



Land Use History

The stories of our woodlands



**Virginia
Cooperative
Extension**

Virginia Tech.
Virginia State University

Land Use History in Virginia: Pre-European

Native American land management in Virginia

- Tree harvesting
- Agricultural land clearing
- Fire as a management tool



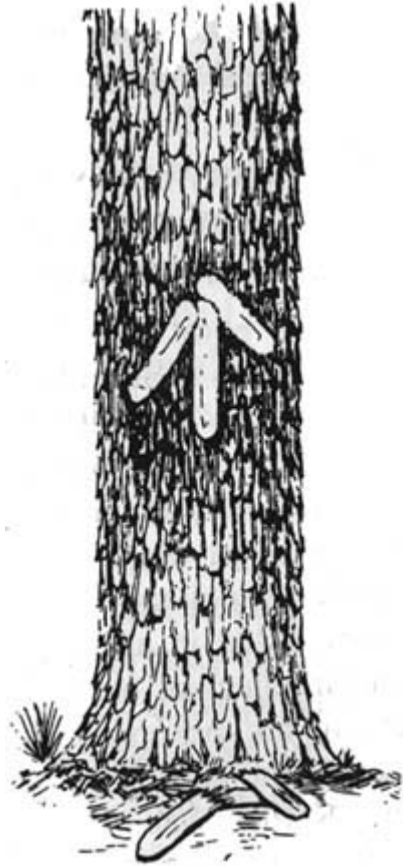
Land Use History in Virginia: The 1600's

The 1600's

- Europeans displaced Native Americans
- Declining number of people reduced use of forests
- Fewer forests were converted to cropland



Land Use History in Virginia: The 1700's



The 1700's

- European populations grew
- Use of forests increased
- Land cleared for agriculture

Land Use History in Virginia: The 1800's

The 1800's

- Population expansion across the country
- Wood used for building and heat
- Fuel for iron ore production
- Land cleared for farming



Land Use History in Virginia: The 1900's

The 1900's

- 1920 end of exploitation era
- First forestry schools founded
- State Forestry Agencies
- Society of American Foresters
- USDA Forest Service
- National Forest/Park Systems



Land Use History Overview

American forests

- European arrival: 950 million acres
- 1900: 600 million acres
- Today: 737 million acres

Virginia forests – currently 15.8 million acres



Determining Land Use History

Looking for Clues

- Human Impacts
- Natural Disturbances
- Succession



Human Structures

- Buildings, vehicles, tools, cemeteries, roads, earthworks
- Tell us about the people who came before





