



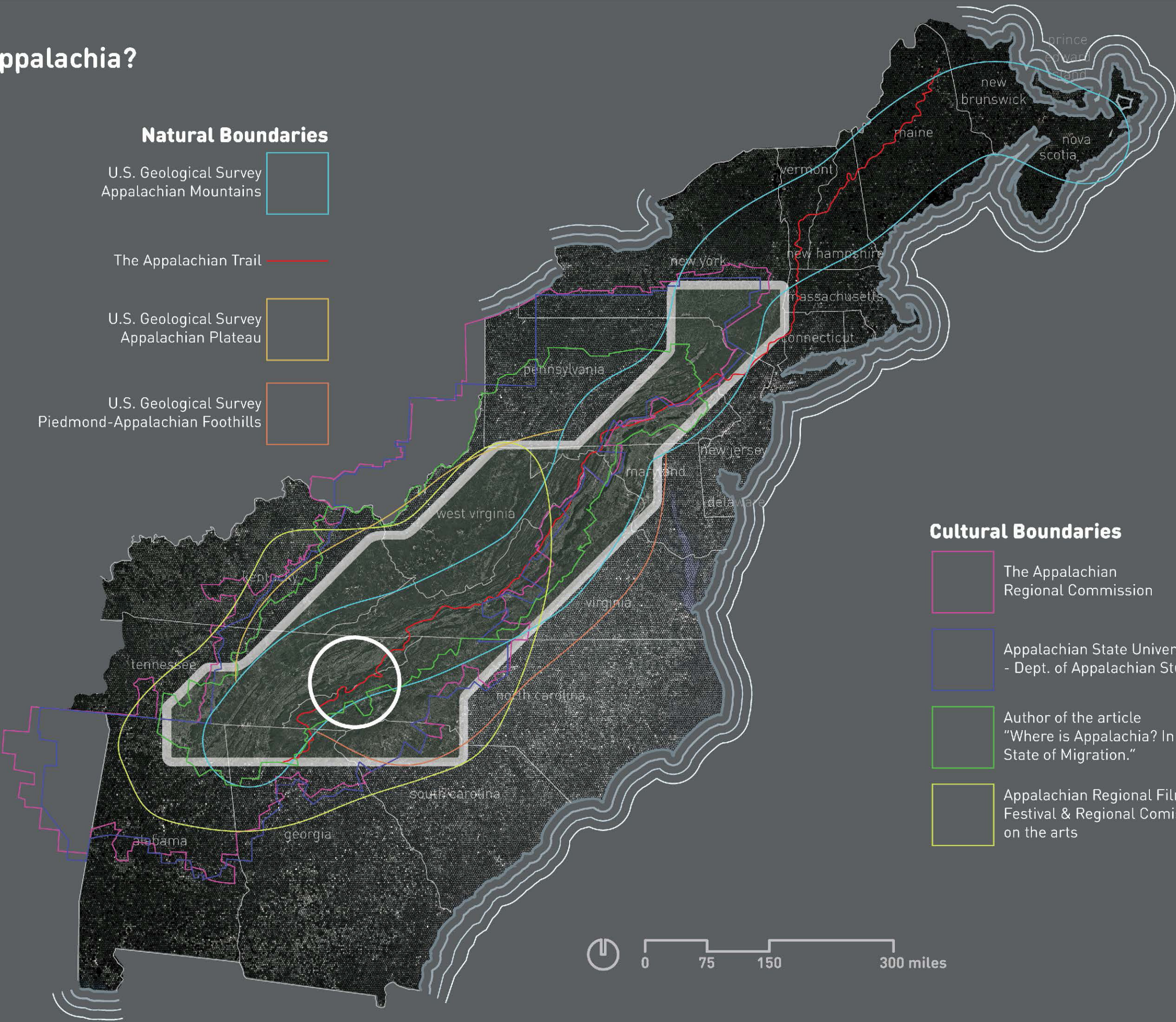
# **RETURNING TO UNAKA**

**Roan Mountain as a site of restorative justice through  
ecological and cultural stewardship in the heart of Appalachia**

Where is Roan?



# Where is Appalachia?



## Natural Boundaries

U.S. Geological Survey  
Appalachian Mountains



The Appalachian Trail



U.S. Geological Survey  
Appalachian Plateau



U.S. Geological Survey  
Piedmont-Appalachian Foothills



## Cultural Boundaries

The Appalachian  
Regional Commission



Appalachian State University  
- Dept. of Appalachian Studies



Author of the article  
"Where is Appalachia? In a  
State of Migration."



Appalachian Regional Film  
Festival & Regional Commission  
on the arts



0 75 150 300 miles

Collision of Narratives



Romanticized depiction of Cherokee Native Americans, western North Carolina



Great Smoky Mountains National Park, North Carolina



logging in the Smoky Mountains



Coal Mining near Kingsport, Tennessee



Former town of Filbert, West Virginia



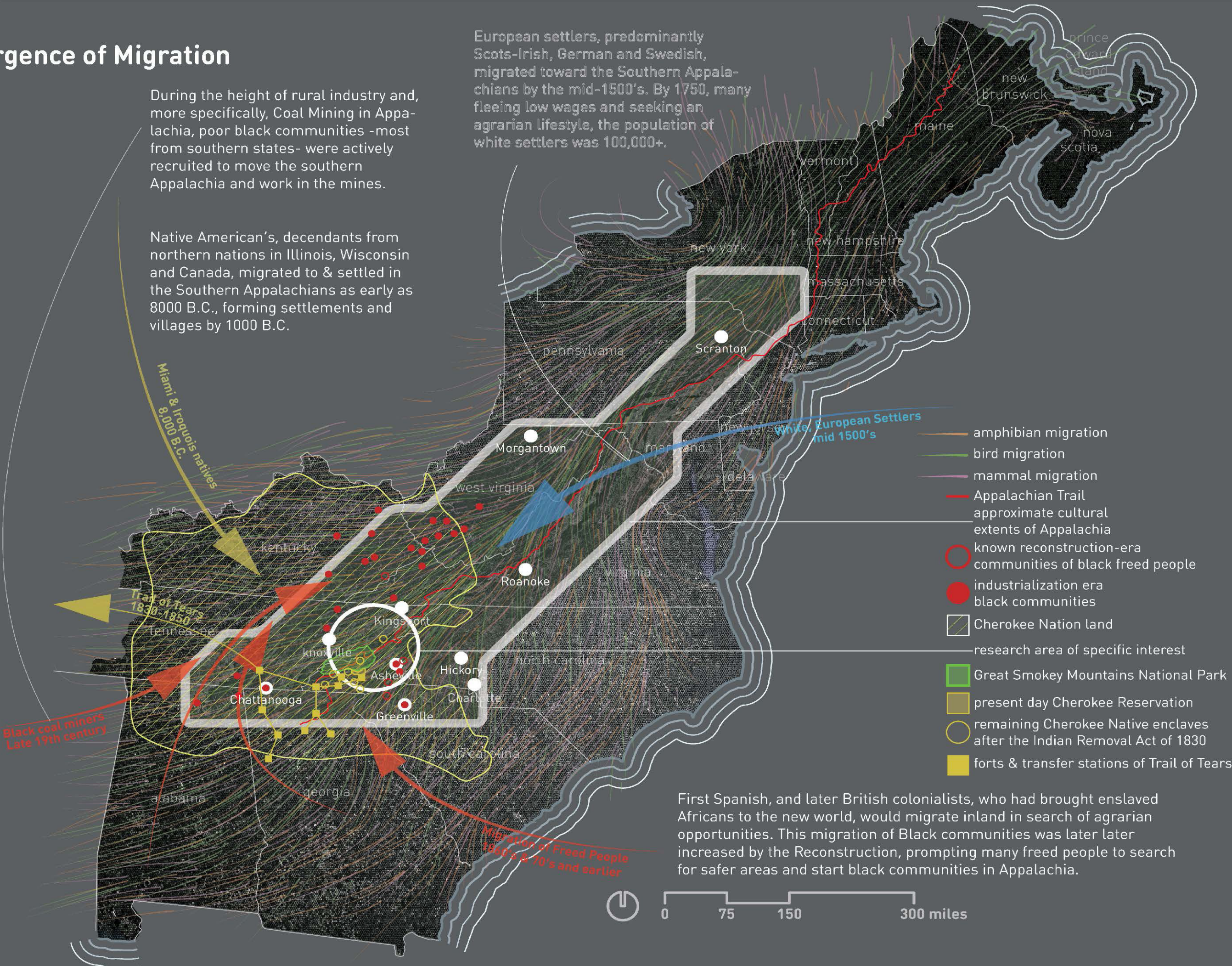
A Bluegrass band in Kentucky, ca 1930

# Convergence of Migration

During the height of rural industry and, more specifically, Coal Mining in Appalachia, poor black communities -most from southern states- were actively recruited to move the southern Appalachia and work in the mines.

Native American's, descendants from northern nations in Illinois, Wisconsin and Canada, migrated to & settled in the Southern Appalachians as early as 8000 B.C., forming settlements and villages by 1000 B.C.

