastern Band of Cherokee Indian Lands



124,474 Sq. Miles 56,893 Acres



Historic boundaries were digitized from georeferenced paper map created by C.C. Royce 1884

Agency: Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
Author: Josh Parris
Data: Royce 1884, U.S. Census, EBCI



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 16N
Central Meridian: 87°0'0"W

SOUTHEASTERN BIODIVERSITY & CHEROKEE IDENTITY



**Food
Arts
Ceremony
Medicine
Recreation
Economy**



Drinking Water



Legend and Language





Millenia of Cherokee Science

- Rivers = “Long-person”
- Rivercane brakes
- Woodlands and grasslands
- Fire
- Vegetation Management
- Wildlife conservation

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Front Page / News | By Scott

Park, Tribe sign sochan agreement



Citizen Times

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Great Smokies approves historic sochan collecting agreement with Eastern Band of Cherokee

Karen Chávez, Asheville Citizen Times

Published 4:33 p.m. ET March 25, 2019 | Updated 3:54 p.m. ET March 27, 2019



Tribal Reserve – Big Witch – Cultural Burn – April 2024







EBCI Landscape Management in the 21st Century

- 
- EBCI Deeded
 - EBCI Trust
 - US Forest Service
 - Blue Ridge Parkway
 - GSM National Park
 - NC Counties



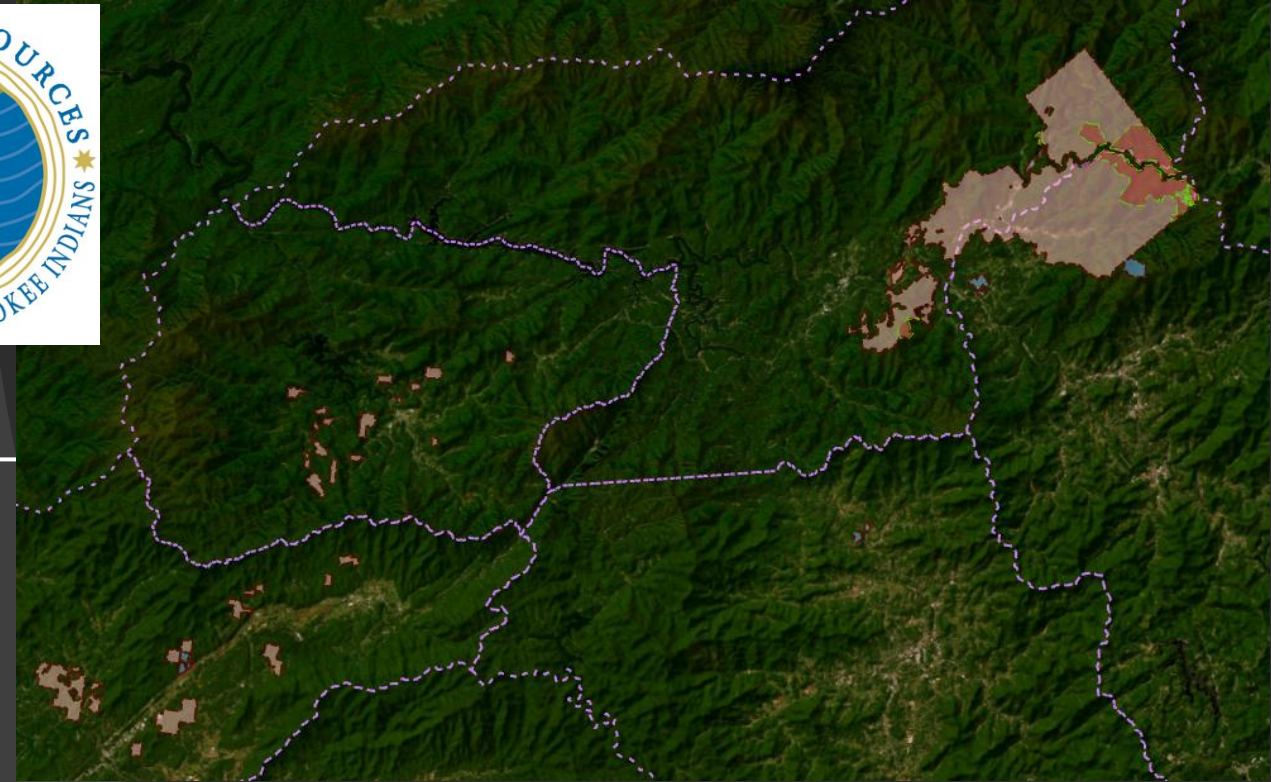
Qualla Boundary
(NC Cherokee Reservation)



