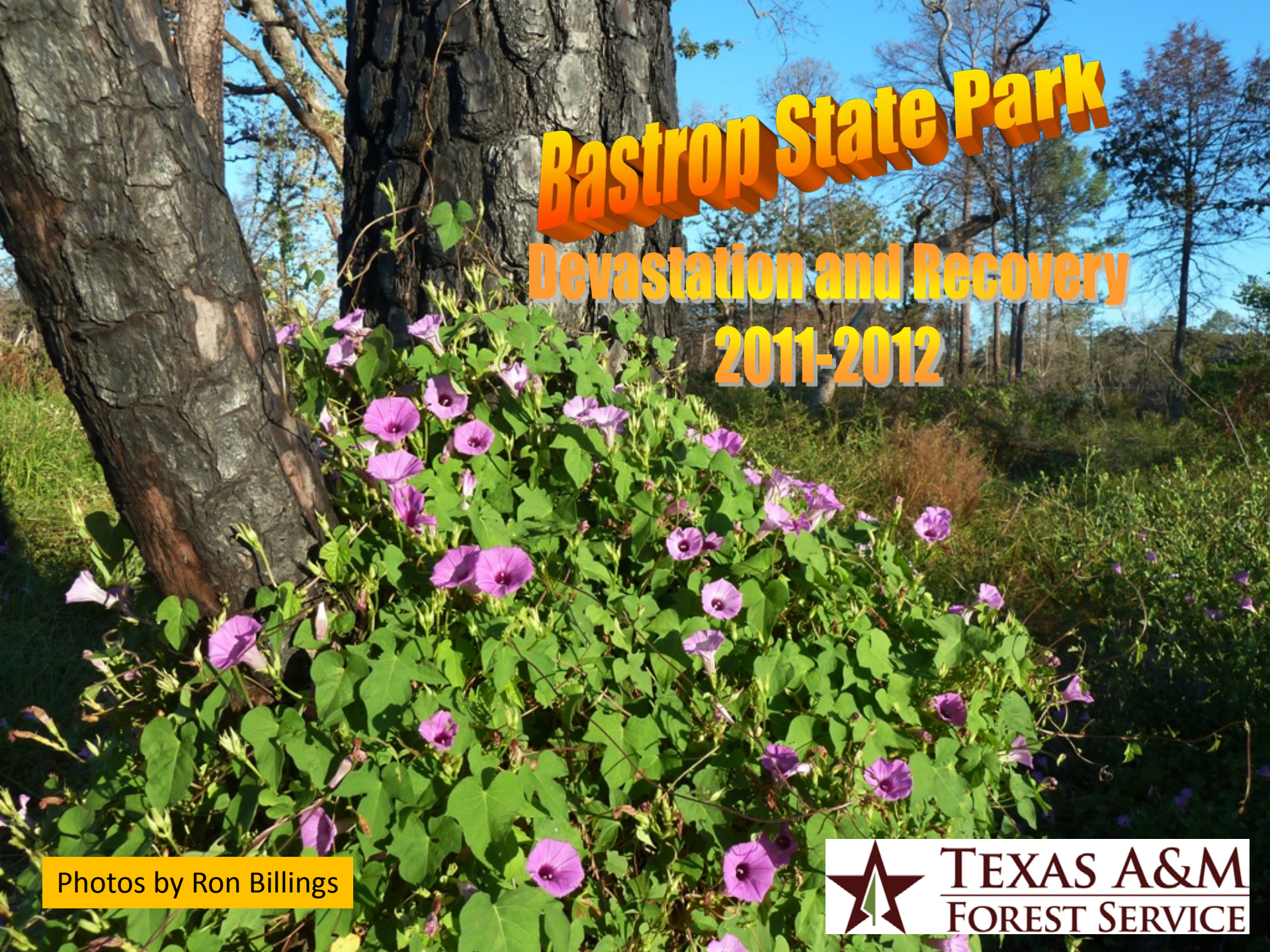
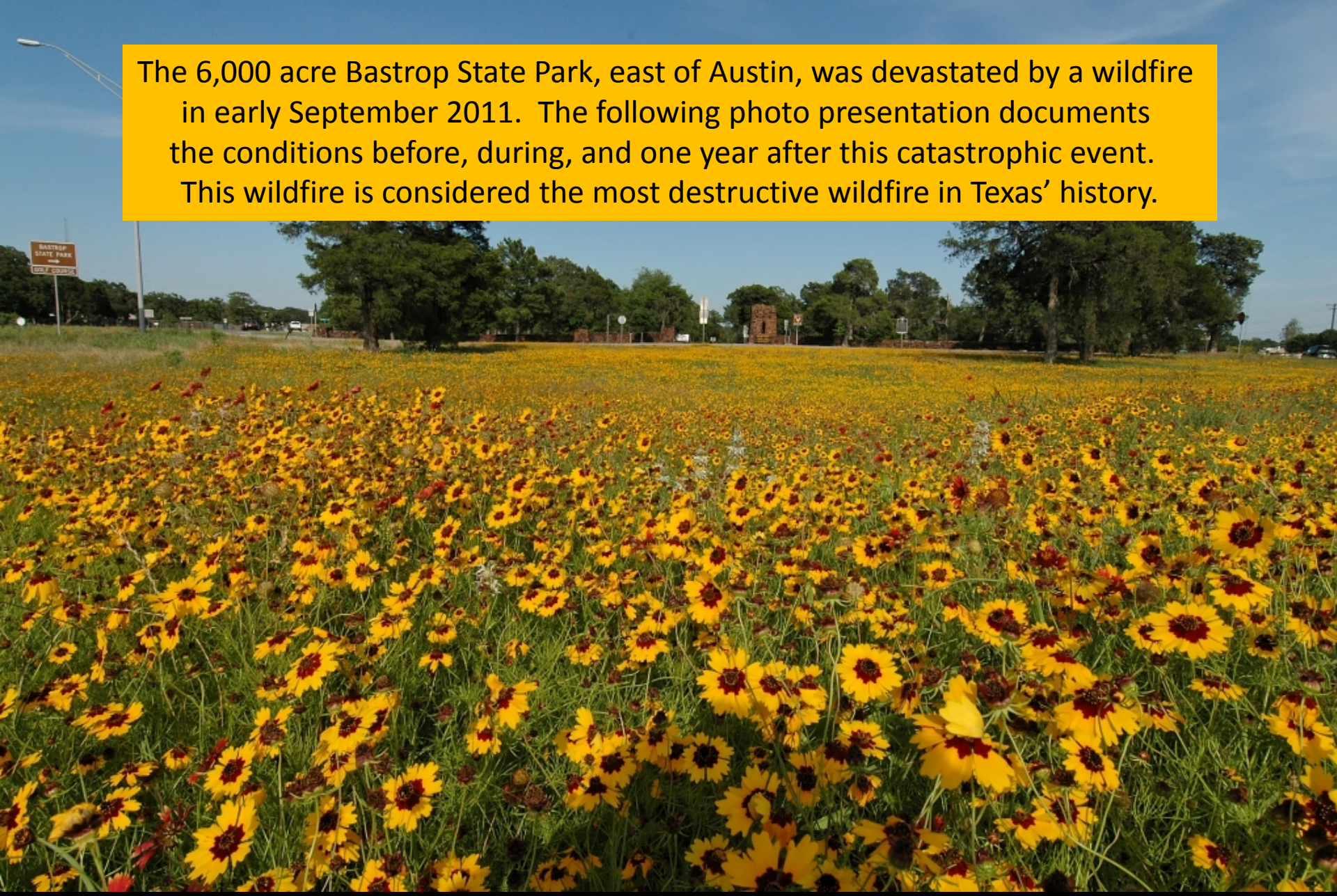
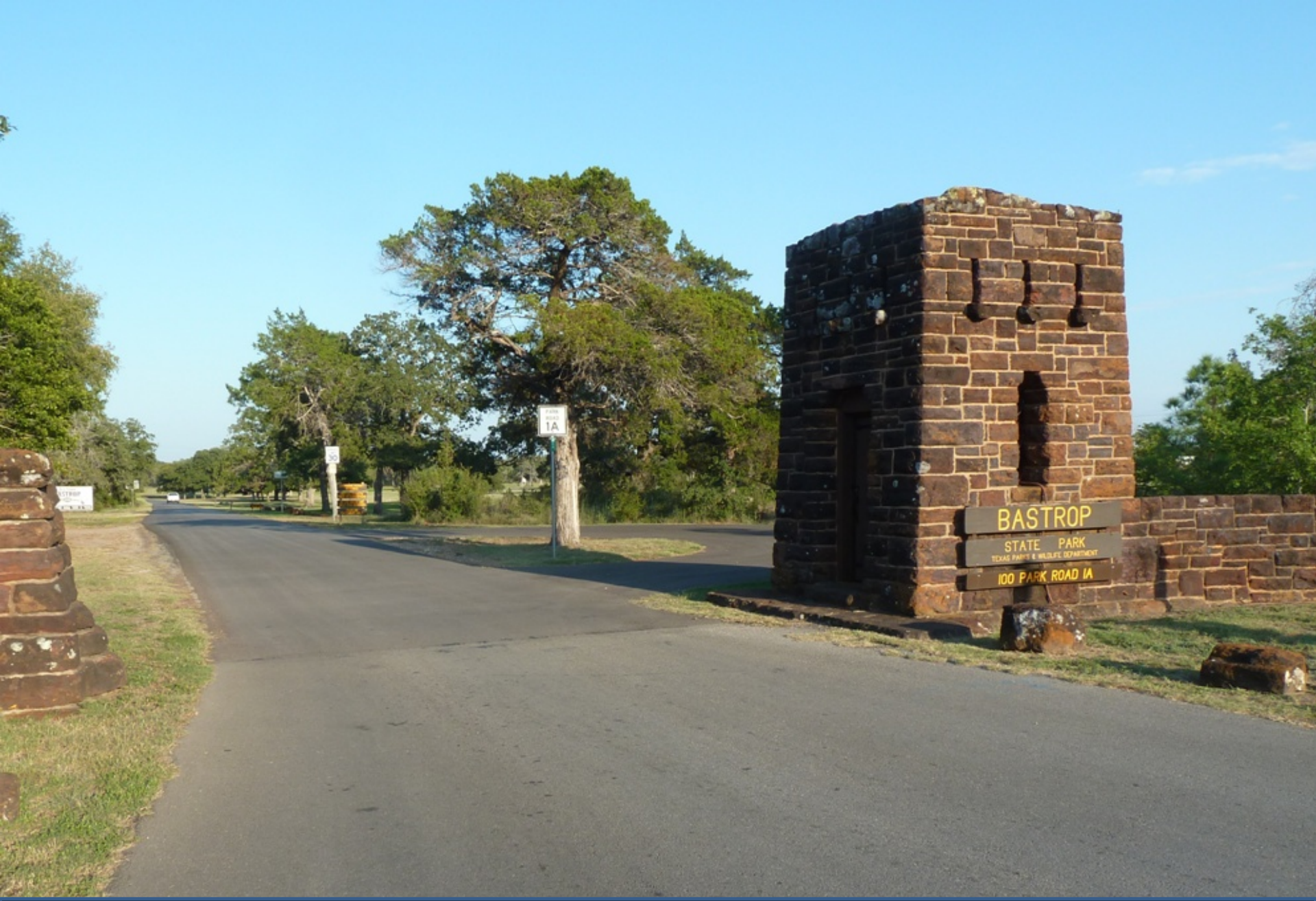

Bastrop State Park
Devastation and Recovery
2011-2012
Photos by Ron Billings
Texas A&M
Forest Service


The 6,000 acre Bastrop State Park, east of Austin, was devastated by a wildfire in early September 2011. The following photo presentation documents the conditions before, during, and one year after this catastrophic event. This wildfire is considered the most destructive wildfire in Texas' history.