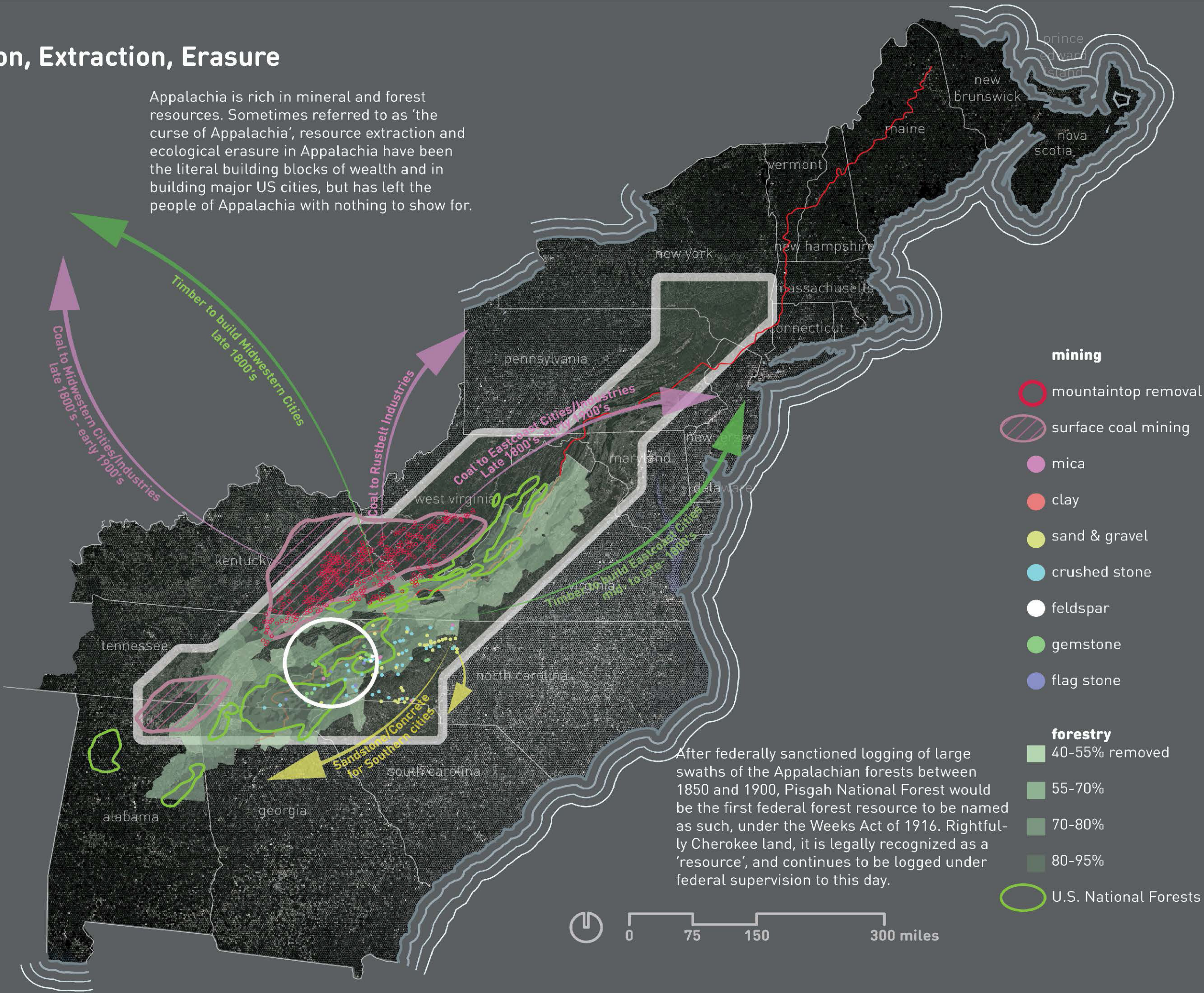
European settlers, predominantly Scots-Irish, German and Swedish, migrated toward the Southern Appalachians by the mid-1500's. By 1750, many fleeing low wages and seeking an agrarian lifestyle, the population of white settlers was 100,000+.



First Spanish, and later British colonialists, who had brought enslaved Africans to the new world, would migrate inland in search of agrarian opportunities. This migration of Black communities was later later increased by the Reconstruction, prompting many freed people to search for safer areas and start black communities in Appalachia.

# Contestation, Extraction, Erasure

Appalachia is rich in mineral and forest resources. Sometimes referred to as 'the curse of Appalachia', resource extraction and ecological erasure in Appalachia have been the literal building blocks of wealth and in building major US cities, but has left the people of Appalachia with nothing to show for.



## Roan Mountain



Roan Mountain, a massiff consisting of 5 distinct “balds”, meaning a peak that is not covered by forest, is one of the highest mountains of The Appalachians. Cherokee legend says a great battle took place on these balds between the Cherokee Nations and the Catawba Nation. The battle is told to have been so deadly that it has left the mountain peaks bald, and covered it with crimson flowers. The Cherokee, experts in symbiotic forest and ecology management, have considered it a spiritual place ever since, and have continued to manage the balds, keeping them clear of forest, as tribute to their ancestors.

The Cherokee, after having been forcibly removed from their lands by our government long ago, no longer inhabit Roan Mountain. Today it is part of a Tennessee State Park, and is managed by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. Roan Mountain is still a place of great spirituality in Cherokee culture, but a physical relationship, ownership or a voice in its management does not exist.



## Bristol & Appalachian Music

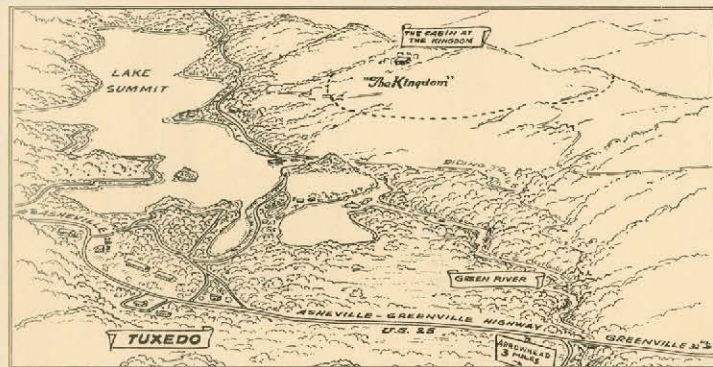


In the summer of 1927, the New York City-based music producer Ralph Peer occupied an old hat warehouse in Bristol TN/VA, and put an open call out for musicians of the south to record music with him. Known as ‘The Bristol Sessions’, and in a time where the country was hooked on Jazz, this event is described as The Big Bang of Country music. The recording sessions drew talented musicians with their inherently southern & family music from all over the south, and thrustured many of them into fame for decades to come.

Not only is this a culturally significant event for Southern Appalachia and Country music, but there are lesser known, black narratives to tell here. Drawing people from as far as Mississippi, The Bristol Sessions is also where the likes of Muddy Waters and Howlin’ Wolf, two legendary Chicago Blues icons who cemented the culturally black genre for decades to come, were thrustured into fame and signed into label contracts. The events of that summer also diffused Southern Appalachian folk music and regional bluegrass nation-wide, such as the traditional song ‘In The Pines’, eventually being picked up by artists like Lead Belly in Harlem, NY and Nirvana out west.



## The Kingdom of The Happy Land



The Kingdom of The Happy Land was a reconstruction-era community of freed Black people. Fleeing oppression, discrimination and persisting threats of violence, many Black people migrated to the Southern Appalachians in search of a truly free existence. Hidden in the tight valleys of Western North Carolina, The Kingdom was one of the first of its kind and, as such, embodied a larger narrative and unwritten history of rural Black place-making.

“Several sources locate The Kingdom’s origin in 1866 when approximately 50 freedpeople traversed the mountains from the Deep South to a small mountaintop in Western North Carolina—the same year white supremacists established the Klu Klux Klan in nearby Tennessee while southern states passed the Black Codes to restrict freedom from the newly liberated Black American population. Over the next few years, The Kingdom is believed to have grown to a 200-person communal society with a king and a queen and a common treasury.”

—Danielle Dulken, 2019 in Scalawag Magazine



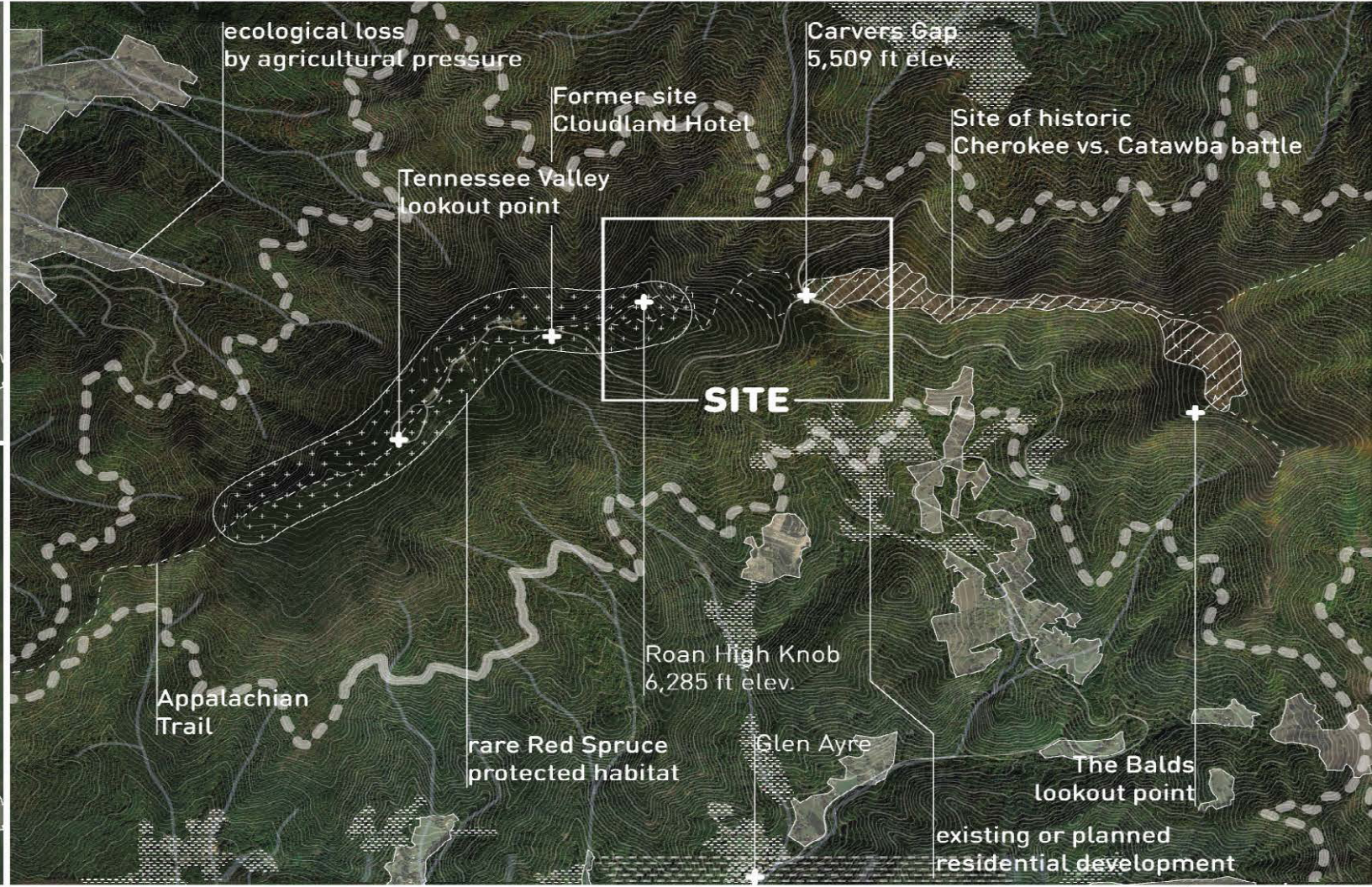
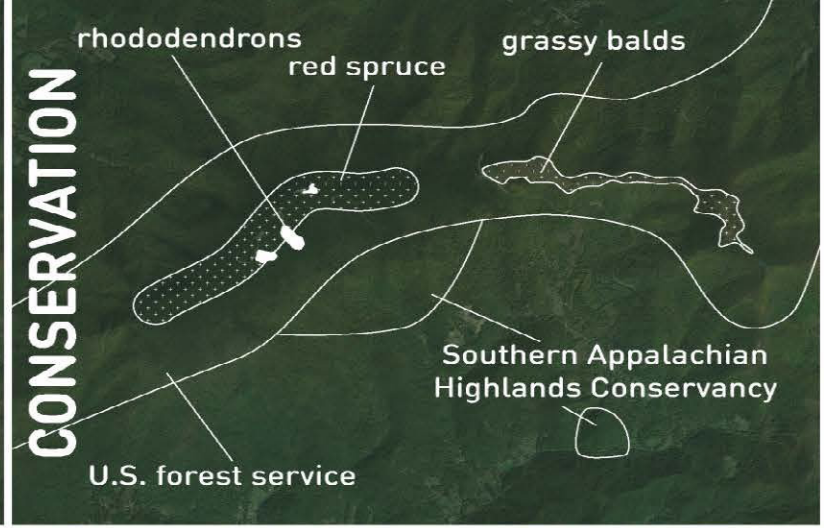
## Eastern Cherokee Reservation