Colonization and Ecosystem Decline

- De-forestation
- Fire suppression
- Keystone species loss
- Habitat degradation and fragmentation
- Inadequate resources for management

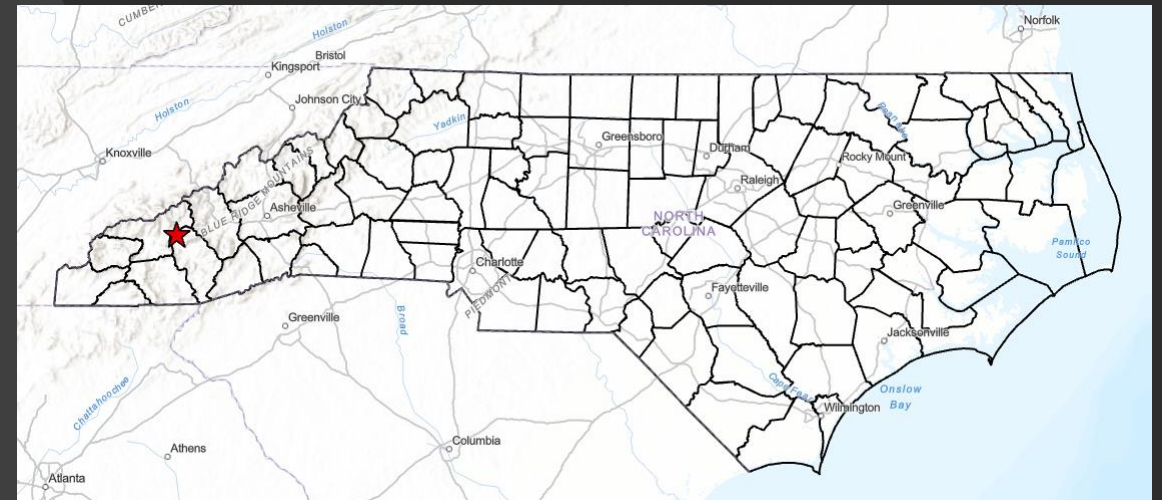
EBCI Forest Lands



Ownership Type		Acres
Tribal Boundary	<i>Total Area</i>	56,893
	<i>Forested Area</i>	49,019
	<i>Non-Forested Area</i>	7,874

Possessory Holders*	44,010*
Tribal Reserve*	6,133*

**These numbers are estimates and do not reflect Forested/Non-Forested acreages. GIS analysis of these ownership types is limited by data quality and availability.*



Forest Breakdown



Forest Type	Diameter Class (inches)								Grand Total
	4-8	8-12	12-16	16-20	20-24	24-28	28-32	>32	
Acidic Cove Forest	61	47	26	13	5	1	<1	<1	153
Chestnut Oak Forest	79	57	26	11	4	2	<1	<1	180
Early Successional Forest	95	54	10	1	-	-	-	-	161
Montane Alluvial Forest	84	56	29	13	3	-	1	-	187
Montane Oak – Hickory Forest	62	53	28	14	5	2	1	<1	165
Northern Hardwood Forest	43	29	16	21	8	3	1	1	122
Pine – Oak/Heath Forest	82	63	25	7	4	1	-	-	181
Rich Cove Forest	48	42	29	16	6	2	1	-	144
Virginia Pine Successional Forest	58	73	25	1	-	-	-	-	156
White Pine Forest	84	53	22	11	5	2	1	<1	178
Total EBCI Forest	67	51	25	12	5	2	<1	<1	161



