

A new vision for
conservation into
the future

The Southeastern Conservation Adaptation Strategy

The Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS) is a collaboration to define the conservation landscape of the future. It is a shared, long-term vision for lands and waters that sustain fish, wildlife and plant populations, and that improve our citizens' quality of life in the southeast United States and Caribbean. This vision provides regional focus for investments across organizations, disciplines, and partnerships on shared and proactive goals. The unique role of SECAS is to identify and support the steps necessary to regionally plan, implement, and evaluate actions that sustain habitat, mitigate threats, and adapt to future conditions.

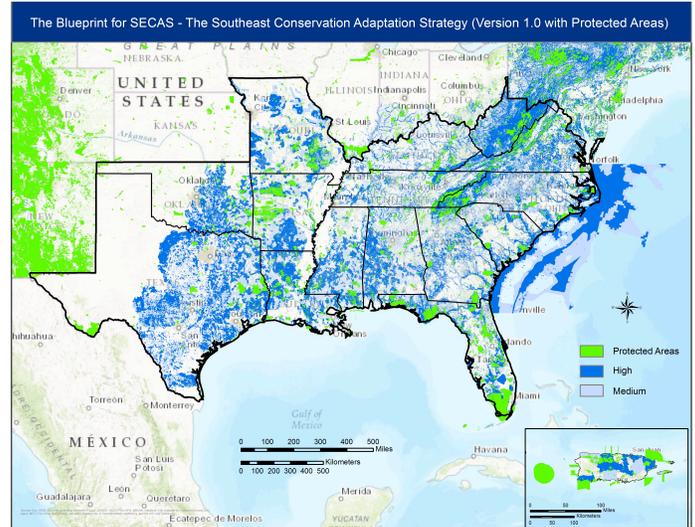
The challenges are clear.

Trends for growth and economic development predicted in recent assessments show that the Southeast's population grew at a rate roughly 40 percent faster than any other region over the past six decades. Cities are getting bigger; rural communities are getting smaller. These are just some of the challenges we are seeing across the Southeast.

Between now and 2060, more than half the nation's population growth and an estimated 65 percent of its economic growth will occur in 10 mega-regions across the country – four are here in the Southeast Region. The gross regional product for the Piedmont mega-region alone: \$1.1 trillion – and that number is already outdated for a region that snakes south from north of Nashville down to Birmingham, over to Atlanta and then dog-legs northeast through Columbia and Greenville, South Carolina; Charlotte, North Carolina; and the Research Triangle of Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill.

In that same time frame, we are likely to lose an amount of land to development the size of the State of South Carolina. Globally, demand for food will grow by 35 percent. Demand for energy will grow by 50 percent. Demand for water will grow by 40 percent. Most people will have little contact with nature and the outdoors.

All these pressures – on conservationists, state and federal agencies, business owners, private landowners, ranchers, farmers, policymakers and other agencies – affect all of us. Decisions are being made to address population growth, increasing urbanization, traffic congestion, struggling educational systems, increasing global competition, and wildlife conservation needs. As a result of these pressures, there is farmland conversion, ecosystem degradation, declining air quality, droughts, and competition for water resources.



- The Blueprint represents lands with high conservation value; it does **not** represent an acquisition boundary.
- A fairly significant amount of the "high" scoring area is already in the conservation estate in both Florida (~53%) and in the Appalachians (~24%).
- There are many potential conservation layers embedded within the Blueprint map, such as prescribed burning and reforestation. When separated out, a much smaller subset of the Blueprint map is relevant.
- Private/working lands identified on the map may be good candidates for voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs.
- The "medium" scoring areas are important for promoting and maintaining connectivity.
- The Blueprint is being refined as this collaborative partnership work moves forward, and significant efforts are already underway across the region.

And the opportunities within those challenges are even clearer.

SECAS is unifying the delivery of conservation activities and supporting innovation that can be applied across the region. It's a recognition of our need as a community to articulate our values. In doing so, others who have shared interests in what this region will look like in 2060 will be made aware of what is important biologically long before decisions are made, allowing us to join forces in shaping the landscape for future generations.

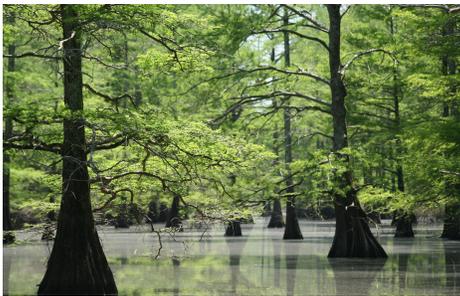
Leaders Behind SECAS

Key leaders of this effort are the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, which includes 15 states, the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, and the 12 federal agencies of the Southeast Natural Resource Leaders Group.