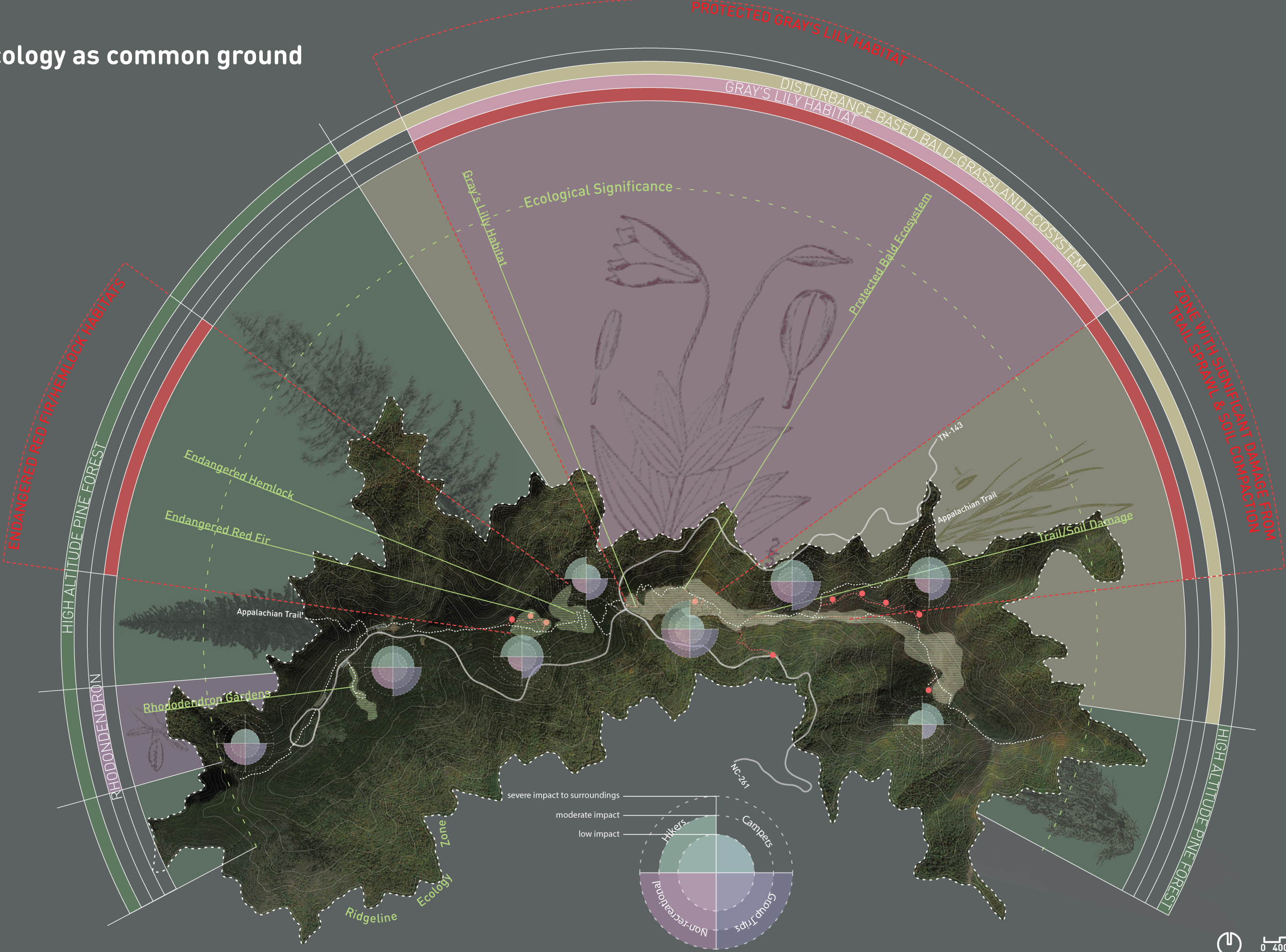
The Eastern Cherokee Reservation, or officially the ‘Qualla Boundary’, is a US government land trust reserved for the federally recognized Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. After the Indian Removal Act of 1830, most of the Cherokee natives were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands, and migrated over the Trail of Tears to new territories in Oklahoma. Some of the Cherokee hid in the tight and isolated mountain region what is now Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The remaining Cherokee have since regained this federal land as official reservation.

A huge problem in the regaining of cultural, racial & environmental justice is the recognition that, before the reservation was given to the Cherokee Nation, it was logged & completely stripped of its forests. This part of the Appalachians, in particular, was hard-hit by the late 1800’s logging frenzy that built our East Coast cities, including New York. It is estimated 80-95 percent of this land was logged, before given to the Cherokee Nation. Stripped of its cultural, ecological & physical significance, it is no longer truly a home for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

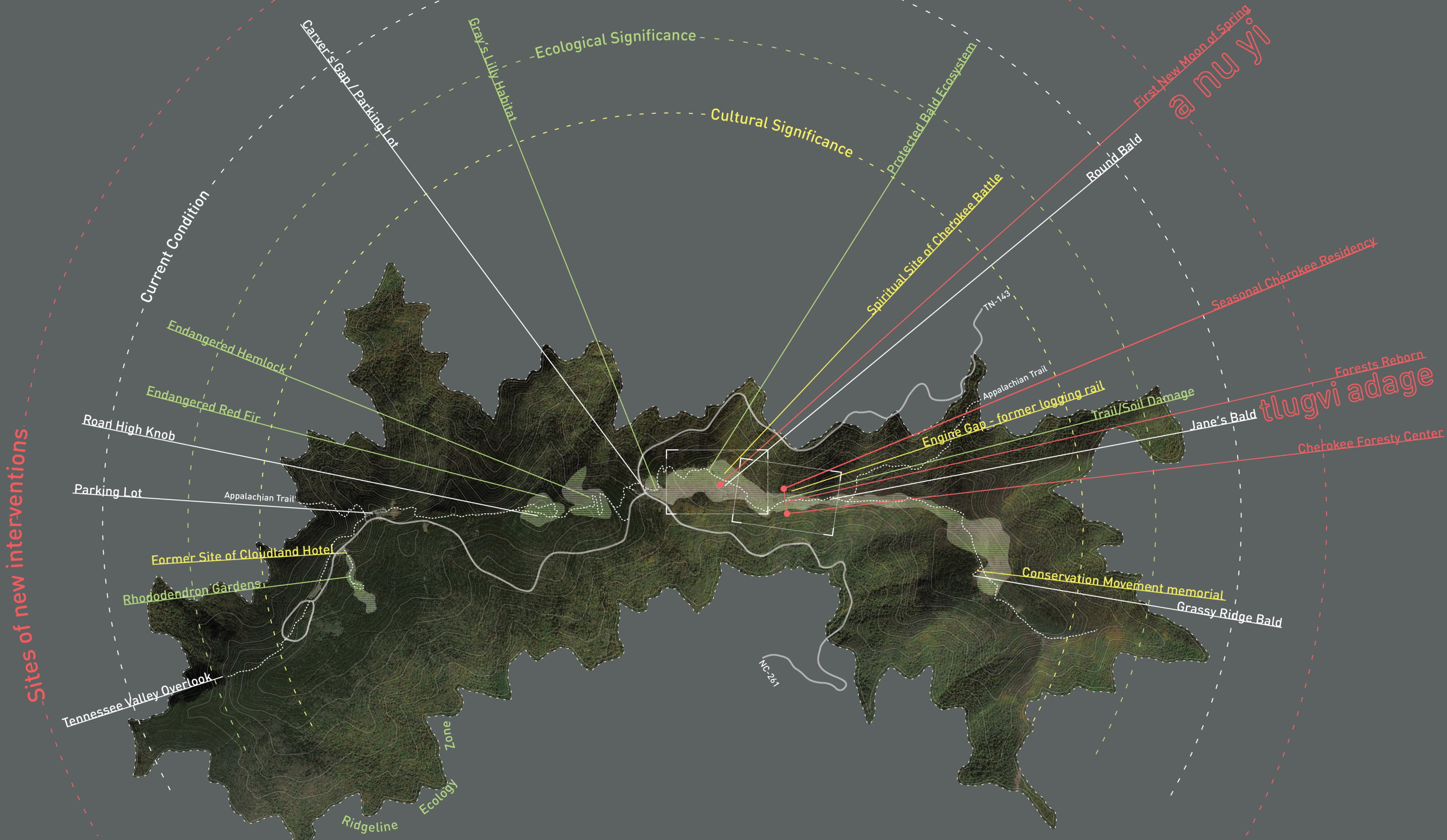




Ecology as common ground



Mark-making for restoration



## MISSION

The restoration & conservation of Roan Mountain's ecological networks & cultural heritage through a synthesis of ecological & cultural stewardship

## VISION

A future for Roan Mountain, where it has become -once again- a place for the Cherokee to return back to. As an act of cultural, spiritual & ecological reparations of the perception of space & place, to exchange knowledge of indigenous land management, and to protect Roan Mountain as part of larger, vital highland ecological networks

## CONCEPT

The concept for a distributed approach to land-use, occupation & program, then, is synthesized through the inherent & interrelated ideas **Shelter, Migration & Destination**