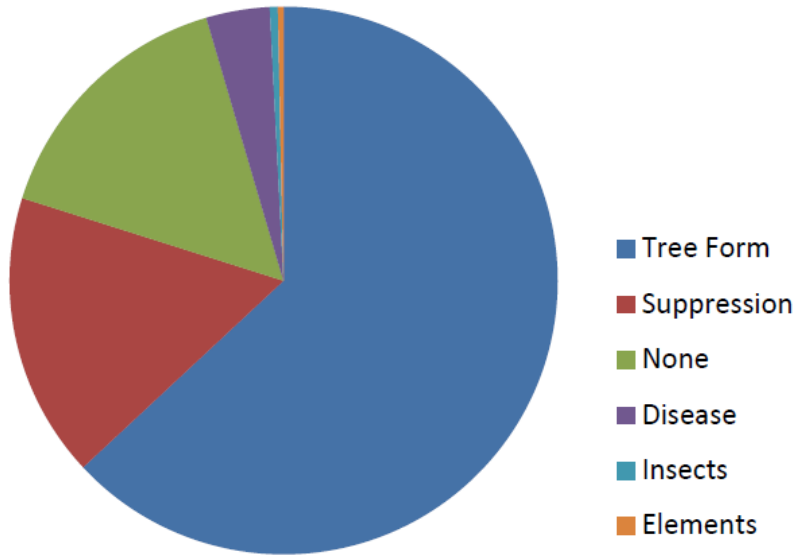
Forest Type	Number of Acres*	Number of CFI Plots	Percent of Total Area
Chestnut Oak Forest	17,081	98	35%
Montane Oak-Hickory Forest	9,660	70	20%
Acidic Cove Forest	6,220	48	13%
Rich Cove Forest	5,228	45	11%
Early Successional Forest	3,647	27	7%
Pine-Oak/Heath Forest	3,537	23	7%
White Pine Forest	1,652	12	3%
Northern Hardwood Forest	912	9	2%
Montane Alluvial Forest	737	6	2%
Virginia Pine Successional Forest	345	4	1%
Grand Total	49,019	342	100%

