

The White Oak Initiative

Working to enhance the future of
America's upland oak forests



Introduction

- Brief overview of the importance of white oaks in ecosystems
- Explanation of the issue – lack of white oak regeneration



American White Oak

- Habitat and food for wildlife
- Supports rural economies
- Wide variety of industries
 - Furniture
 - Flooring
 - Cabinetry
 - Barrels for spirits and wine



But There is a Problem

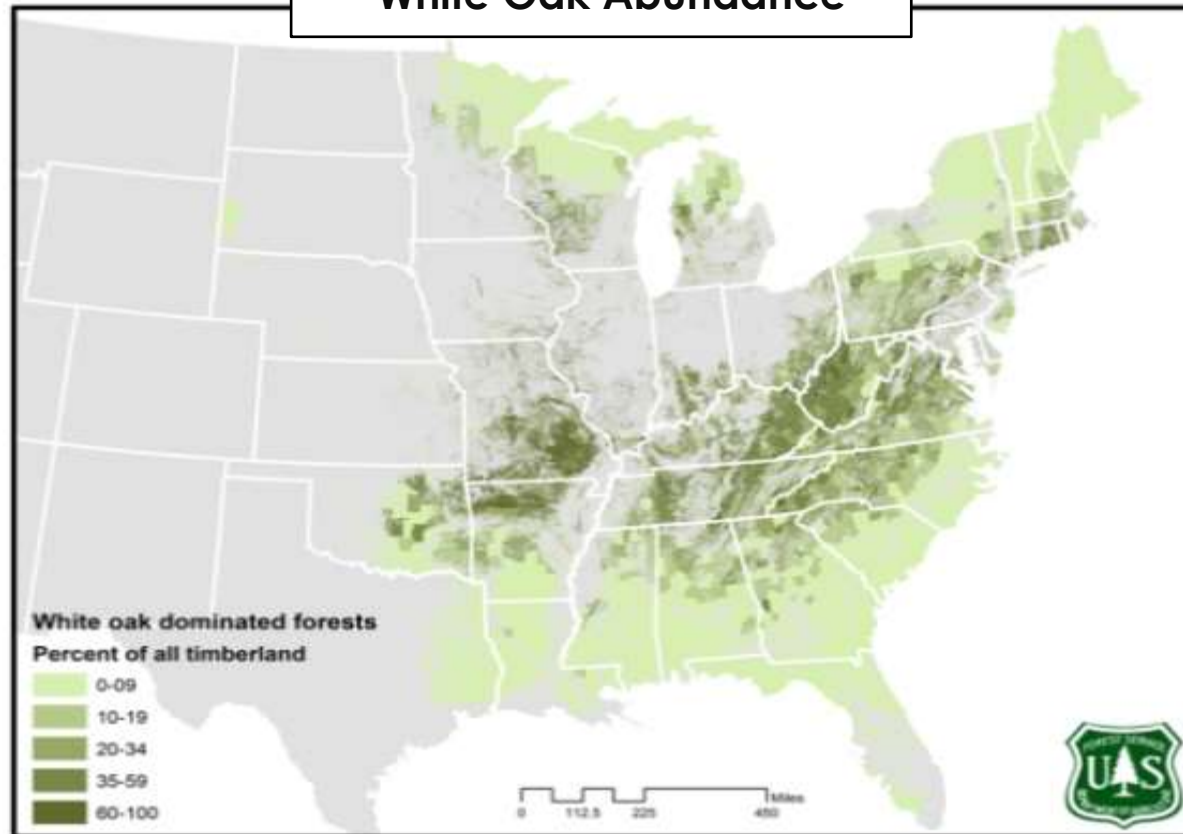
- White oak populations are projected to significantly decline across its range in the coming decades