Shelter, Migration, Destination

The First New Moon of Spring - A Nu Yi

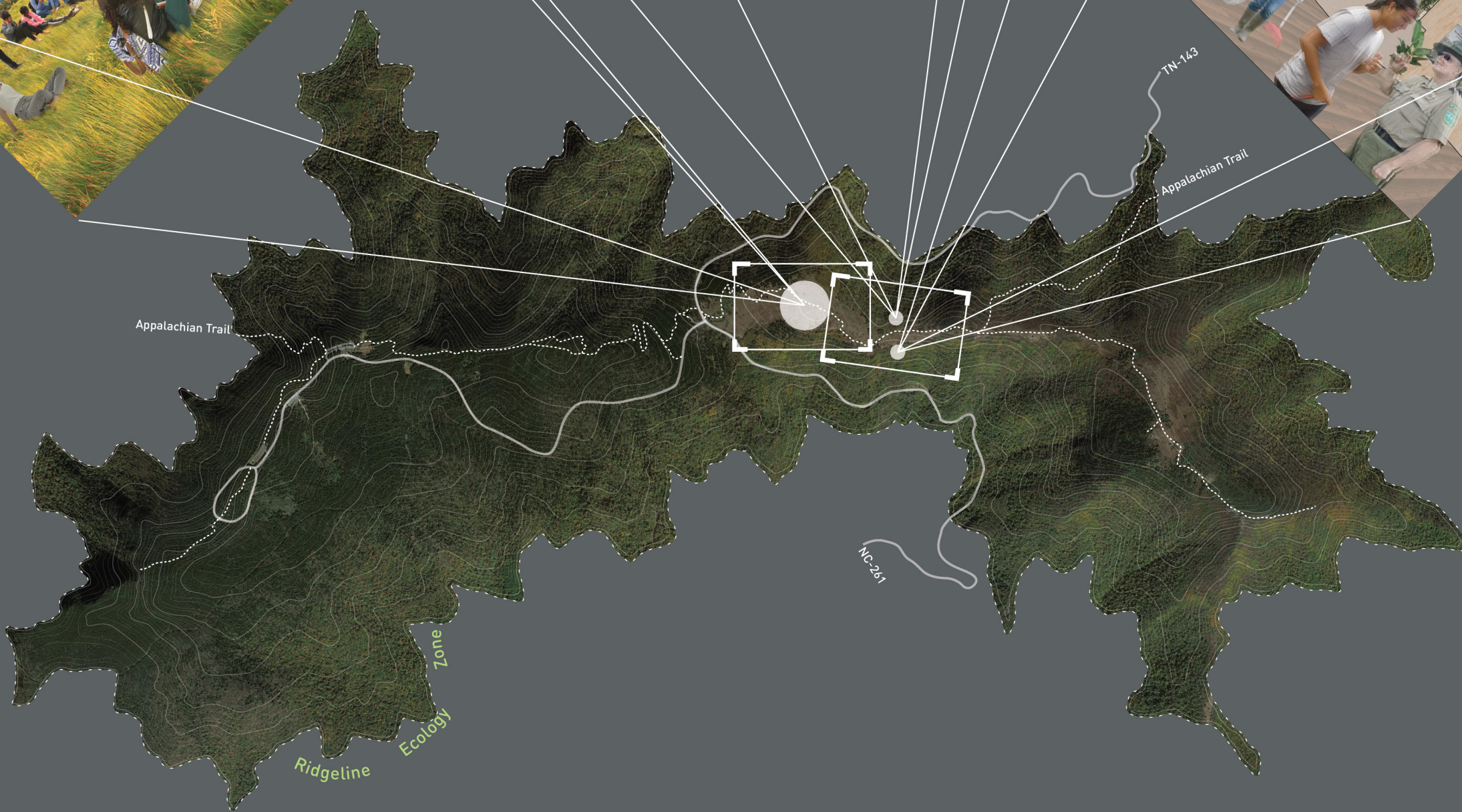
A temporary performance space as a marker for regeneration

Forest Reborn - Tlugvi Adage

A seasonal residence for Cherokee Natives to re-inhabit their land

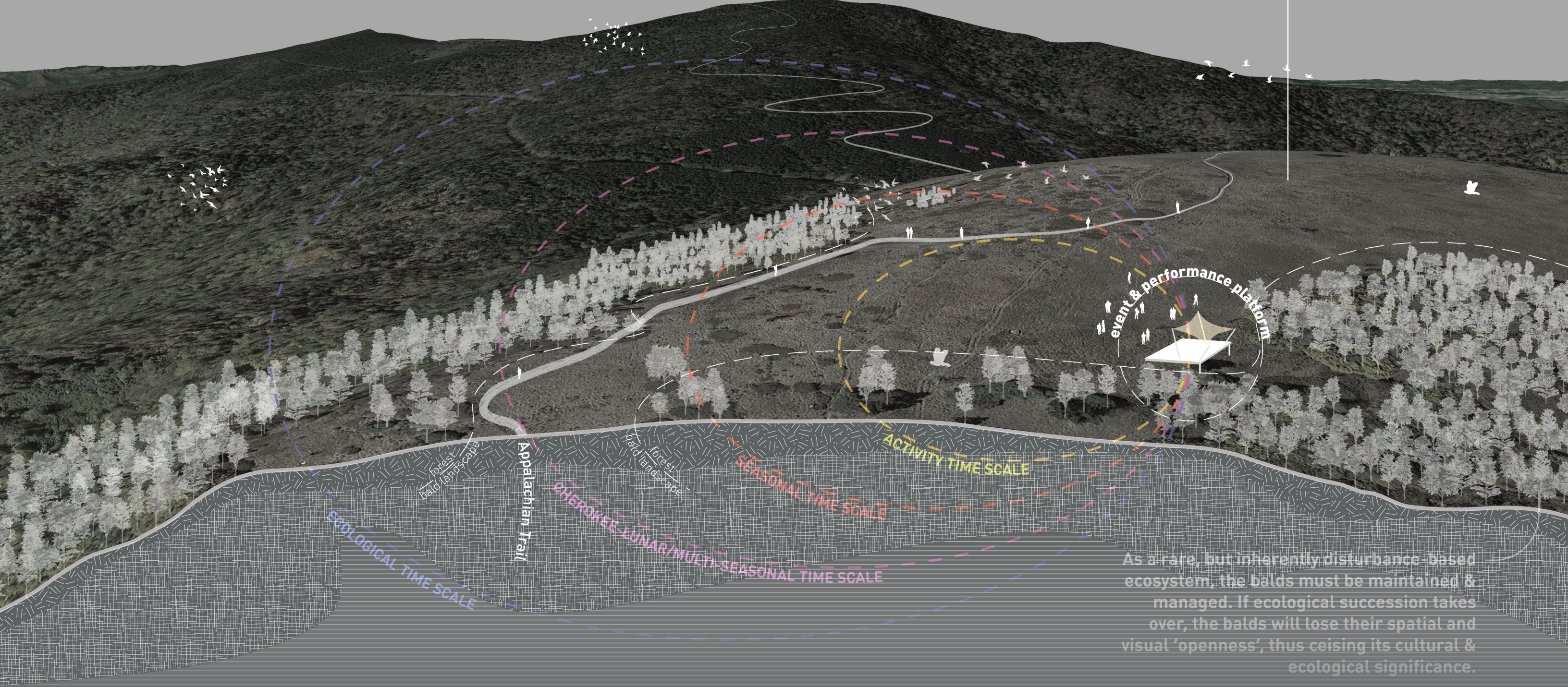
Forest Reborn - Tlugvi Adage

A permanent forestry center for Cherokee & Park Service



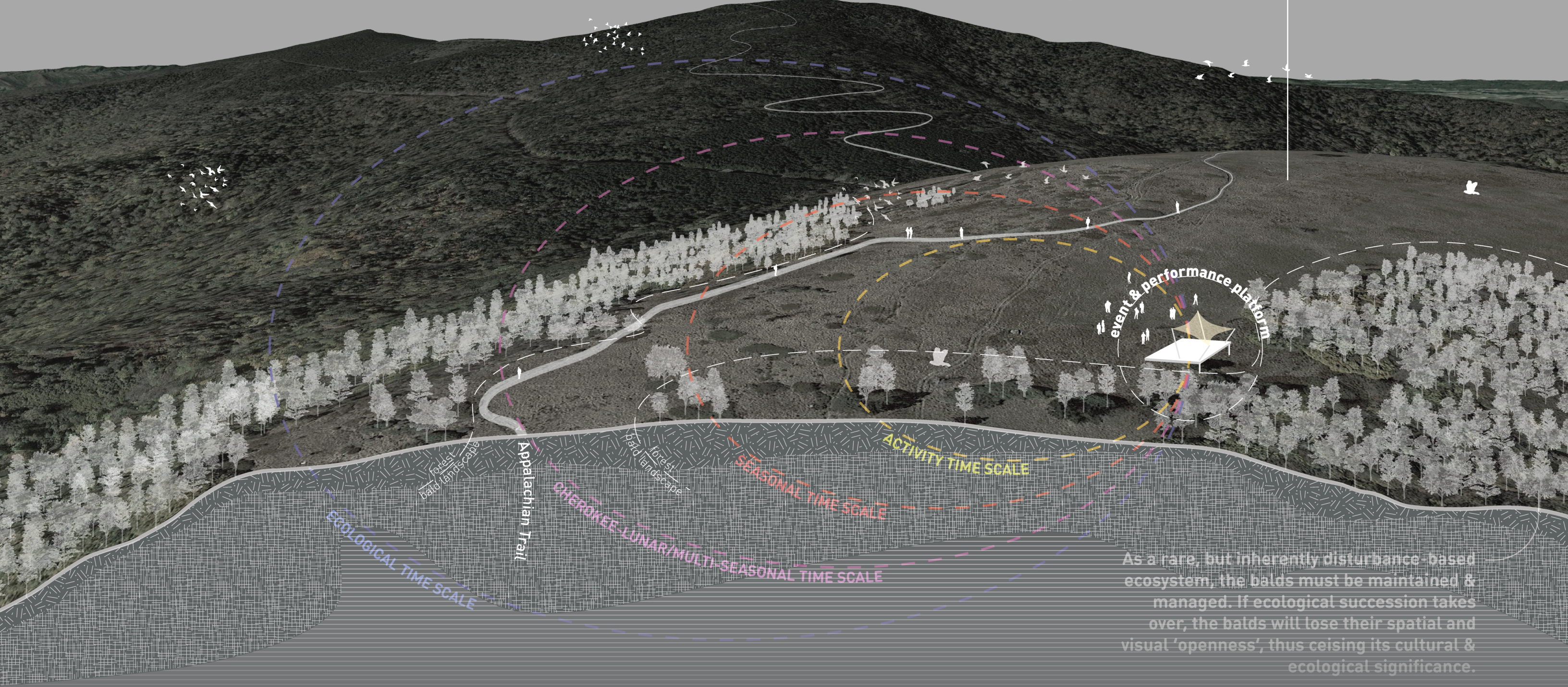


The Roan Balds are a significant spiritual and cultural site of the Cherokee Nation. It is believed to have been maintained by the Cherokee to remain bald, so as to pay respects to their ancestors. Either way, the site -which is rightfully their land- maintains its significance to this day.