BASTROP STATE PARK
GOLF COURSE

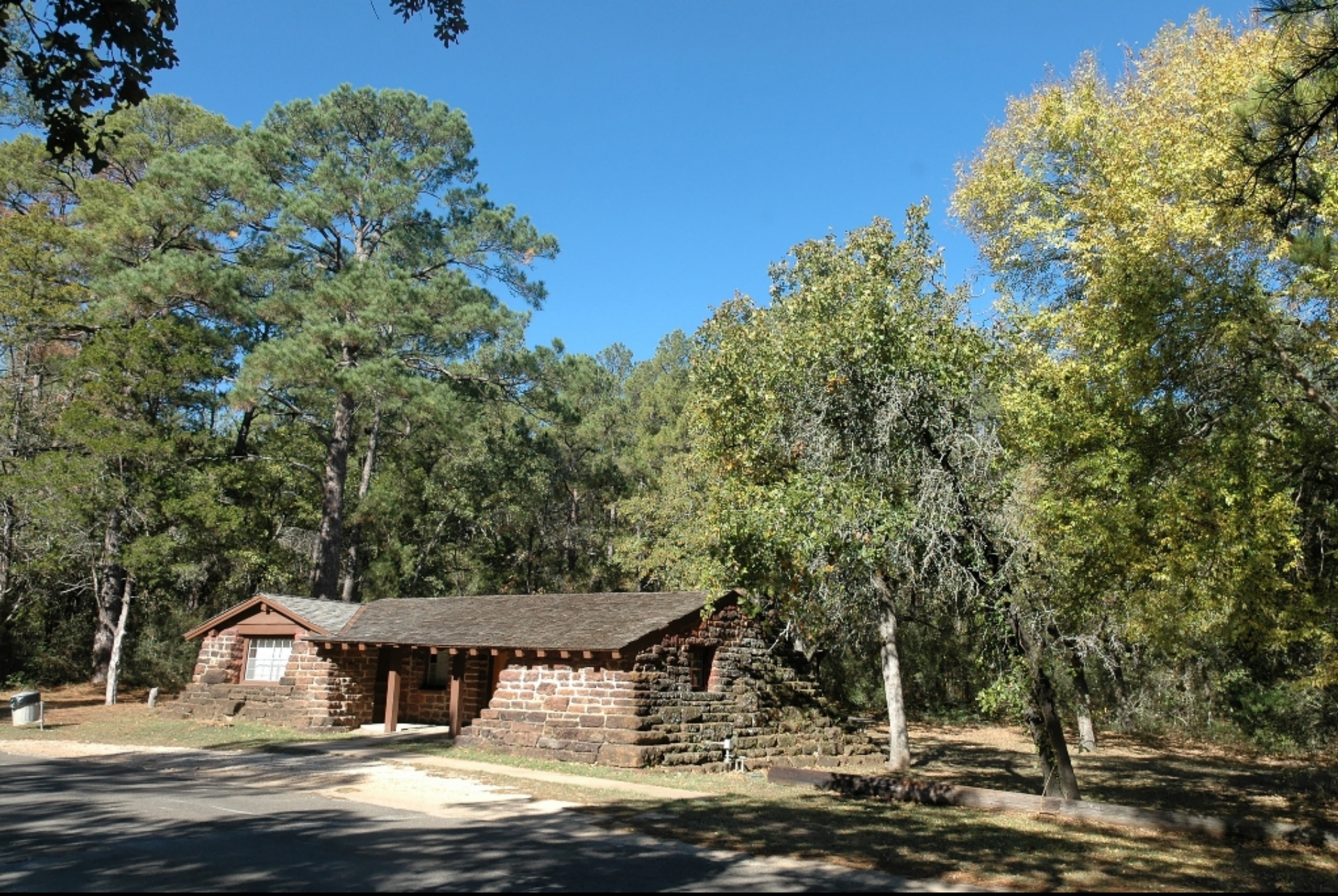
May 2006



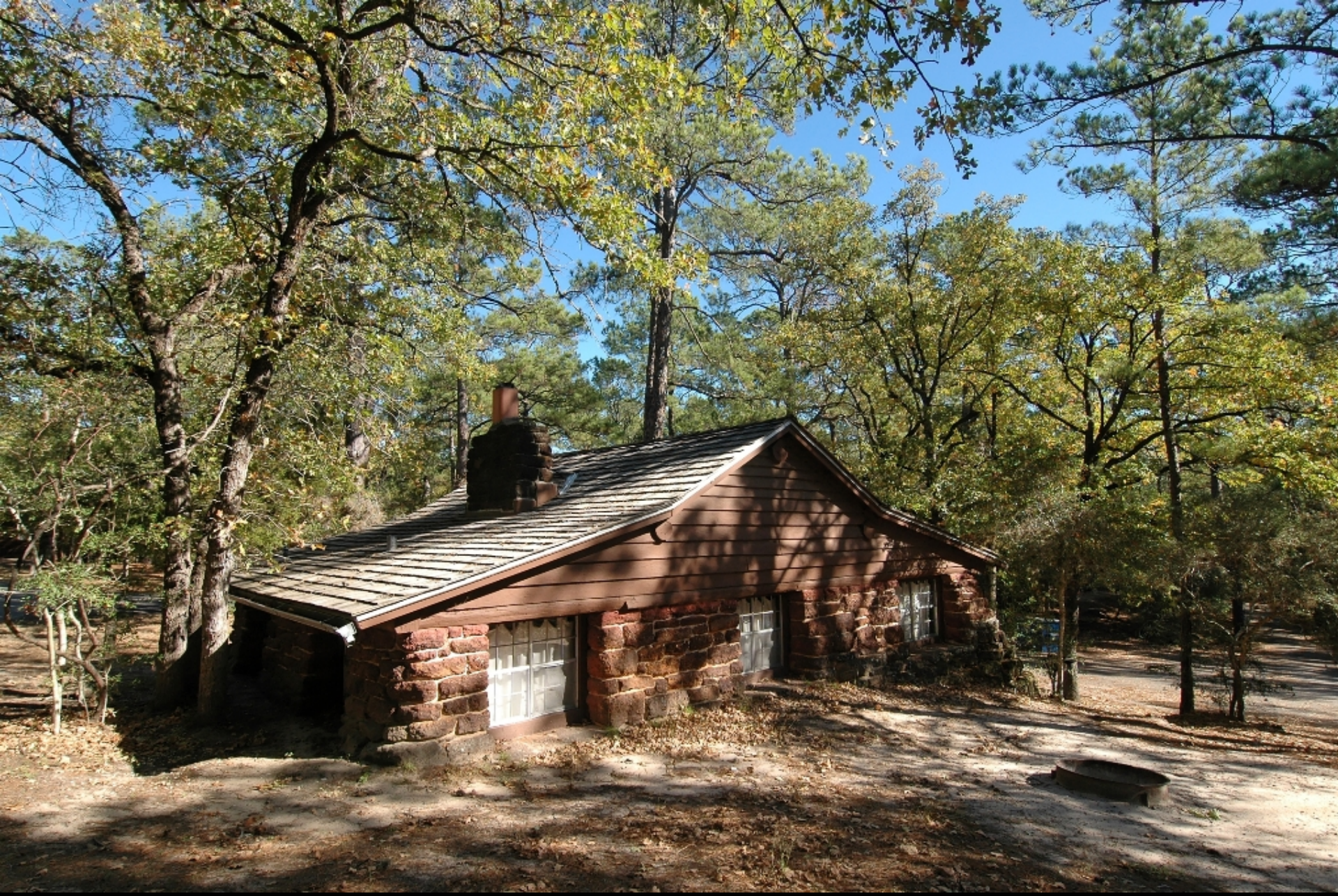