Planted Vegetation

- Exotic plants
- Vinca
- Plants where they don't usually grow



Agricultural Evidence

- Fence rows/rocks
- Drainage ditches
- Furrows



Past Timber Harvests

Evidence of past harvesting

- Stumps/sprouts
- Multi-stemmed trees
- Logging roads & skid trails
- Scars



Reading Tree Stumps

Tree rings

- Age
- Fire
- Weather
- Site history

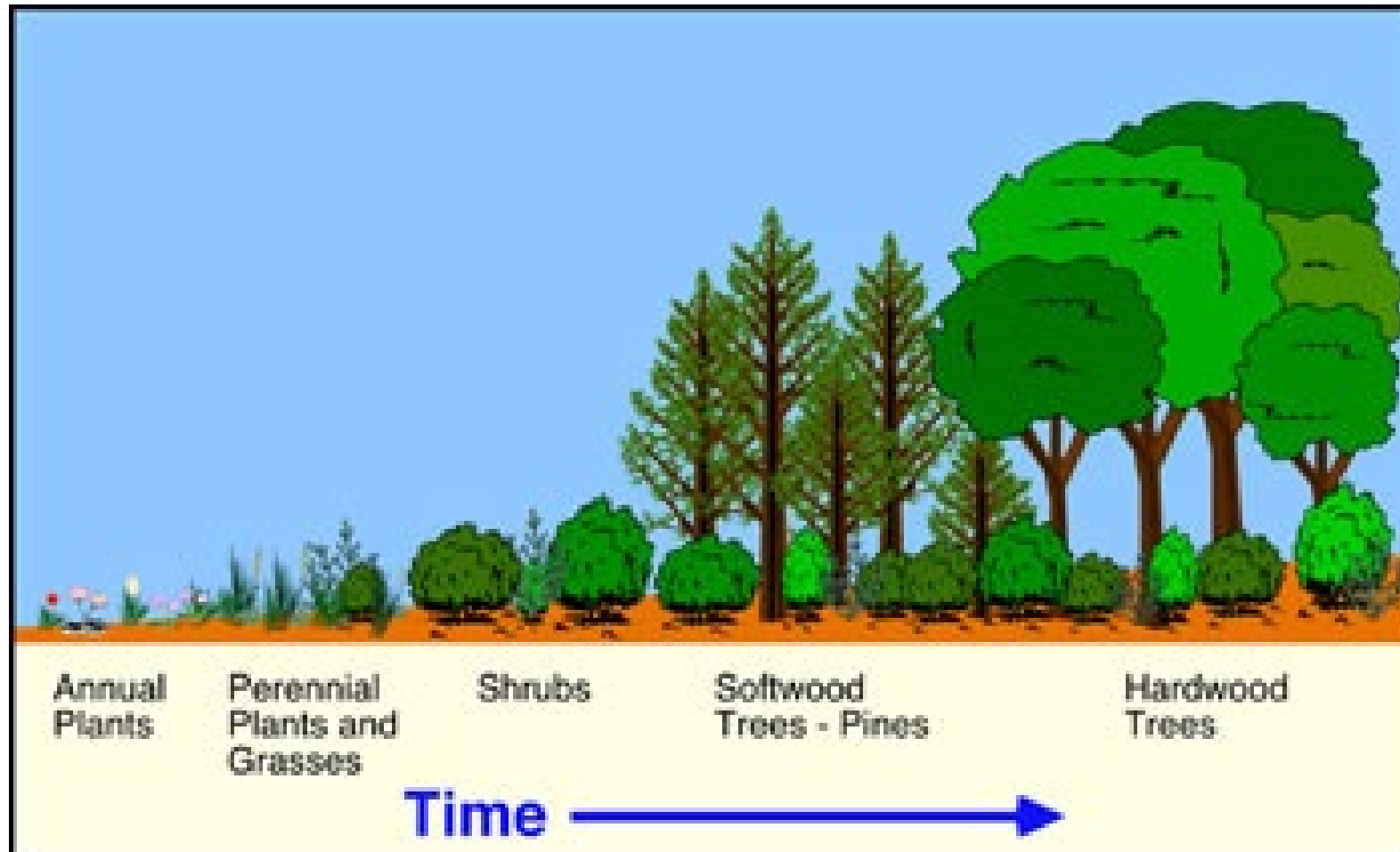


Natural Disturbances

- Hurricanes/wind
- Ice
- Wildfires
- Lightening
- Insect/disease outbreaks



Succession



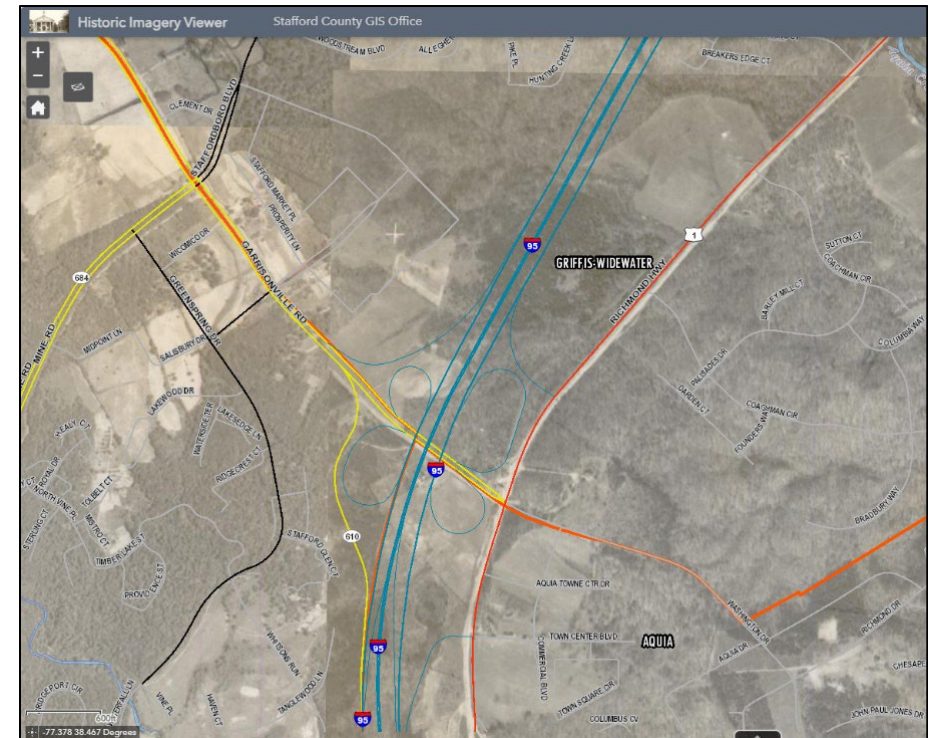
Succession Example

- Succession after a fire



Other Sources of Information

- Current owners & neighbors
- Historical aerial photos – available on county GIS and/or local forestry or USDA office





Discussion?