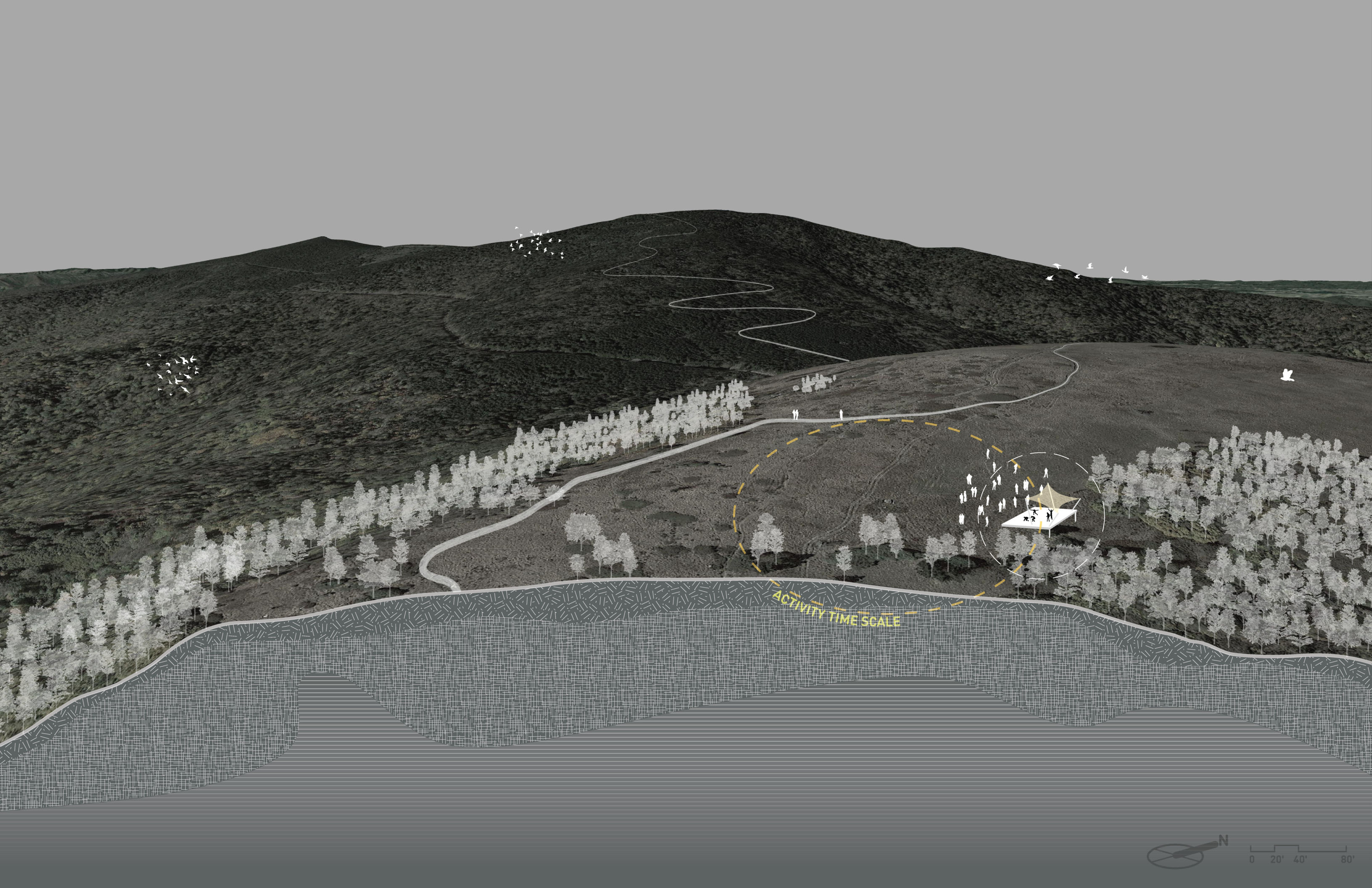


As a rare, but inherently disturbance-based ecosystem, the balds must be maintained & managed. If ecological succession takes over, the balds will lose their spatial and visual 'openness', thus ceasing its cultural & ecological significance.

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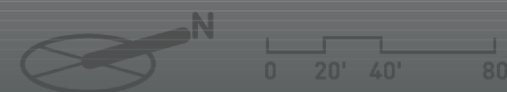
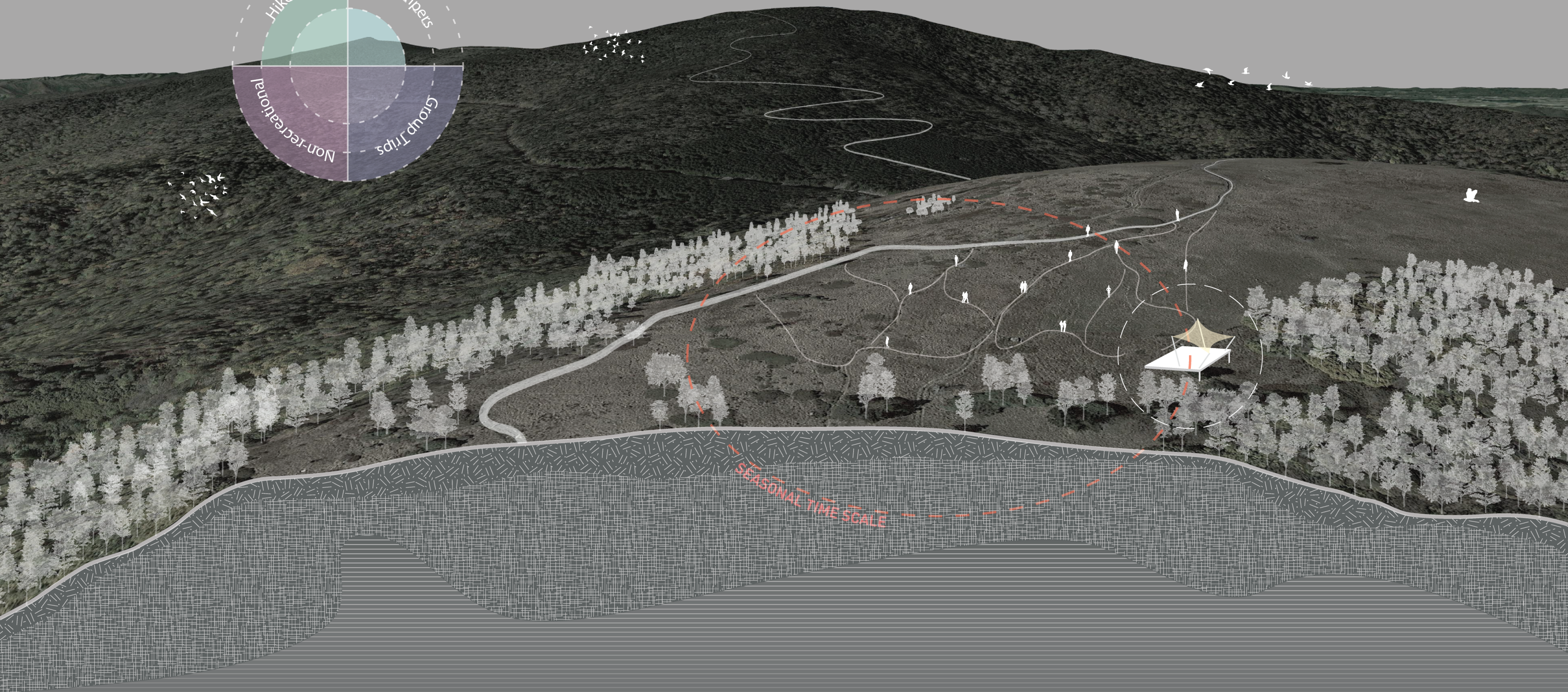
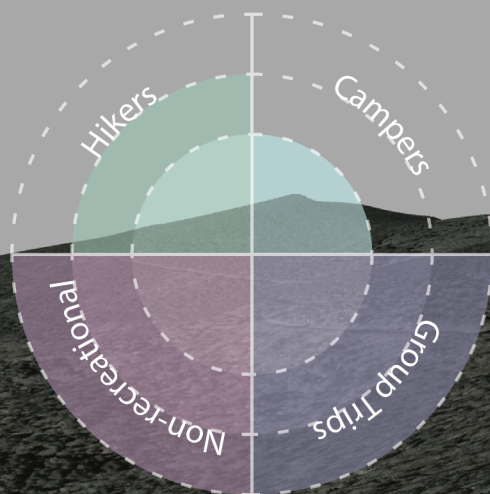
As a rare, but inherently disturbance-based ecosystem, the balds must be maintained & managed. If ecological succession takes over, the balds will lose their spatial and visual 'openness', thus ceasing its cultural & ecological significance.