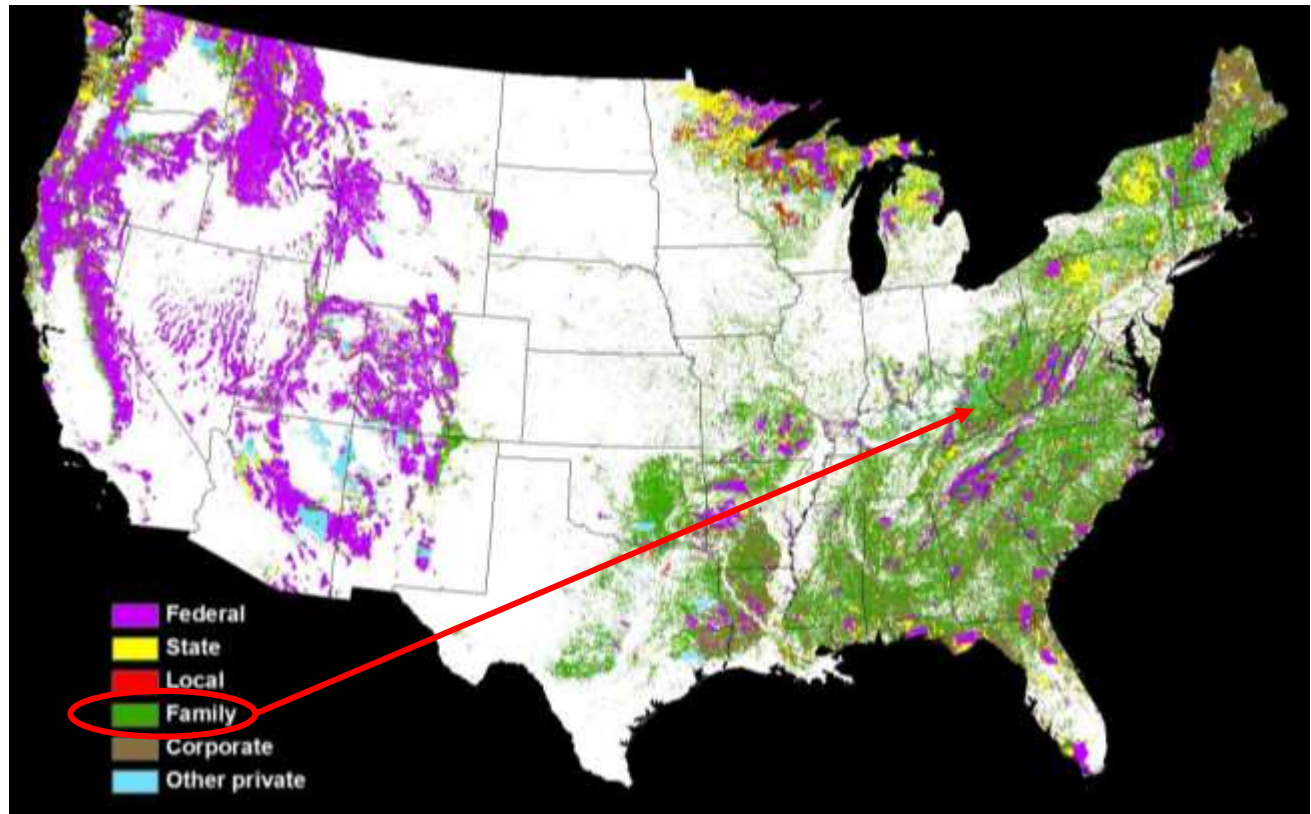
American White Oak

Cornerstone for the forests of the Eastern United States

White Oak Abundance



U.S. Forestland Ownership





The research shows that without swift intervention today, the American white oak population will begin to **decline significantly within the next 10 to 15 years**, with more extreme declines over the next several decades.

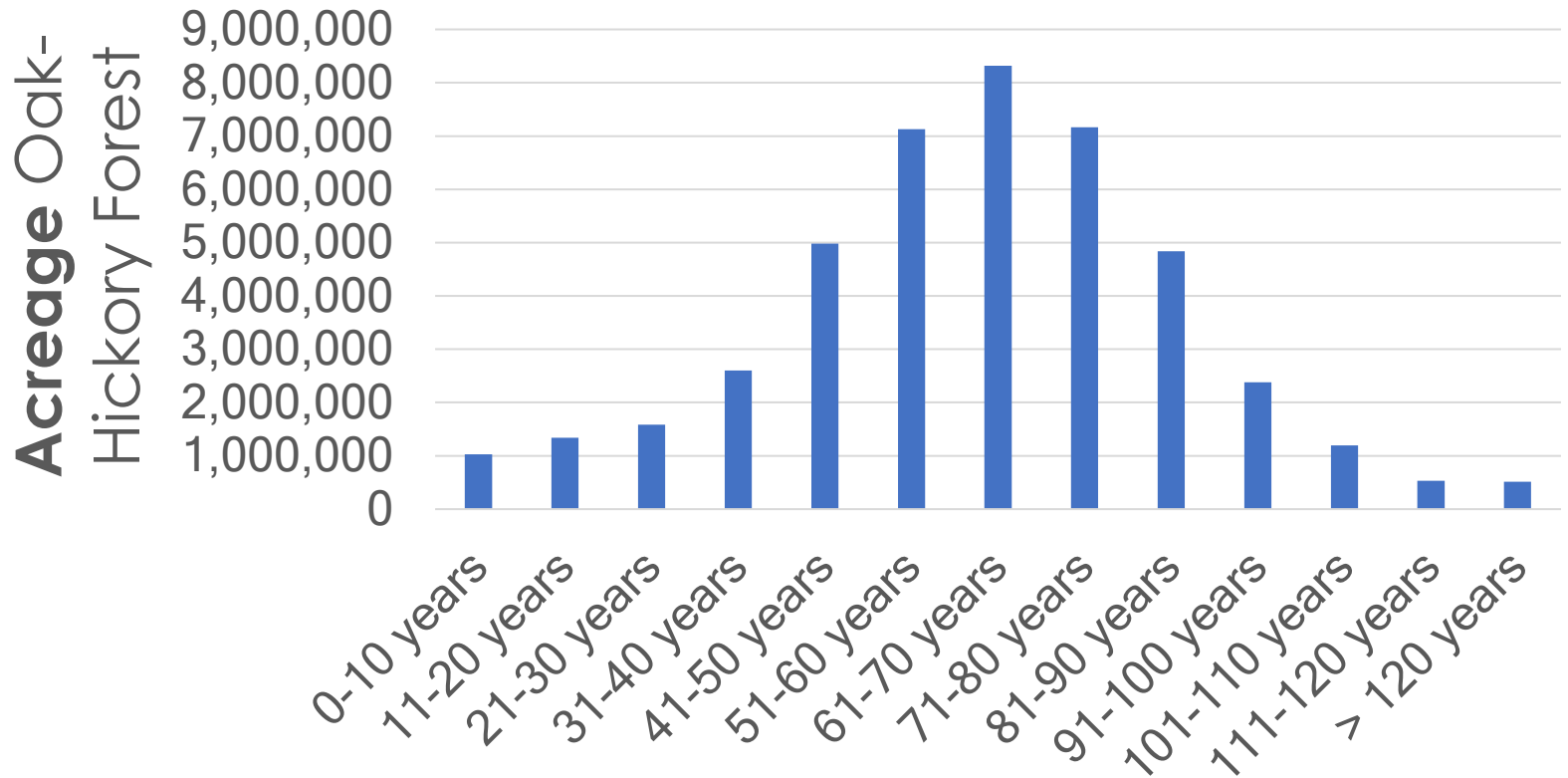


Changes in Our Oak Forests

About 75% of all white oak trees across the eastern United States can be classified as “mature,” while populations of **young white oak trees are limited.**



