



SOIL AND PLANT SCIENCE DIVISION

Technical Soil Services

South Central Soil Survey Region

Ouachita Mountains Major Land Resource Area

Remnant Grassland Identification and Management Training

Purpose

Ecological site specialists attended this training to increase knowledge of remnant prairies in the Southeast United States.

Background

On May 29–30, 2024, Trevor Crandall and Chris Stelly, ecological site specialists in the South Central Soil Survey Region, attended a Remnant Grassland Identification and Management Training in Bismarck, Arkansas. The first day of the training consisted of 10 presentations on native grasslands in the Southeastern United States, how to identify these ecosystems, and why they are important to preserve.

The second day of the training consisted of a field tour where they were able to visit a managed glade, an unmanaged glade, a restored remnant grassland, and a remnant grassland that is awaiting restoration. Crandall and Stelly learned about specific indicator species, such as the Ouachita prickly pear. It is indicative of a remnant grassland and, when present, shows that the seed bank at that specific location is still viable and waiting to be restored to a thriving grassland ecosystem.

Key Outcomes

There were many important takeaways from the training. One of them was that preserving what we have is important and restoring what is restorable is essential. Preservation and restoration will make these ecosystems available for future generations and will provide habitat for the unique flora and fauna that are dependent on their existence. Another takeaway during the training was the importance of conservation partners. At least 10 organizations were represented during the training.

Every conservation organization has specific expertise that can assist ecologists. Many are land managers who want their properties sampled and the data incorporated into state-and-transition models. Conservation organizations are willing to help create ecological site descriptions that can be used to help public and private land managers make responsible and wise conservation decisions.