ACTIVITY TIME SCALE



0 20' 40' 80'

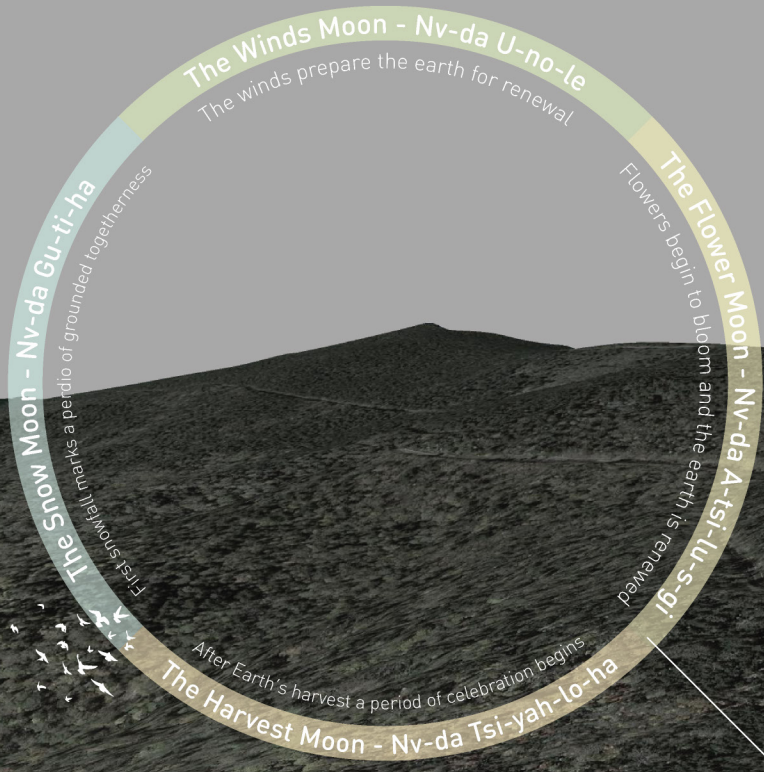


MARK-MAKING

REBUILDING

CELEBRATING

REGENERATING



Cherokee Lunar Cycle

Cycle of Annual Burning

CHEROKEE LUNAR/MULTI-SEASONAL TIME SCALE



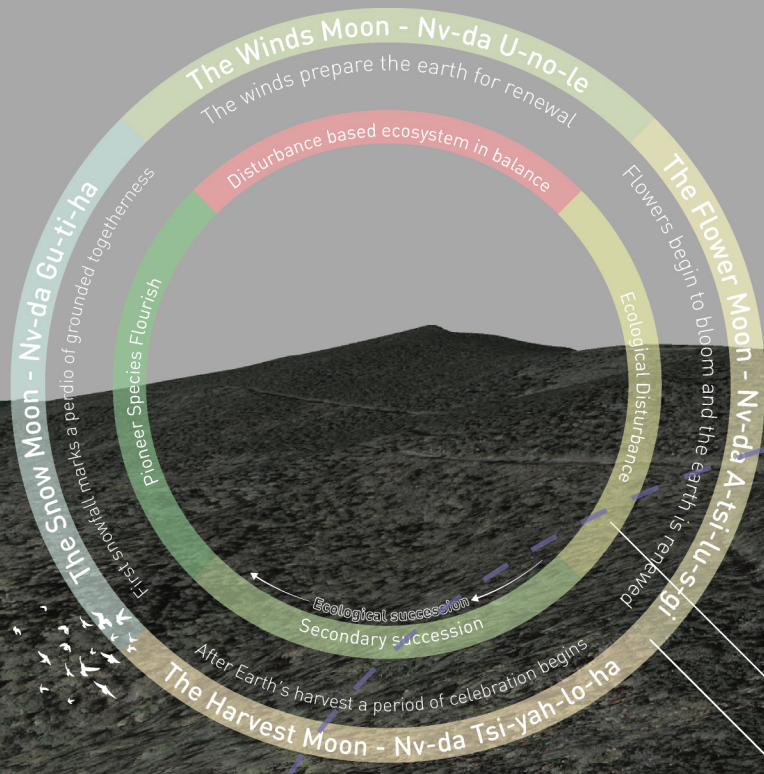
0 20' 40' 80'

MARK-MAKING

REBUILDING

CELEBRATING

REGENERATING



Cycle of Ecological Succession

Cherokee Lunar Cycle

Cycle of Annual Burning

ECOLOGICAL TIME SCALE

forest  
bald landscape

forest  
bald landscape

Moves to new location

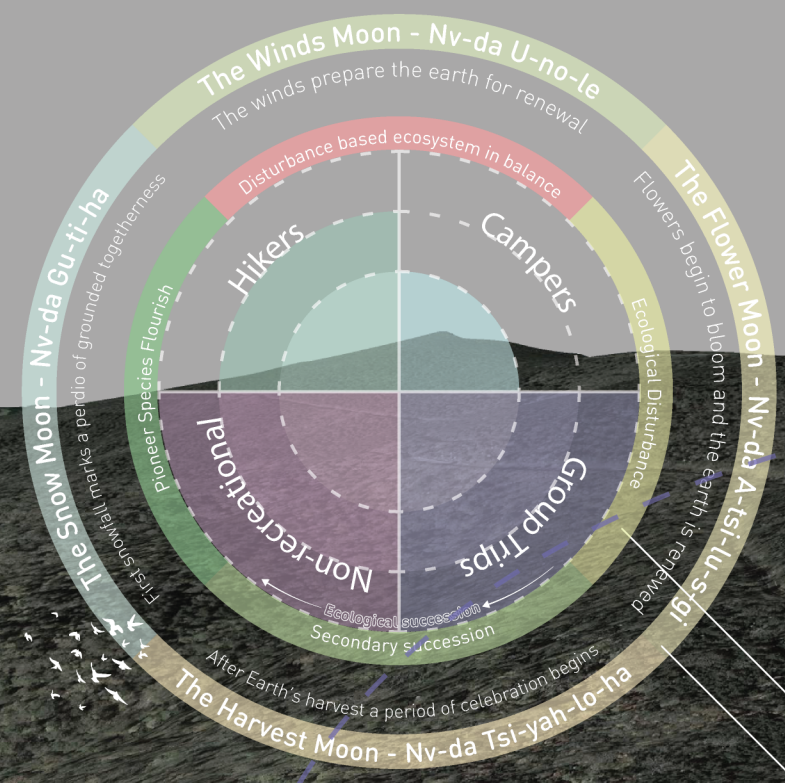


0 20' 40' 80'