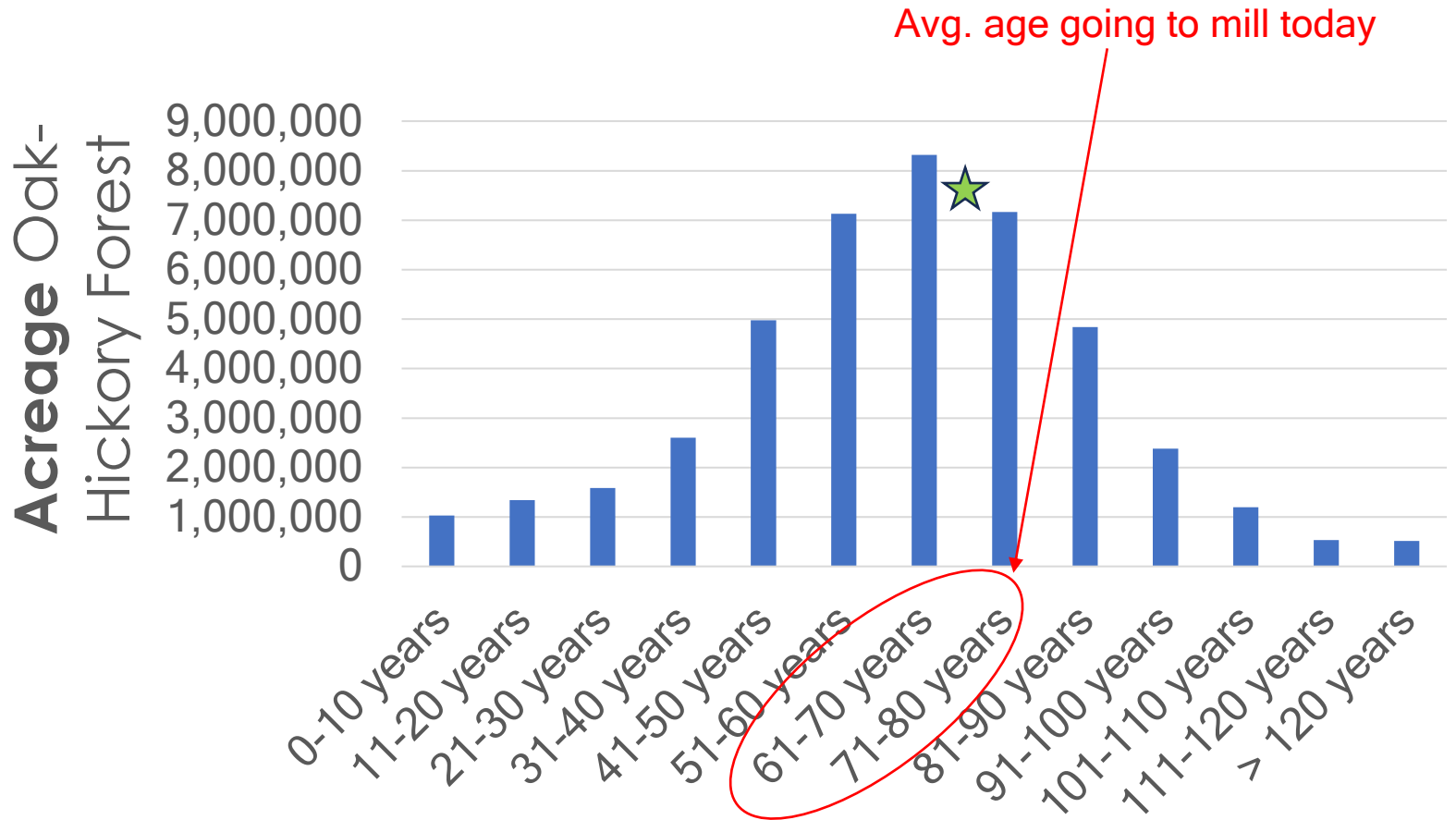
Stand Age Distribution of Oak-Hickory Forest Type Group



Source: EVALIDator Version 1.7.2.00 – IL, IN, KY, MO, OH, TN
Data run by Lhotka
J. Stringer, Univ. of KY, Forestry and Natural Resources



