

# Natives First

## A Native Vegetation Standard for the Conservation Title of the Farm Bill

Presented by:

Jef Hodges, Grassland Coordinator

National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative



...the unified strategy to restore wild quail



I interrupt this presentation to bring you a public service announcement. **WEAR YOUR SAFETY GEAR!**



# The States Have United for Bobwhites

**25 States +  
Partners**

**1 Unified  
Technical Committee**

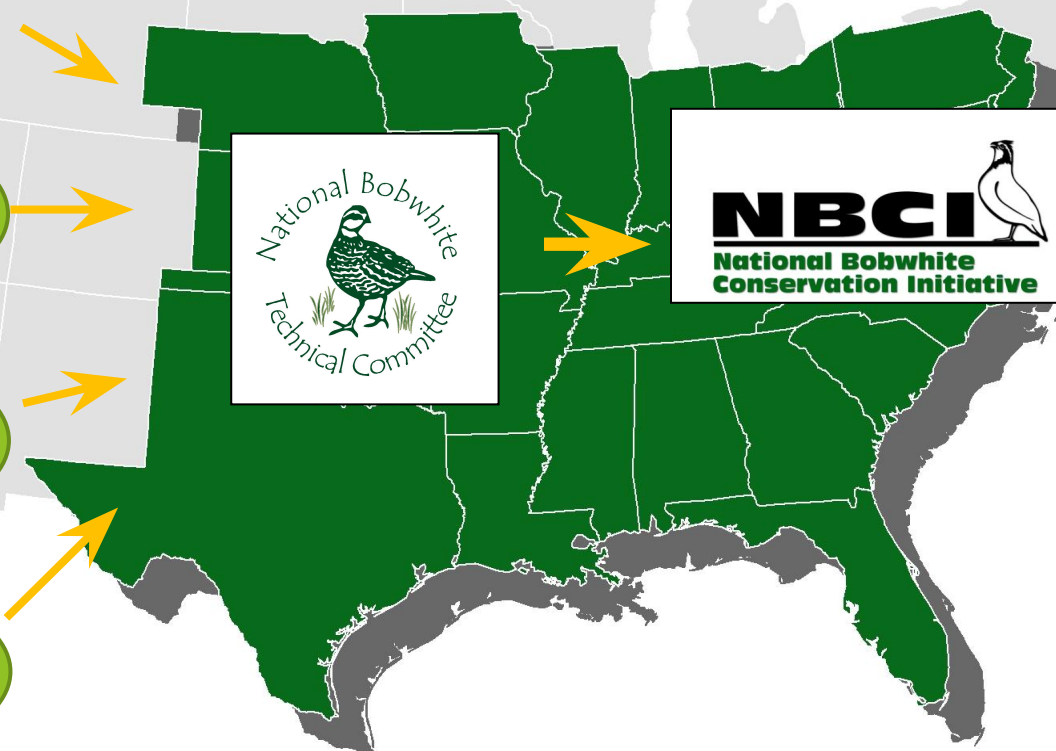
**1 Unified  
Initiative**

Midwest

Southeast

Northeast

Many  
Partners



# Natives First

## A native vegetation standard for the Conservation Title of the Farm Bill

- Place no regulatory restrictions on private landowners;
- Eliminate financial assistance for aggressive introduced plants;
- Promote adoption and use of native plants for most purposes; and
- Allow flexibility for non-aggressive introduced plants.