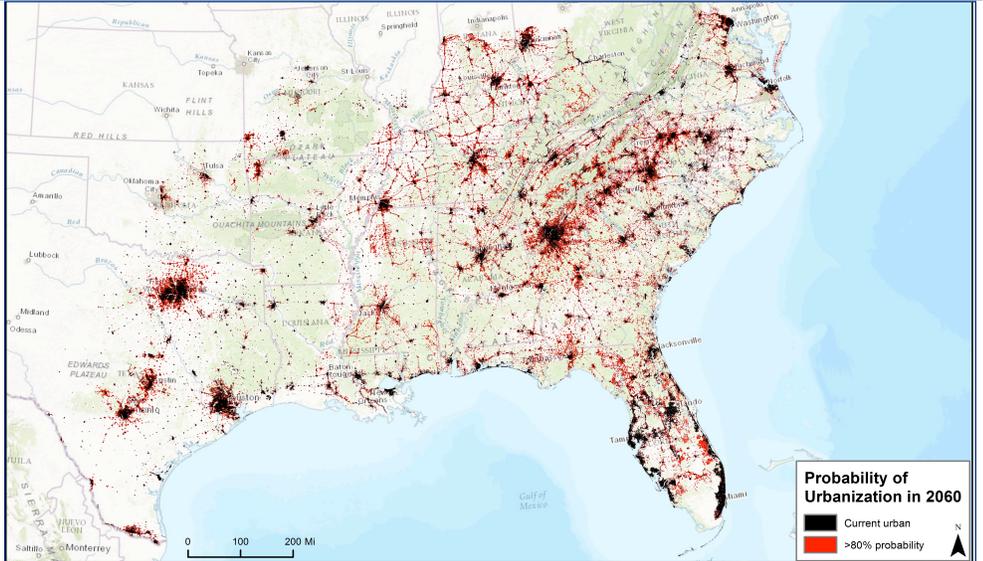
Collaboration and Technical Capacity

Key partners include the Southeast Climate Science Center, South Central Climate Science Center, the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership and the six southeastern Landscape Conservation Cooperatives: Gulf Coast Prairie, Gulf Coastal Plains & Ozarks, South Atlantic, Appalachian, Peninsular Florida, and Caribbean.

SECAS is a collaboration to define the conservation landscape of the future. Current and future generations rely on the nation's fish, wildlife and plant resources and habitats. Working with private landowners, the business community, local leaders, and other partners and stakeholders will be critical to achieve the SECAS vision.



The ecological systems upon which our southeastern resources depend are changing, subject to pressures such as sea level rise, urbanization, habitat fragmentation, changing weather patterns and exotic species. Fortunately, alongside these ecosystem changes, technical advancements in conservation theory, decision theory, and the digital revolution are creating opportunities for transformative change in the way conservation is planned and the way resources are managed.



SLEUTH model projected urbanization to 2060 for the Southeast. Black areas indicate current urbanization; shades of red from light to dark indicate increasing probability of urbanization.

“The time is upon us all to be more collaborative and strategic in targeting our collective conservation activities to achieve broader landscape level conservation goals within the context of our individual conservation missions.”

*- Ed Carter,
Executive Director, Tennessee
Wildlife Resources Agency*

Over the next five years, through SECAS, the partners will:

- ▶ Refine a habitat network for the southeastern U.S. and Caribbean based on a common assessment of current natural resource conditions, the development of alternative future scenarios, and identification of shared conservation priorities.
- ▶ Integrate major existing conservation plans and designs across the Southeast.
- ▶ Assess vulnerabilities, such as sea level rise along the Gulf coast, future urban growth, and river flow alterations.
- ▶ Understand and improve how resource management decisions are made to facilitate the implementation of conservation priorities.

- ▶ Communicate the SECAS vision and develop tools to help partners, resource managers, and community leaders implement that vision as well as engaging constituencies across the landscape.



More information

For more information, please visit SECASSoutheast.org, or call Cynthia K. Edwards, our SECAS coordinator, at (601) 965-4903 (ext. 303), or 337-207-9377.



Photos: Big Lake NWR - USFWS; Buffalo River Overlook, AR - Doug Wertmann (Flickr CC 2.0)