Stand Age Distribution of Oak-Hickory Forest Type Group

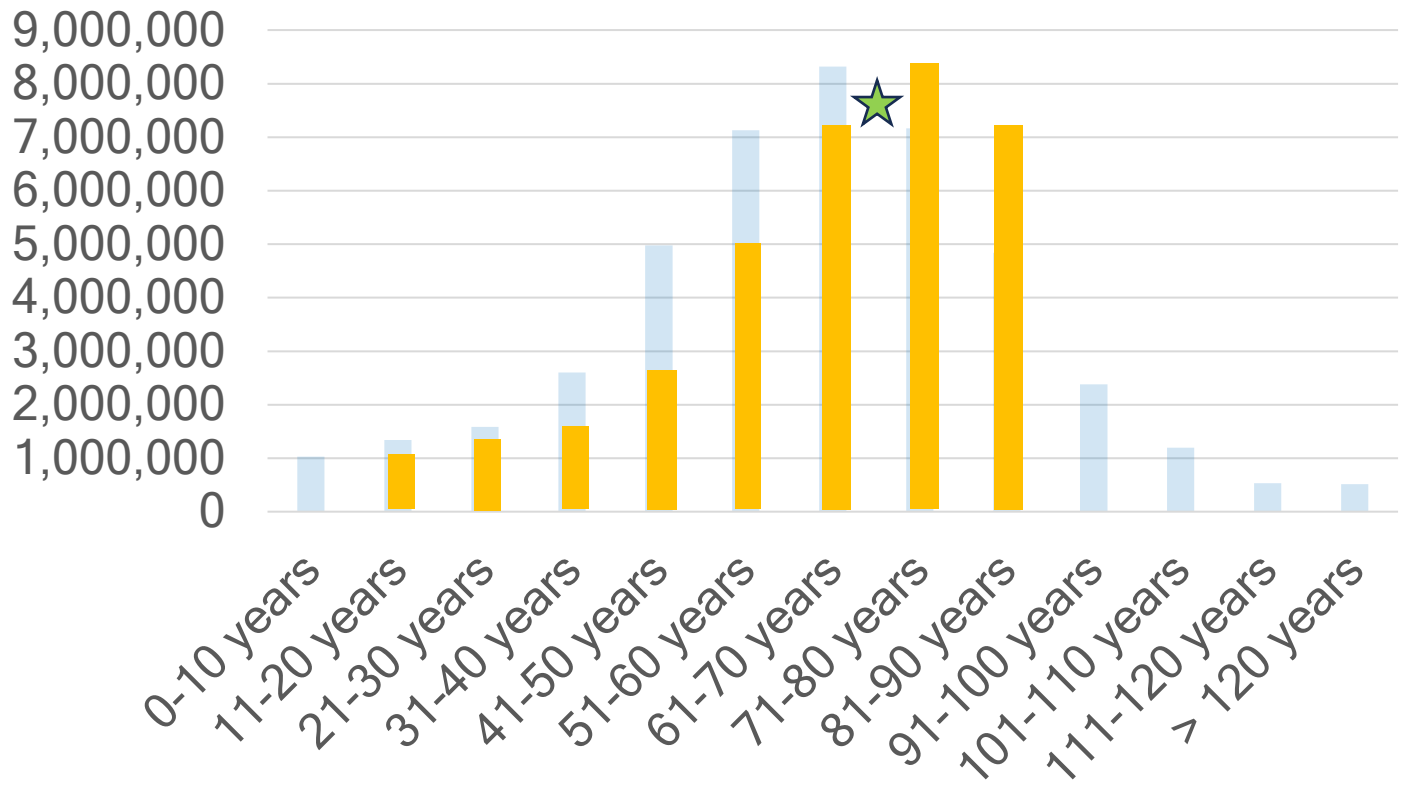


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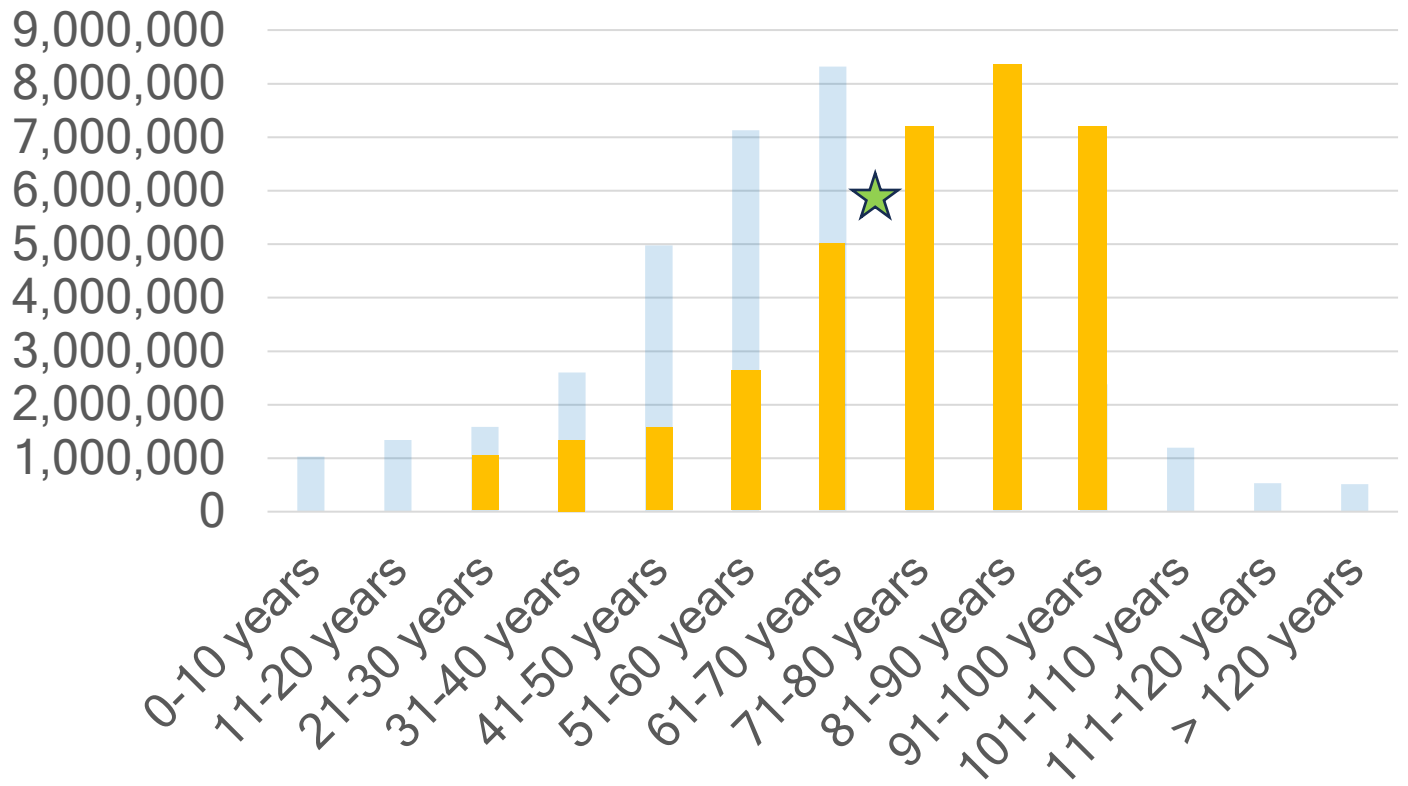
Acreeage Oak- Hickory Forest