**These numbers are estimates. GIS analysis of these types is limited by data quality and availability.*

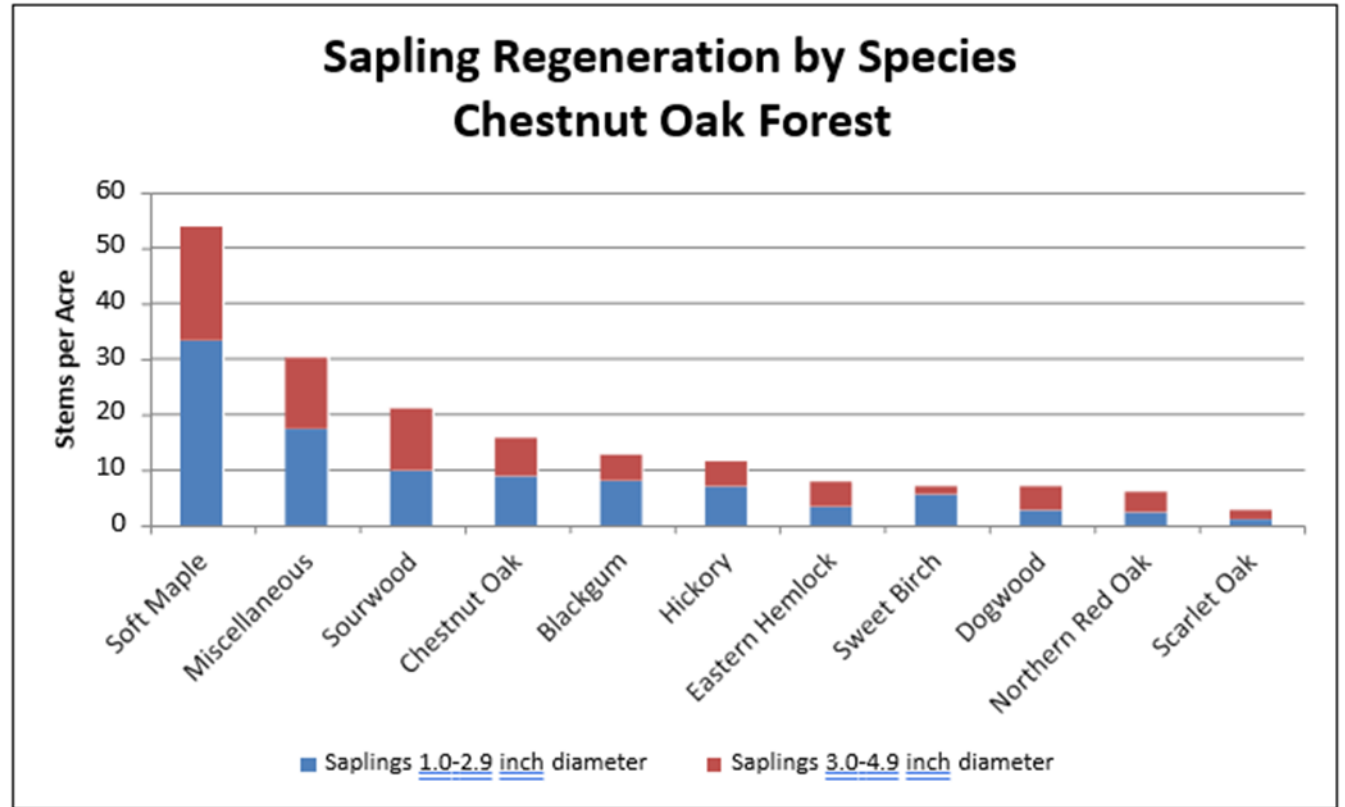
Forest Breakdown



Forest Damaging Agents EBCI Forest



Sapling Regeneration by Species Chestnut Oak Forest



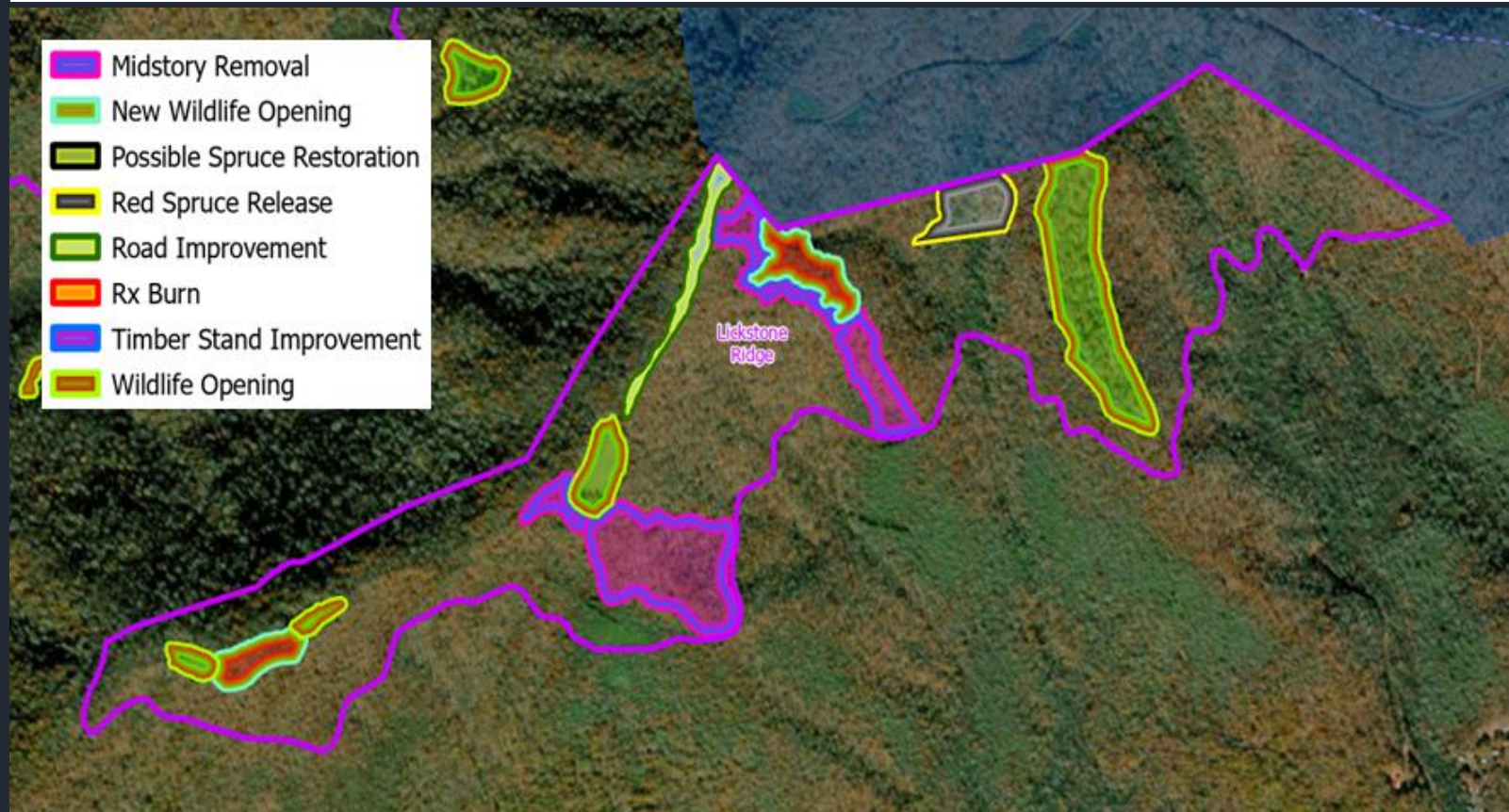
Current Projects



- Tribal Reserve
 - Lickstone Ridge
 - Bigwitch
 - Spread Branch
 - Wolf Laurel
 - Jenkins Creek
- Possesory Holder
 - Bigmeat Parcel
 - Hammon Parcel
 - Tiger Parcel*