<http://bringbackbobwhites.org/conservation/natives-first/>



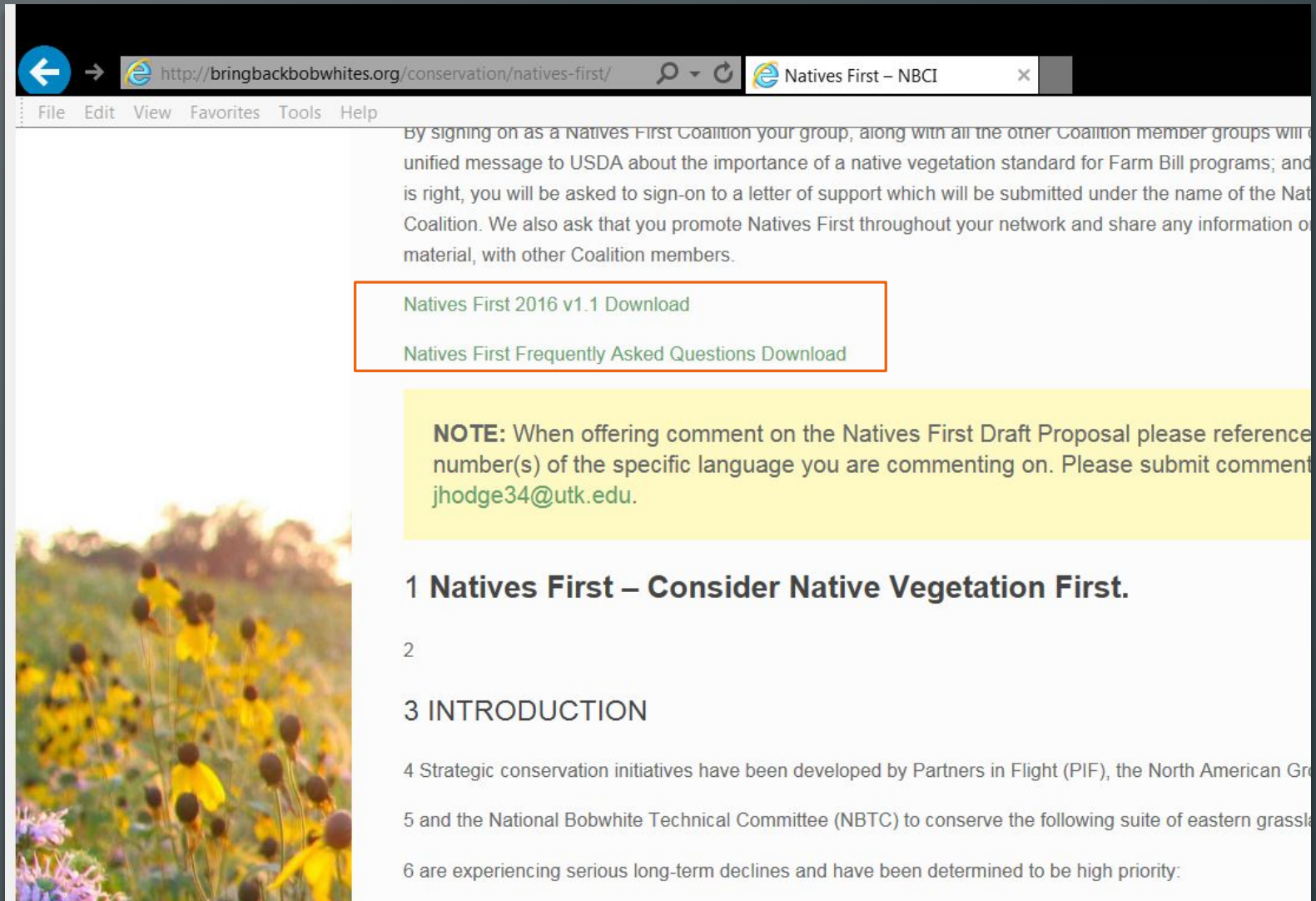
...the unified strategy to restore wild quail



# USDA Conservation Title of the Farm Bill Landscape Impact (25 NBCI States)

- Excluding fish and wildlife habitat, EQIP enrolls nearly 1.9 million acres annually (2009-2014)
- In 2014 EQIP enrolled an estimated 1.25 million acres in introduced grasses
  - Need to shift focus from “wildlife” exclusivity to multi-use applications with wider environmental and taxpayer benefits.

<http://bringbackbobwhites.org/conservation/natives-first/>



By signing on as a Natives First Coalition your group, along with all the other Coalition member groups will send a unified message to USDA about the importance of a native vegetation standard for Farm Bill programs; and if you are right, you will be asked to sign-on to a letter of support which will be submitted under the name of the Natives First Coalition. We also ask that you promote Natives First throughout your network and share any information or other material, with other Coalition members.

