



# Apalachicola Ecosystems Project



## Background:

The Apalachicola Ecosystems Project (AEP) was created to research how the native peoples of the southeastern United States adapted to and used their social and biophysical environment. The AEP fills a need for long term research on how humans interact with and alter the global environment. By taking an interdisciplinary science approach that is well grounded in historical ecology and anthropology, the AEP is poised to contribute to an understanding of the mechanisms of human-environmental interaction and provide data for other scientists, historians, and policy makers.

## Objective:

This effort will identify the cultural contexts of the native people of the southeastern United States and will contribute to public education and engagement. The historical context of human social organization will be used in concert with geological and ecological research to identify metrics of anthropogenic effects on the biophysical environment. These findings will be disseminated to the public through museum displays, educator resources, scientific publications, and public engagement.

## Approach:

We will document the historical context of the southeastern natives through archaeological, historical, and ethnographic research. A number of sites have been identified and more will be identified for study. We will couple this research with geological, paleobotanical, and paleozoological studies of the environment.

## Benefit:

The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity notes that human induced forest fires

are a global problem, not only for the forest loss but also for the potential deleterious climatological effects that they can produce. Through taking a long-term approach and including the historical, social, and anthropological context of human-environmental interaction, the AEP will contribute a holistic and comprehensive understanding to environmental management and human social dynamics.

## Accomplishments:

Sites have been selected for the field tests. Paleoenvironmental studies have been conducted identifying the effects of hunting and specific economic activities on particular forest species. Several research articles, public lectures, and books have been produced. Archaeological and paleoenvironmental investigations are underway.



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