Lickstone Example

Improve Forest Roads, New Wildlife Openings, Cull Tree Removal, Midstory Reduction, Oak Release, Rx Fire, Red Spruce Release, Red Spruce Planting, Thinning for Diversity

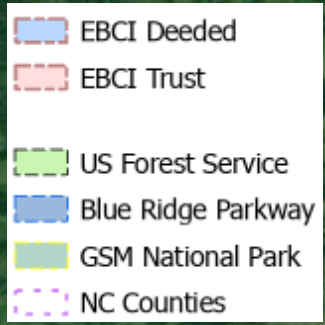


Challenges to forest management on EBCI Trust Lands

- Multiple Agencies
- Low Capacity
- Market Contraction
- Complex Land Management System



Multiple Agencies



- Great Smoky Mountains NP
- Blue Ridge Parkway
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Forest Service
- North Carolina WRC
- North Carolina FS
- Mainspring Conservation Trust



Low Capacity

- The EBCI Program is New!
 - Currently just me
- Tommy Cabe
 - Research and Community Engagement
- Mike Lavoie
 - Foundation and Funding
- ❖ From an operational point we are at ground zero



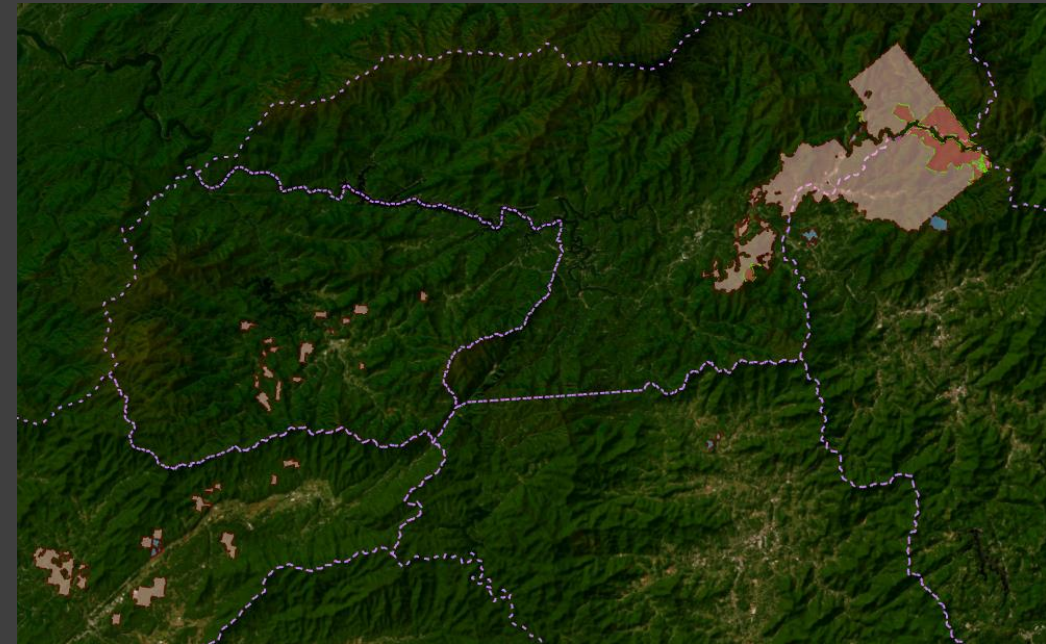
Market Contraction

- Paper plant closure
- Opportunity?
- ❖ Forest Sector Support Organization in the Southern Appalachian area



Complex Land System

- Trust Lands
 - Possessory Holder
 - Not the same as the TAAMS
 - Multiple owners per parcel
- Tribal Reserve Land
- State Deeded Lands



EBCI Natural Resource Governance

Legacy Plan (IRMP – 2014)