[Natives First 2016 v1.1 Download](#)

[Natives First Frequently Asked Questions Download](#)

**NOTE:** When offering comment on the Natives First Draft Proposal please reference the number(s) of the specific language you are commenting on. Please submit comments to [jhodge34@utk.edu](mailto:jhodge34@utk.edu).

## 1 Natives First – Consider Native Vegetation First.

2

### 3 INTRODUCTION

4 Strategic conservation initiatives have been developed by Partners in Flight (PIF), the North American Grassland Conservation Team (NAGCT), the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI), and the National Bobwhite Technical Committee (NBTC) to conserve the following suite of eastern grassland birds that are experiencing serious long-term declines and have been determined to be high priority:

# Natives First Draft Proposal Language

- Original language and guidance provided by a Working Group made up of a broad base of stakeholders.
  - Retired NRCS, eastern pasture and rangeland representation
  - ARS
  - Producers
  - Seed Trade
  - U.S. Geological Survey
  - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
  - State Agency

# Natives First Strategy

(developing/evolving)

- Primary objective
  - Develop a Natives First Coalition of organizations, agencies and businesses supporting the concept of favoring/emphasizing native vegetation for ALL conservation uses under the Conservation Title of the Farm Bill.
  - Emphasize Natives First - not Natives Only.



# Natives First Strategy - Visionary longer term

- Natives First Coalition take eventual leadership in promoting, developing and marketing multiple benefits of using native vegetation.
- Natives First Coalition serve as a clearing house of information and dissemination of native vegetation information.
- Natives First Coalition members, through coordination and collaboration develop and share materials.

# Natives First Coalition - Visionary longer term

- Natives First Coalition lead marketing and public relations campaign promoting positive values of native vegetation.
- Current examples:
  - Monarch Initiative efforts
  - Honey Bee Initiative efforts
  - Soil Health promotion

# The Native Vegetation Advantage

## Forage and Biomass

### Native warm-season grasses and forbs provide increased summer forage production.

**Increased summer forage production** – Native warm-season grasses grow during the warmest months of the year when cool-season grasses are in a slump, providing excellent forage when cool-season grasses are at their lowest quality and quantity.

**Improved summer weight gains** – Research in a variety of the Rocky Mountains show Average Daily Gains greater than on cool-season grasses during the same grazing period.

Different classes of livestock under differing grazing regimens have a range of gains:

Tennessee:	1.12 lbs. to 2.65 lbs. ADG*
Kansas:	1.23 lbs. to 2.28 lbs. ADG*
Nebraska:	1.40 lbs. to 2.80 lbs. ADG*
Eastern Piedmont:	average 2.0 lbs. ADG*

**Reduced acres needed for hay production** – Native grasses typically out yield cool-season introduced grasses by 1 to 3 tons per acre, depending upon species and site quality. In addition, appropriate harvest time for several species of native warm-season grasses is later in the growing season than cool-season grasses, reducing conflicts with other on-farm activities. Hay harvest is also after typical rainy spring weather, allowing for better hay curing and higher quality hay because it is less likely to be rained on once cut.

**Reduced inputs and drought tolerant** – Generally, not much water and nitrogen to produce a unit of dry matter season grasses have deep, extensive root systems and capacity of the soil allowing the plants to resist the imp cool-season grasses.

Species
Big Bluestem
Indiangrass
Eastern Gai
Switchgrass
Tall Fescue
Data from

### Native warm-season grasses are a logical choice for biofuel.

**Native vegetation doesn't compete with food crops as sources for biomass fuel production** – Competition between food and non-food uses drives prices up, resulting in both higher food prices and higher biofuel prices. Native vegetation doesn't compete with food crops, eliminating the inflationary cycle caused by competing interests.

**No annual cultivation/planting cycle** – Native warm-season grasses are perennial and do not require annual cultivation and planting.

**Native grasses out yield many biomass crops** – Native grasses harvested for biomass yield from 4.6 to over 12 tons per acre, depending upon species, nutrient, environmental and edaphic conditions; yields over 8 tons per acre are not uncommon.<sup>14</sup>

**Native vegetation sequesters carbon** – Over 95% of the carbon storage in native vegetation is below ground<sup>15</sup>, meaning when harvested the majority of sequestered carbon is retained.