Source: EVALIDator (FIA Data) Version 1.7.2.00 – IL, IN, KY, MO, OH, TN
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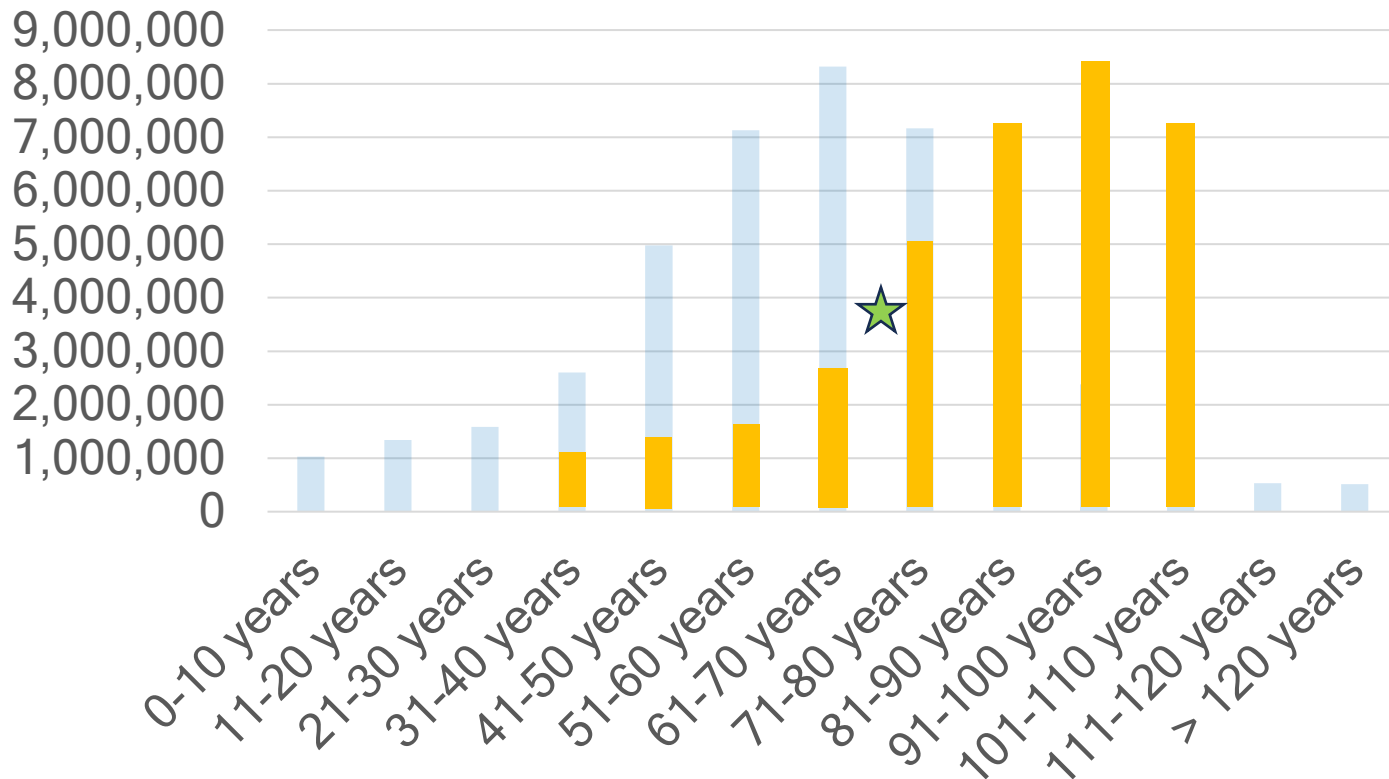