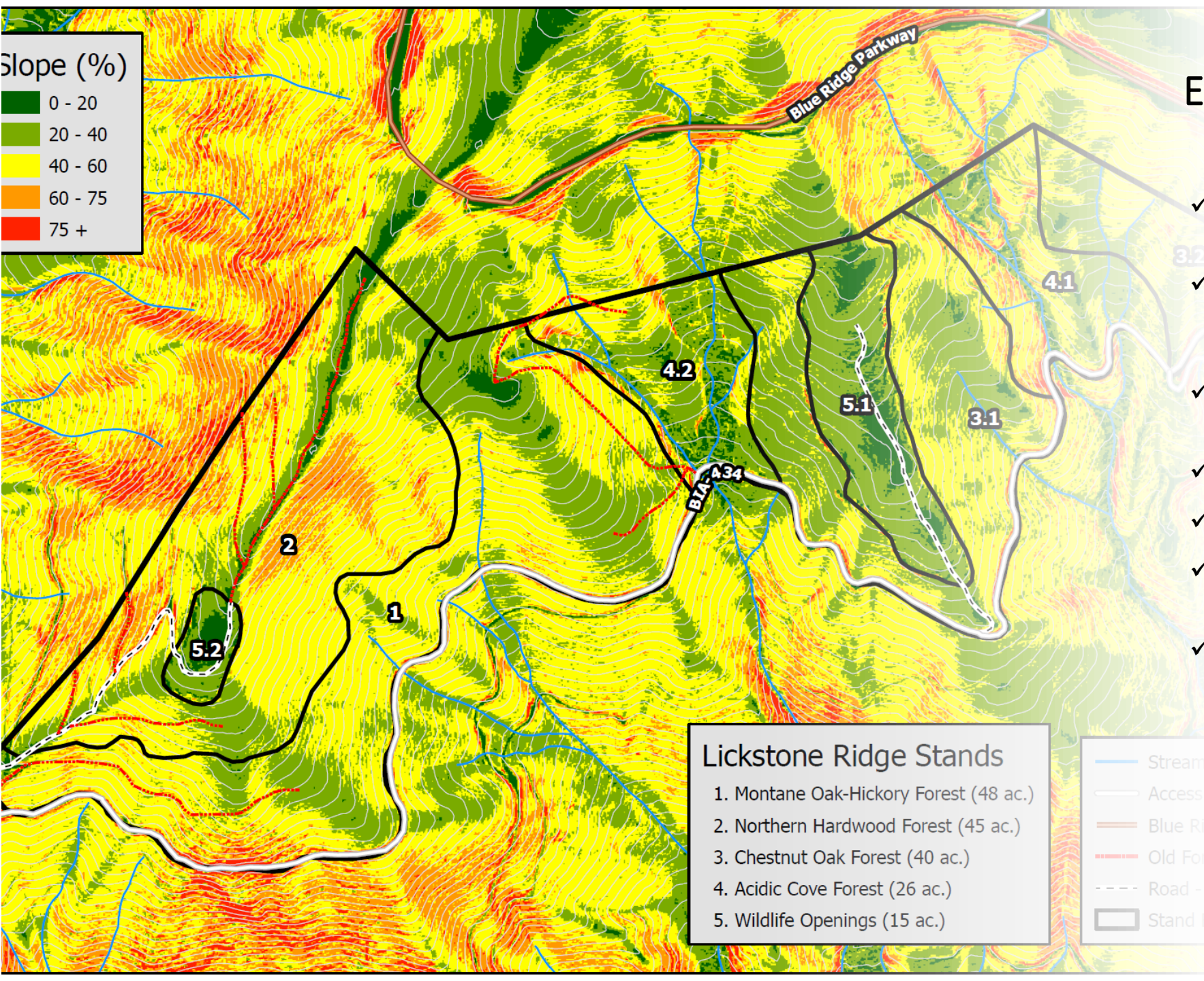
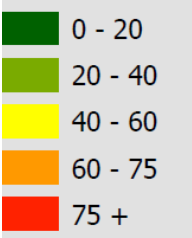
- forest resource goal *“to perpetually maintain healthy and diverse forest resources through an informed and adaptive management approach”*
- “Zone of influence” – impact natural resource management within the ancestral homeland

Natural Resources Department

- Integrated programming
- Socio-ecological framework
- **Partnerships**



Slope (%)



EBCI Forestry Initiatives

- ✓ Forest program contracting through BIA (P.L. 93-638)
- ✓ Coordination and expansion of partnership with BIA Fire Management program
- ✓ USFS partnerships (i.e. GNA, TFPA, Co-stewardship)
- ✓ Tribal Reserve restoration
- ✓ NRCS Cooperative Agreements
- ✓ Possessory holder outreach and project planning (NNIS projects)
- ✓ Native plant research and restoration (i.e. Ramps, Sochan)

Lickstone Ridge Stands

- 1. Montane Oak-Hickory Forest (48 ac.)
- 2. Northern Hardwood Forest (45 ac.)
- 3. Chestnut Oak Forest (40 ac.)
- 4. Acidic Cove Forest (26 ac.)
- 5. Wildlife Openings (15 ac.)