MARK-MAKING

CELEBRATING

REBUILDING

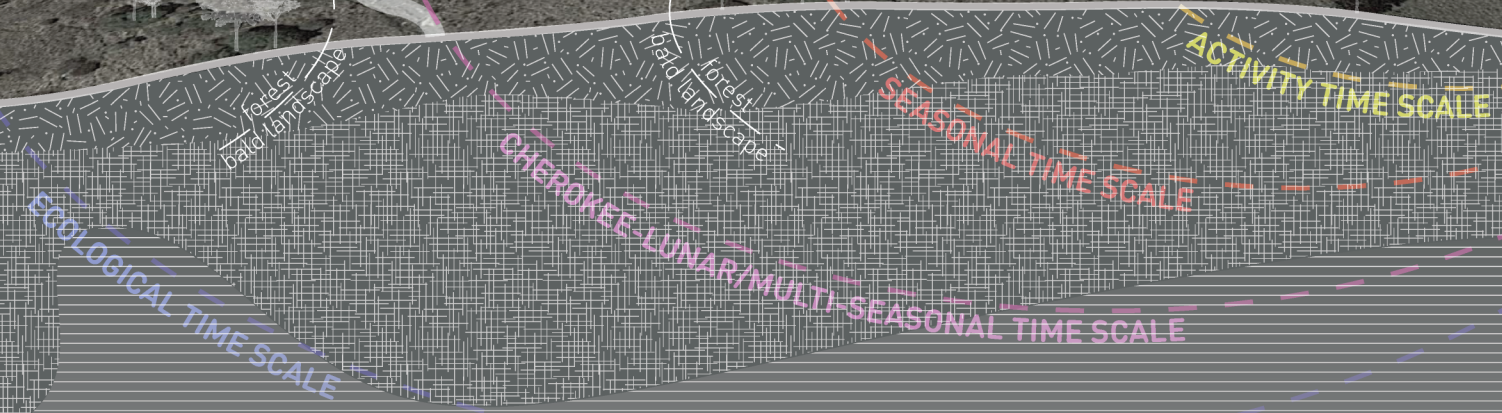


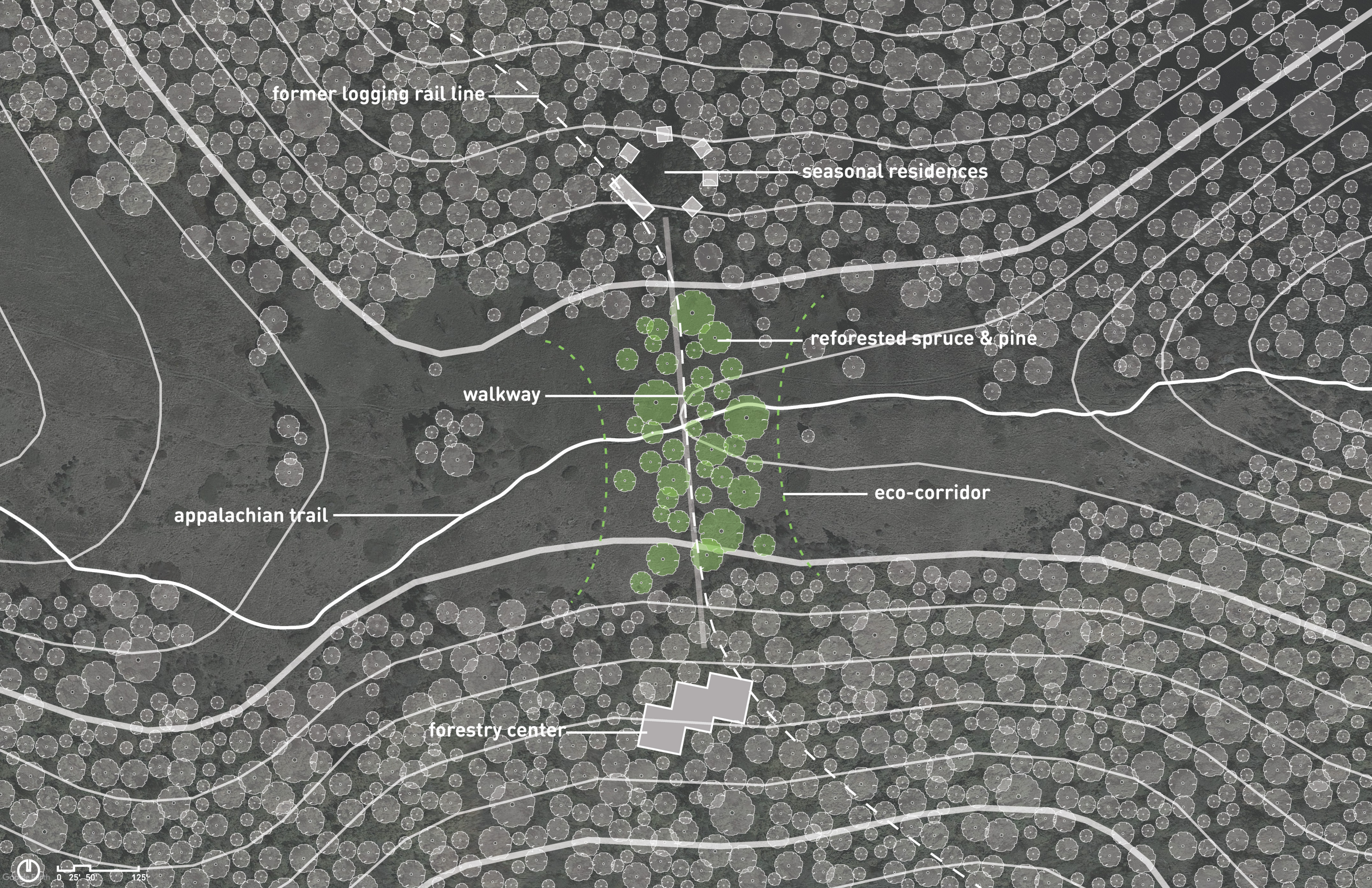
Cycle of Ecological Succession

Cherokee Lunar Cycle

Cycle of Annual Burning

REGENERATING





former logging rail line

seasonal residences

reforested spruce & pine

walkway

eco-corridor

appalachian trail

forestry center

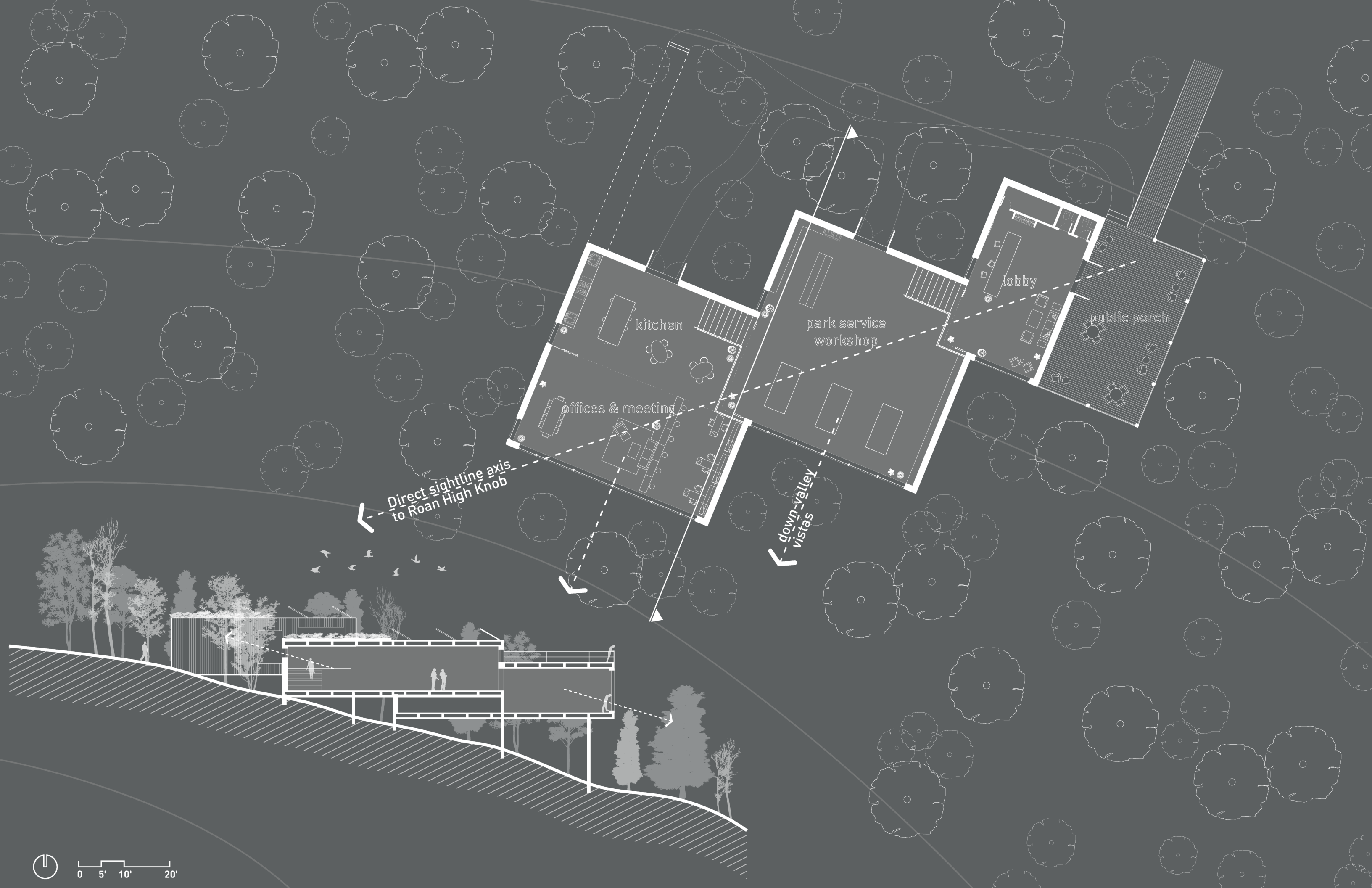


balsam fir

red spruce

frasier fir

hemlock



Direct sightline axis  
to Roan High Knob

offices & meeting

kitchen

park service  
workshop

lobby

public porch

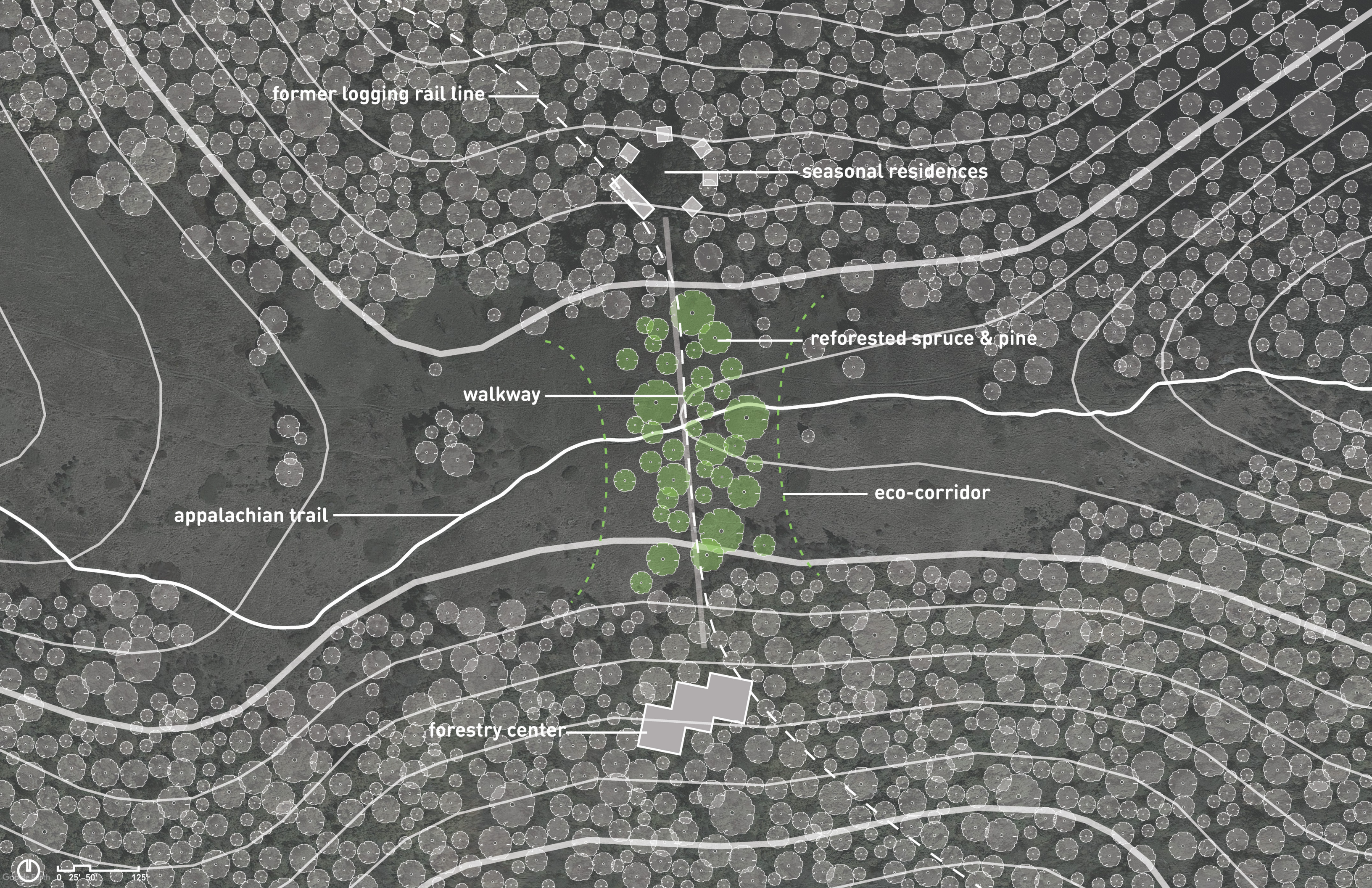
down valley  
vistas



0 5' 10' 20'