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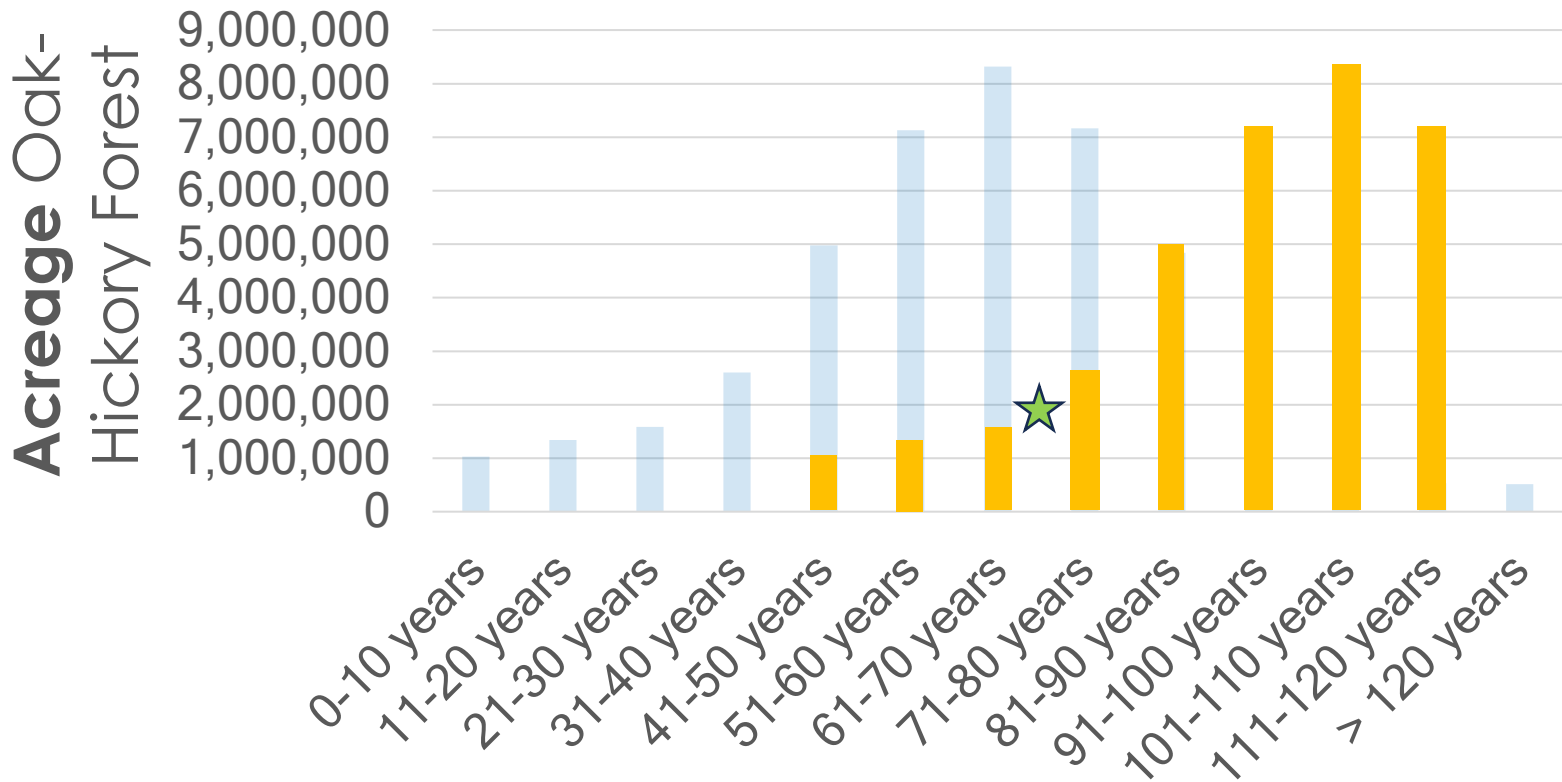
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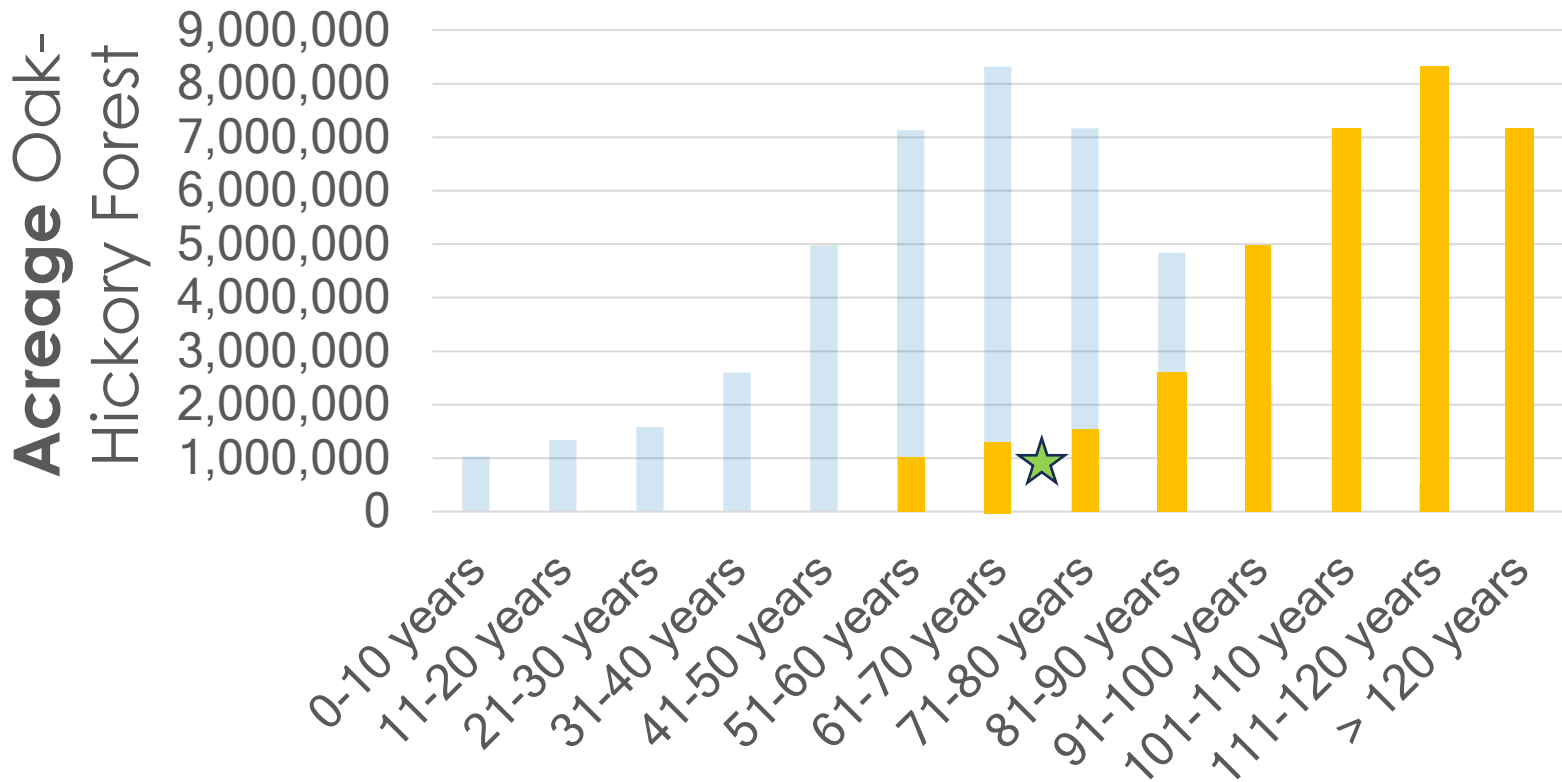
Acres of Oak-Hickory Forest