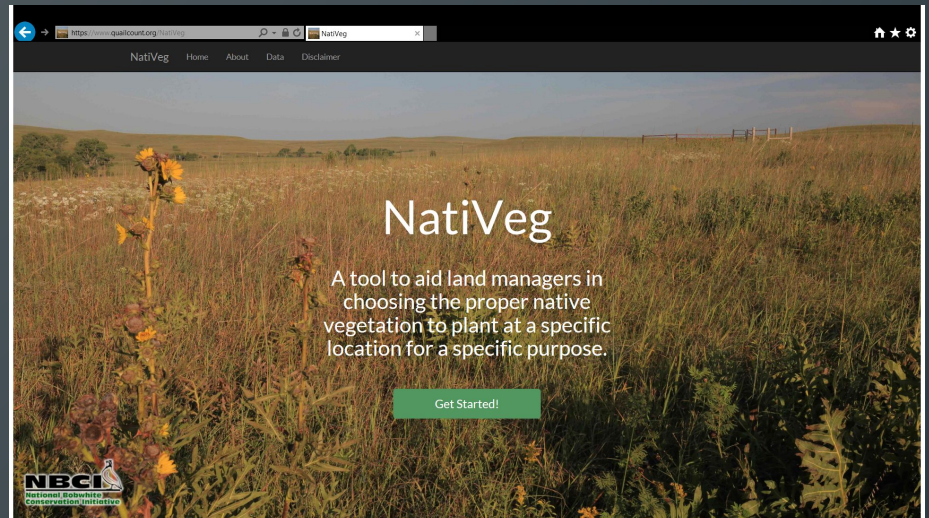
#### References

1. Kayser, F. D., G. E. Bates, J. C. Walker, C. A. Harper, and E. D. Dixon. 2011. Grazing native warm-season grasses in the Mid-south. SP731-C.
2. Kansas State University, Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 558, October 1981.
3. Moshier, R. B., Anderson, S. E. 2008. Switchgrass, Big Bluestem and Indiangrass for Grazing and Hay. University of Nebraska – Lincoln Extension, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. NebGuide G1908.
4. Burns, J.C., Fisher, D.S. Forage Potential of Switchgrass and Eastern Gamagrass in the Eastern Piedmont. Proceedings of the 2nd Eastern Native Grass Symposium, Baltimore, MD, November 1999.
5. Kayser, F. D., G. E. Bates, J. C. Walker, C. A. Harper, and E. D. Dixon. 2011. Producing hay from native warm-season grasses in the Mid-south. SP731-D.
6. Kayser, F. D., C. A. Harper, G. E. Bates, J. C. Walker, and E. D. Dixon. 2011. Native warm-season grasses for Mid-south forage production. SP731-A.
7. Hopkins, A.A. K.P. Vogel, K.J. Moore, K.D. Johnson, and T. Carlson. 1995. Genotype effects and genotype by environment interactions for traits of elite switchgrass populations. Crop Sci. 35: 125-132.
8. Madugulin, S.B., J. Boston, D. Brindley, R. Conner, W. Ounsworth, D. Parrish, C. Talarfero, K. Vogel, and S. Wulfscheger. 1999. Developing switchgrass as a bioenergy crop. P. 282-299. In Jandt, J. (ed.) Perspectives on new crops and new uses: Proc. 4th Nat. New Crop Symp., Phoenix, AZ 8-11 Nov 1998. Am. Soc. Horto. Sci. Press, Alexandria, VA.
9. Jobbagy, E.G., and R.B. Jackson. 2000. The vertical distribution of soil organic carbon and its relation to climate and vegetation. Ecol. Appl. 10:422-436.



# Examples of current NBCI promotional efforts for open use

## Fact Sheets Available: Overview Wildlife Forage and Biomass Water, Soil and Air



...the unified strategy to restore wild quail



# Questions?

Jef Hodges  
jhodge34@utk.edu



...the unified strategy to restore wild quail





The preceding presentation was delivered at the

# **2017 National Native Seed Conference**

Washington, D.C. February 13-16, 2017

This and additional presentations available at <http://nativeseed.info>