former logging rail line

seasonal residences

reforested spruce & pine

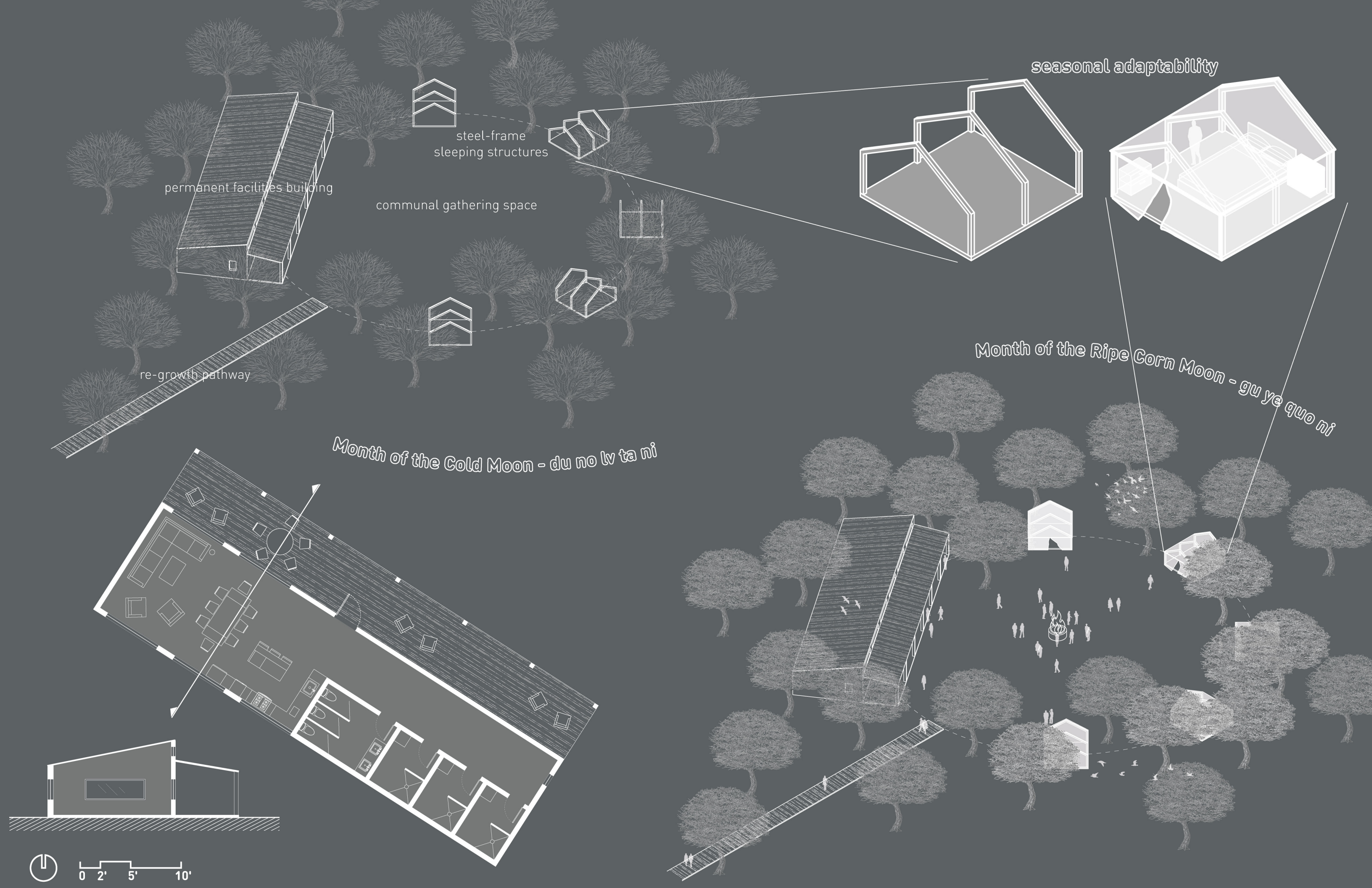
walkway

eco-corridor

appalachian trail

forestry center





seasonal adaptability

steel-frame  
sleeping structures

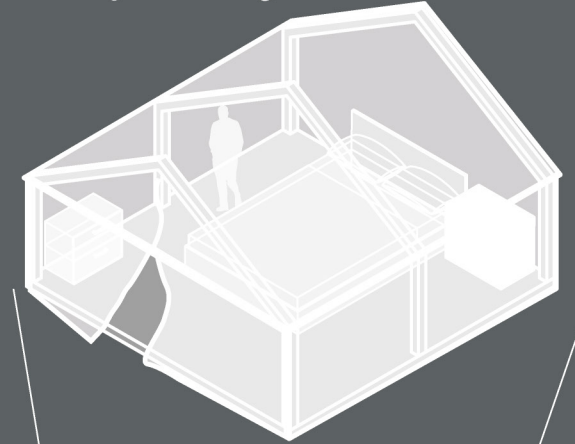
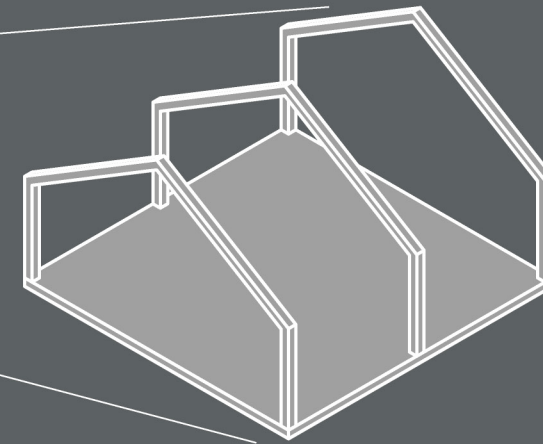
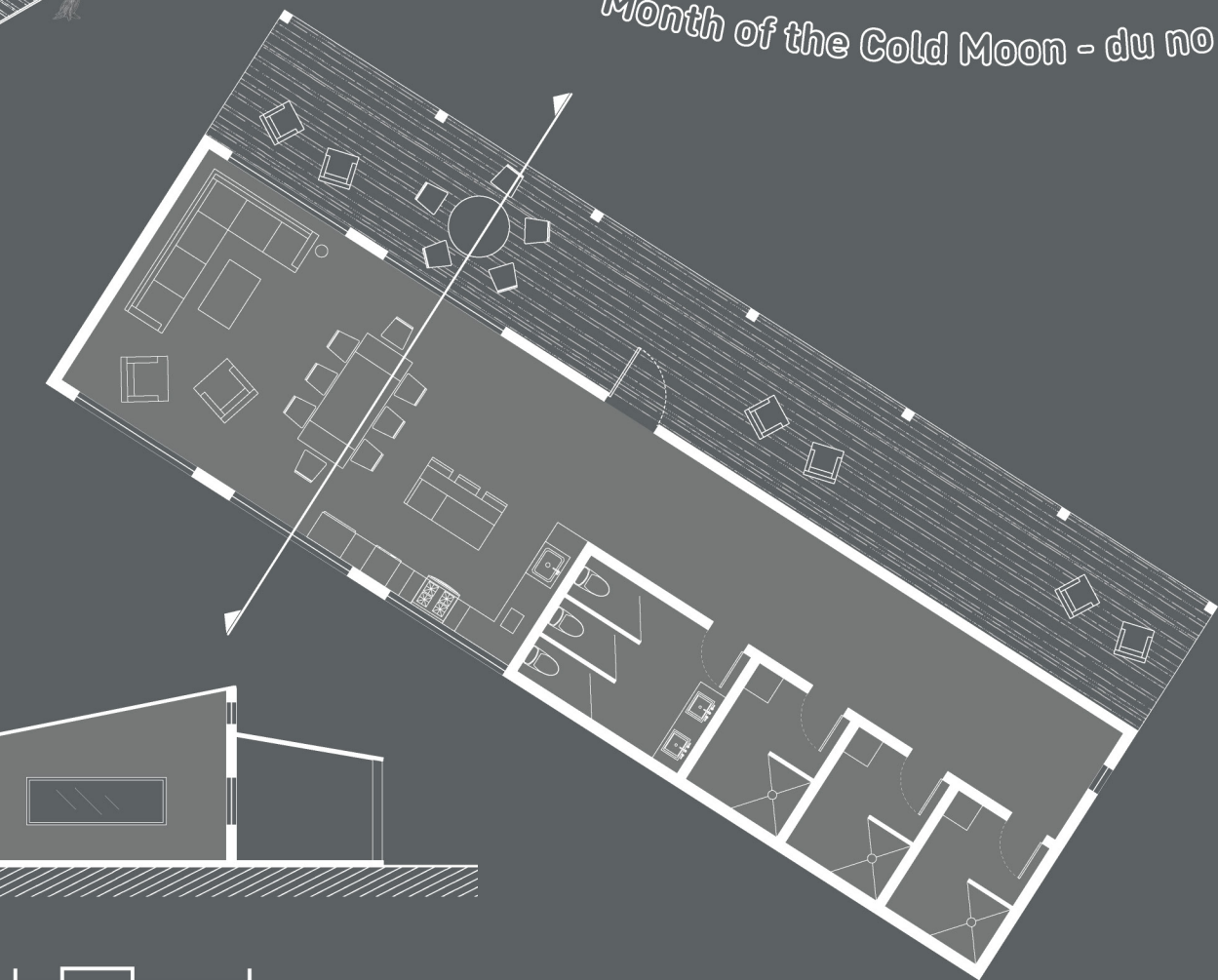
permanent facilities building

communal gathering space

re-growth pathway

Month of the Cold Moon - du no lv ta ni

Month of the Ripe Corn Moon - gu ye quo ni

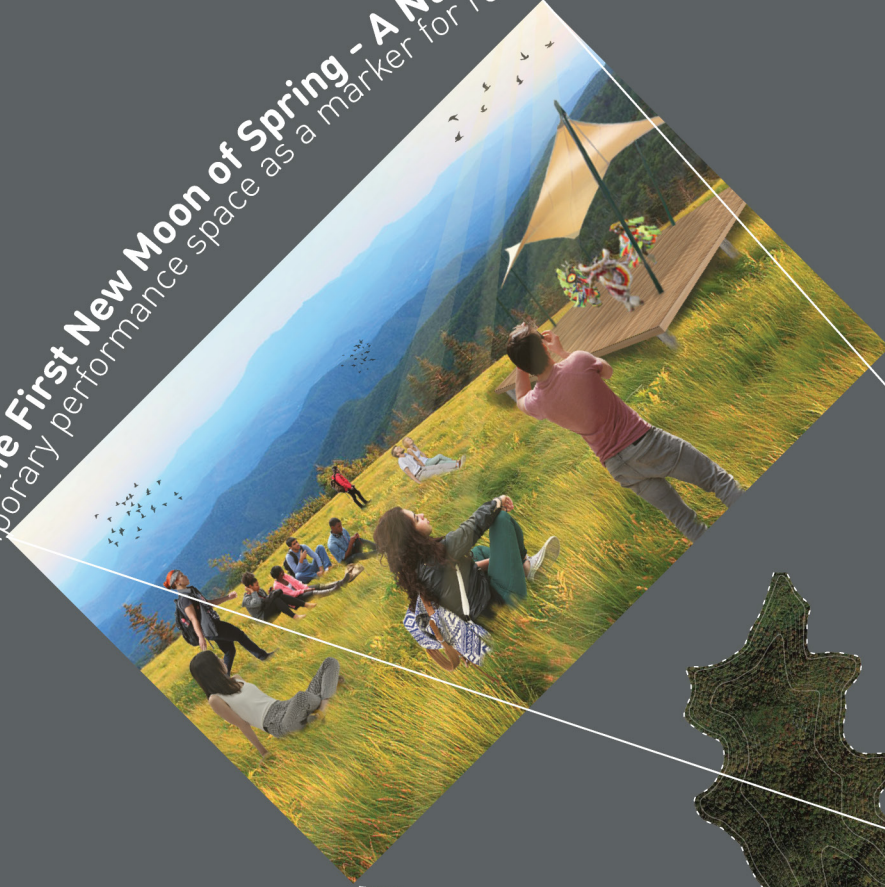


0 2' 5' 10'

**Forest Reborn - Tlugvi Adage**  
A seasonal residence for Cherokee Natives to re-inhabit their land



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A temporary performance space as a marker for regeneration



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THANK YOU