Source: EVALIDator (FIA Data) Version 1.7.2.00 – IL, IN, KY, MO, OH, TN
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Reversing the decline of America's white oak population is **possible**, but intervention must begin today.



Factors Contributing to the Lack of Regen

- Natural – competition, predation, disease
- Human – land use changes, lack of management, invasive species, climate change



Factors Limiting Regeneration

- Lack of active forest management, fire, and other disturbances
- Insects, disease, and invasive species
- Changing land use conditions



What must change to increase acreage of WO in upcoming age classes?

- Disturb our upland oak forests through active forest management, logging, fire, and other disturbances
 - **THIS IS THE KEY.** We *must* continue to disturb our forests! But we need to do it correctly and consistently.
 - By the way, we can't possibly plant our way out of this problem.



Effective and Consistent Active Forest Management



Manage Insects, Disease, Invasive Species - Keep Forests as Forests



What is the White Oak Initiative and Where Does it Fit In?



White Oak Initiative

VISION: The WOI envisions a future in which upland oak forests are managed to ensure a sustainable white oak resource.

MISSION: The mission of the WOI is to be an advocate and catalyst for sustainable upland oak forest management, with a focus on white oak regeneration. We accomplish this through convening, connecting, and collaborating with stakeholders to increase economic, social, and ecological benefits of upland oak forests.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- A Science-Based Approach
- Strategic and Outcome-Oriented
- Collaboration
- Site and Stand-Level Decisions
- Public and Private Lands Involvement
- Sharing of Knowledge
- Stakeholder Feedback



Who is involved in the Initiative?

- Diverse group of individuals and organizations interested in the long-term sustainability of white oak.



**CONSERVATION PLAN:
RESTORING SUSTAINABILITY
FOR WHITE OAK AND UPLAND OAK
COMMUNITIES**



WWW.WHITEOAKINITIATIVE.ORG



Once the A&CP Came Out...

- COVID
- Hired first full-time Executive Director
- A Bit of a “What’s Next?” Dilemma
- Over the past several months, the WOI Board and ED have been focused on setting goals and strategies that make sense
- The WOI can’t possibly be “on-the-ground implementers” (nor should it be)



2024 – 2025 Strategic Goals

GOAL 1. Build internal capacity and infrastructure to ensure a well-run organization

GOAL 2. Be the “Convener” that promotes and enhances white oak conservation efforts.

GOAL 3. Be the “Connector and Collaborator” that fosters interactions between stakeholders working together to advance white oak conservation efforts.



Catalyze On-the-Ground Success

CONVENE

Stakeholders to Explore New and Emerging Markets, Including Financing Solutions

Researchers to Develop BMPs, Report on Current Research and Determine Future Research Needs, etc.

CONNECT

Landowners with Resources

Forest Practitioners with Resources

Organizations Doing Similar Work

COLLABORATE

Work with Interested Parties to Develop a "Unified Front" to Address this Issue

Leverage Resources to Make a Larger Impact

Work Together to Advocate for Policy and Funding that Protects the Long-Term Sustainable Management of Oak Forests



Landowners are Key....

- Family forest owners have **positive opinions of oak.**
- Most family forest owners are willing to receive land management **advice.**
- Family forest owners see the **value in their land.**
- Family forest owners prefer **cost-sharing programs.**
- Family forest owners are interested in **state and university partnerships.**



Existing Resources for Landowners

www.whiteoakinitiative.org



Introduction
Upland oak forests are one of the most dominant forest types in the eastern United States. These forests commonly contain several species of upland oaks that are classified as either red oaks or white oaks. Red oaks



Healthy oak forests take time to mature. Start actively managing your woods today.
Healthy oak forests are critical to supporting wildlife, providing places to enjoy nature and supplying valuable wood products for the nation. White oak is an especially important tree in the forest, both ecologically and commercially. While white oak trees are still abundant across the eastern half of the United States, the conditions are lacking in most forests to support the next generation of oak trees. Proper management of oak forests is needed to make sure there is enough space, light and time for the acorns to germinate and grow tall.

NRCS.USDA.GOV/GETSTARTED



Upcoming Resources for Landowners

- Revised website to serve as more of a “one-stop-shop” for landowners attempting to learn more or find resources
- Mobile app



Outreach and Awareness



Conservation

Mighty Oaks From Little Acorns Grow

NWTF, White Oak Initiative work to ensure healthy oak forests for future generations.

Bourbon, Biodiversity, and the Quest to Save America's Oak Forests

White Oak Initiative Growing and Meeting Challenges

Just as the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted many aspects of our lives, the White Oak Initiative (WOI) is currently in the process of launching a new initiative to help ensure the future of Missouri's white oaks and forestlands. This initiative will focus on providing technical assistance and training to landowners and managers who are interested in improving the health and productivity of their white oak forests. The initiative will be a multi-part effort that includes a series of webinars, field tours, and hands-on training opportunities. The first webinar in the series, "Missouri's Amazing Oaks," will show how to help ensure the future of Missouri's white oaks and forestlands.



Free Webinar on Missouri White Oaks

A five-part webinar series, "Missouri's Amazing Oaks," will show how to help ensure the future of Missouri's white oaks and forestlands



Removing Barriers



H.R. 5582 – White Oak Resilience Act (WORA)



Where are we finding success?



Missouri's oak forests provide

- Critical habitat for wildlife
- Wood products



But their future is at risk

- Young oaks are being crowded out by less desirable trees
- No young trees today means no oak forests tomorrow

Active management is needed

- Weeding the woodland garden ensures young oaks will have the space to grow

JOIN THE EFFORT
Learn more at:
whiteoakinitiative.org



State-level work via USFS Landscape Scale Restoration Grants



Where are we finding success?