- Streams
- Access Road
- Blue Ridge Parkway
- Old Forest
- Road - Tribal
- Stand Boundary

Handmade







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“Gadugi Degvgasesdvi Anigiduwagi Dodalvi”

Working Together to Steward the Kituwah Mountains



Path to Co-Stewarding the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests

Key Role of EBCI Communities

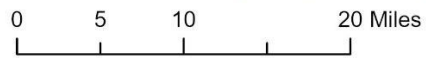
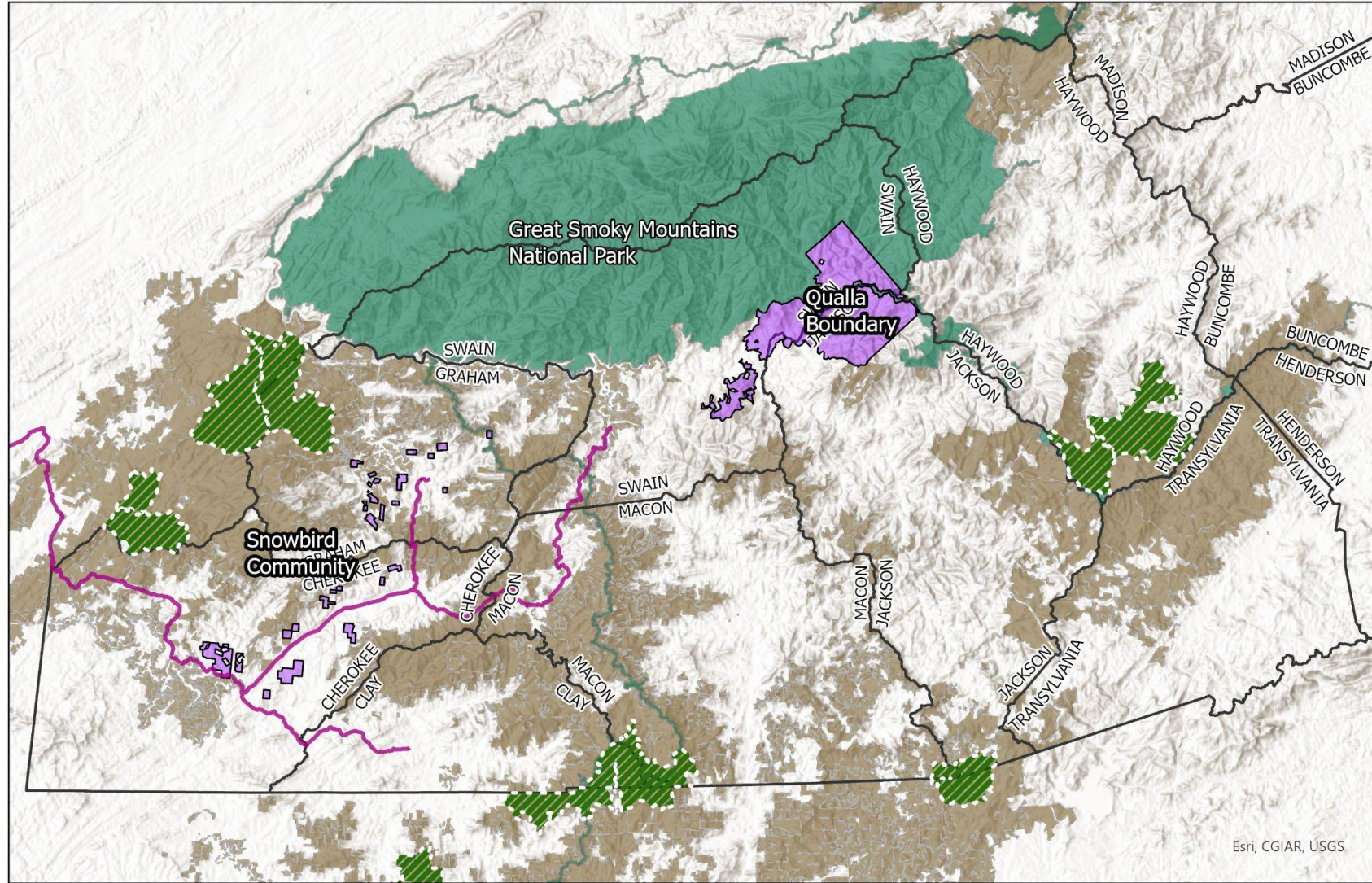


