

Problem Statement: Native American Interactions with Forest Communities and Ecosystems

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Pre-Contact Native people have been using and interacting with the ecosystems of the South Mountain landscape since the late Pleistocene. Published preliminary evidence gleaned from dendrochronological, witness tree, and primary Euro-American sources clearly indicate that the aboriginal populations of the Middle Atlantic region were actively managing the forests around them, primarily with regular and targeted fires. Additional data specific to the South Mountain landscape is required to better understand the composition of pre-Contact forests in our region and the nature of indigenous land use. The Michaux State Forest and other partners would like to see summary and inventory data in some or all of the following areas.

- Dendrochronological and fire incidence data from preserved stumps and trees within the landscape.
- Dendrochronological and species identification data from standing historic structures within the landscape.
- Taxonomic identification of wood charcoal samples from pre-Contact archaeological feature context within the landscape.
- Witness tree inventory data from early land deeds within the landscape.
- Palynological data from wetland communities within the landscape.

Proposed research can seek to summarize existing data sources on some or all of these categories, or can propose to gather new data from the region. The resulting data should be interpreted in context with previously published studies in the Middle Atlantic region.