Developing Collaborations (and Finding \$) to Work Across Boundaries



Where are we finding success?

Barr Announces Formation of Congressional White Oak Caucus

Bourbon Caucus Legislators Propose the 'White Oak Resilience Act' to Save the White Oak Ecosystem

Barr, McGarvey introduce White Oak Resilience Act

117TH CONGRESS
1st Session **H. R. 5582**

To provide for white oak restoration, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

Mr. BARR (for himself, Mr. BIERA, Mr. DESJARDINS, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. MCGARVEY) introduced the following bill, which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture, and in addition to the Committee on Natural Resources, and Education and the Workforce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned:

A BILL

To provide for white oak restoration, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the "White Oak Resilience
5 Act".



On Capitol Hill



How Can We Support Each Other?



A Few Ideas...

CONVENE

Bring Together Members and Vendors to Discuss White Oak Sustainability in the Supply Chain, Production, and Beyond

CONNECT

Create Networking Opportunities Around White Oak Management

COLLABORATE

Work with Interested Parties to Develop a “Unified Front” to Address this Issue

Leverage Resources to Make a Larger Impact

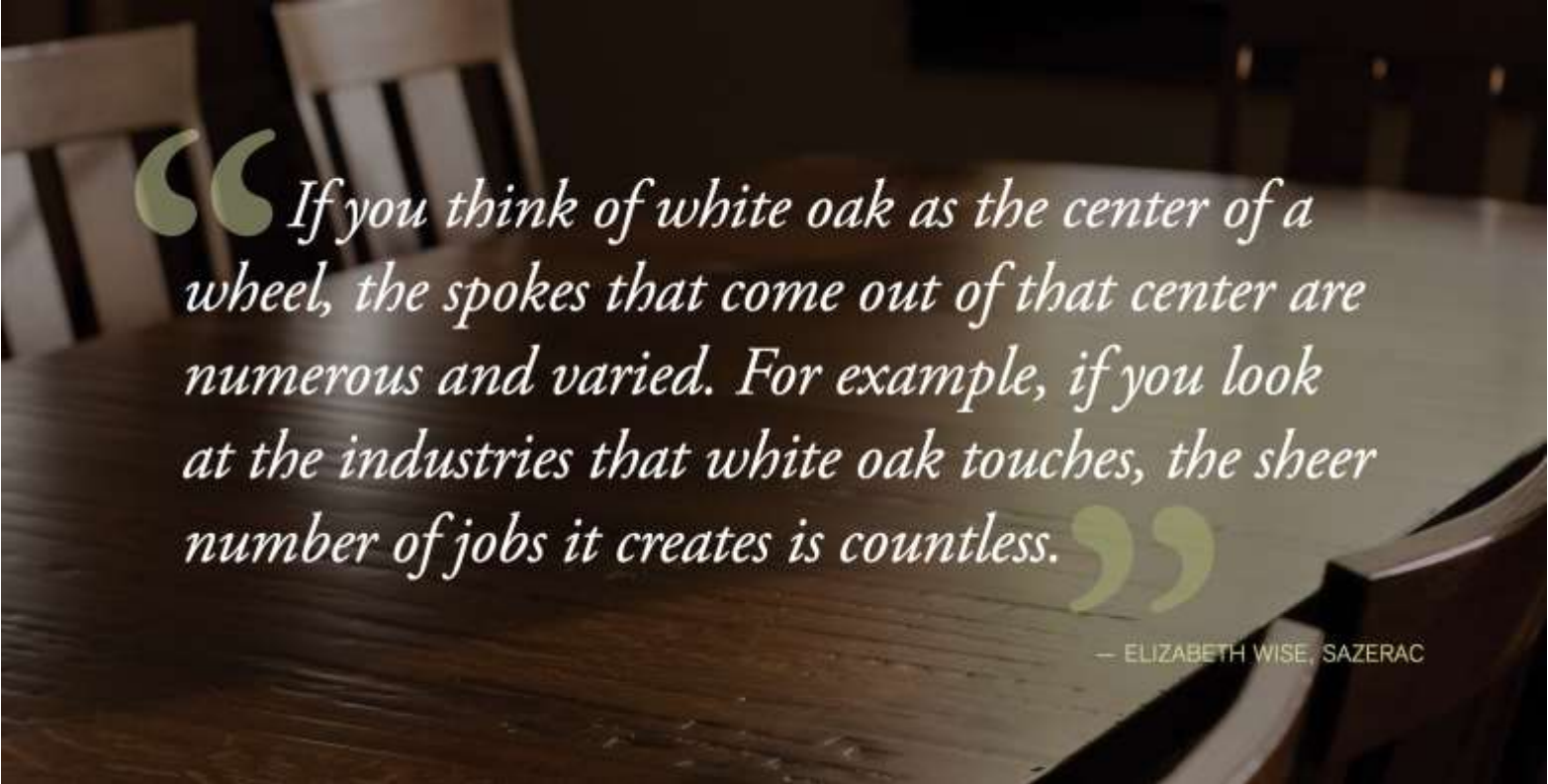
Work Together to Advocate for Policy and Funding that Ensures the Long-Term Sustainable Management of Oak Forests



How to Get Involved

- Financial support for White Oak Initiative by joining the Acorns to Oaks Society
- Participate on White Oak Initiative committee work
- Engage with on the ground projects, research, demonstration sites
- Spread the word
- Policy – engage local, state and federal decision makers





“If you think of white oak as the center of a wheel, the spokes that come out of that center are numerous and varied. For example, if you look at the industries that white oak touches, the sheer number of jobs it creates is countless.”

— ELIZABETH WISE, SAZERAC



For More Information

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