NATURAL RESOURCES
EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS

November 4, 2024



EBCI Land Holdings and Public Lands in Western North Carolina



Commissioned By:
 The Elohi Dinigatiyi "Earth Keepers" Advisory Group
 The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians DNR
 Compiled By:
 Jamie Brackman, University of Michigan
 Sources:
 USGS, US Forest Service,
 State of North Carolina,
 Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

- EBCI Lands
- Trail of Tears
- Wilderness Area
- Forest Service Land
- National Park Land
- North Carolina Boundaries

Esri, CGIAR, USGS

Co-Stewardship – What is it?

Recent federal laws and policies mandate “co-stewardship” of National Parks and Forests, where requested by Tribes

- **“Co-Stewardship”**: broad term, covers collaborative stewardship of federal lands based on US law and Tribal sovereignty (per TFPA 2014, SO 3403, GNA).
 - A step towards “reconciliation”, “co-management” and “land back”.
 - A new relationship between Tribes and the federal government: over the 1.5 million acres in WNC (alone); 1 in 3 acres across the US
- **EBCI strategy**:
 - **Base it all on the ancient Kituwah wisdom, knowledge, practice: the Principles for Stewardship**
 - **Driven by community priorities**
 - **Start with the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forest, then the Smoky Mtn National Park** and other National Forests and Parks in Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, etc.
- **Next**: *prepare a plan to prepare EBCI to co-steward the National Forests, by September 2025*
- **Then**: *implement the plan ‘25-’28 - to establish new Co-Stewardship agreements and fully implement the new relationship*

Key Role of Community Councils

1. Advice and guidance on how to learn from your community - who to talk to, and how, when, where?
 2. Source of knowledge and advice yourself – what do YOU think are the priorities on the lands held by the National Forests and National Parks?
 3. A new and permanent part of the structure and relationship with the National Forests and Park
- **Next Steps:**
 - Community Engagement Process to be led by Angelina Jumper, Junaluska Museum/CIRB, with Tommy Cabe, Josh Parris (Natural Resources Dept), guided by Earth Keepers (*Elohi Dinigatiyi*)
 - Interviews conducted by EBCI youth, young professionals (*Wadulisi*)
 - **When can we come to your community?**

Path to Co-Stewardship of the Nantahala and Pisgah NF

...to 2022:
Laying the
groundwork

- Build understanding, trust, new relationships
- Establish new agreements: (e.g. TFPA, GNA, SPA)
- Collaborate on new USFS Management Plan and priority policy issues

2023 – 2025:
Piloting co-
stewardship
projects

- Designing and initiating co-stewardship projects (e.g. Dick's Creek)
- Collaborating on developing EBCI workforce (e.g. ICC)
- Supporting the EarthKeepers and expanded consultation on USFS projects

2024 – 2025:
Preparing the
plan

- Identify Kituwah Principles and Vision
- Prepare protocols/MOUs for co-stewardship
- Community engagement to identify their priorities
- Mobilize allies
- Identify and resolve challenges

2025 - 2028:
Implementing the
plan and Co-
Stewardship
agreements

- Initiate & implement new agreements
- Collaborate on all categories of stewardship
- Monitor, communicate, adapt
- Continue to raise awareness, education of all constituencies

Work Plan and Products – Delivery by Sept ‘25

- 1. Establish new co-stewardship protocols/MOUs – EBCI – USFS** (*e.g. 1) overarching co-governance; 2) culture/archeology; 3) data sharing/sovereignty*)
- 2. Community engagement to identify Tribe’s priorities** (*e.g. restoration of names, access, ecosystem science (e.g. fire, harvesting), in the priority cultural areas (e.g. Snowbird, Cowee Bald/Big Laurel, Standing Indian, Shining Rock/Sams Knob, Looking Glass/Pink Beds, Harmon Den/Max Patch, plus isolated sites (e.g. Paint Rock)*)
- 3. Mobilize allies to support EBCI programs**
- 4. Establish staffing, partnerships, supporting programs to implement** (*e.g. 1) job/youth development; 2) Tribal led research framework and coordination; 3) cultural fire module and partnerships*)

Then implement, learn, live, breath the new relationships ('25 – '28)



SGI!

Questions?