Entrance to Bastrop State Park

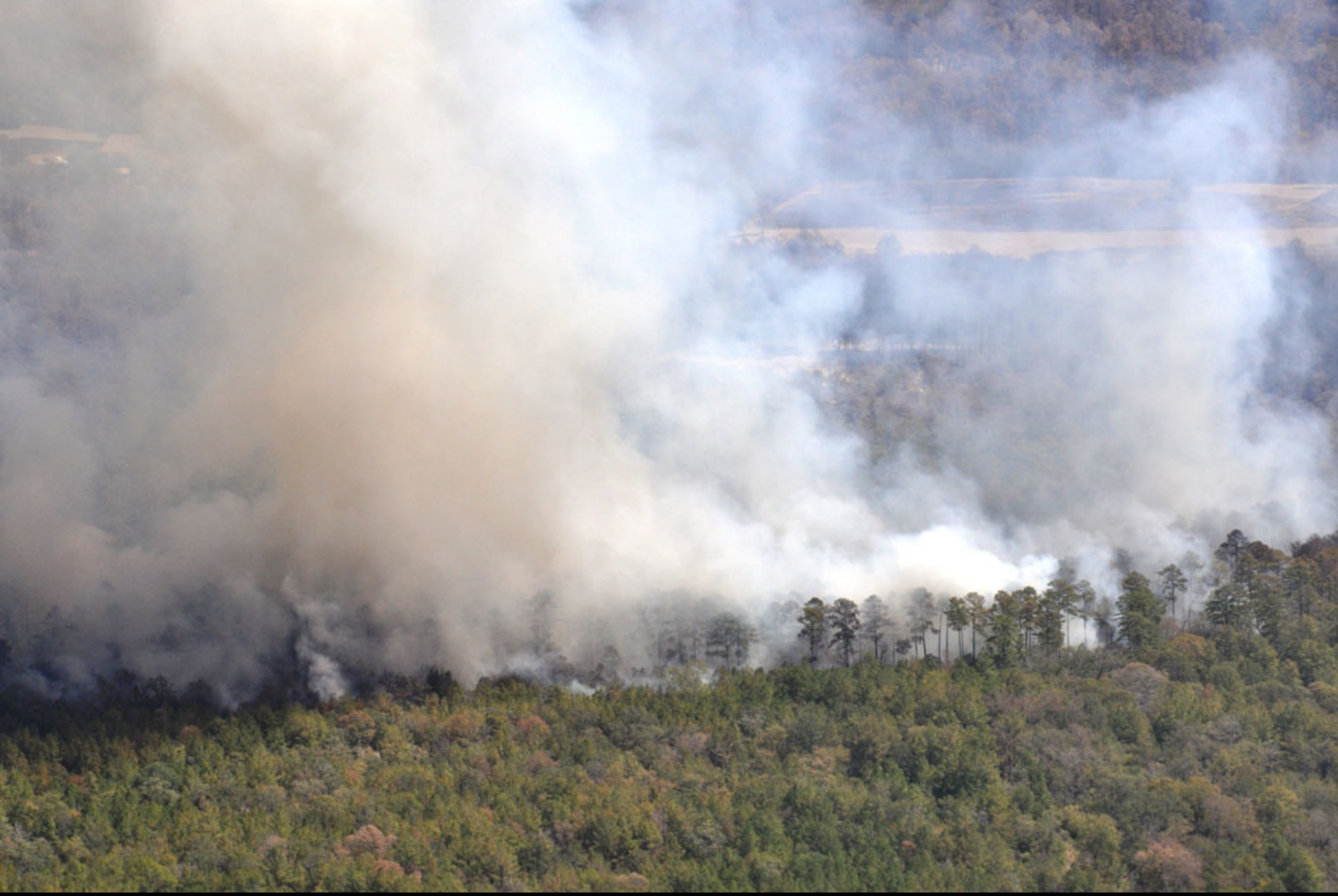
Lost pines of Bastrop State Park along Park Road 1A as it appeared in 2010.

Loblolly pines and post oaks in Bastrop State Park 2010 (note fire scars from prescribed burns).

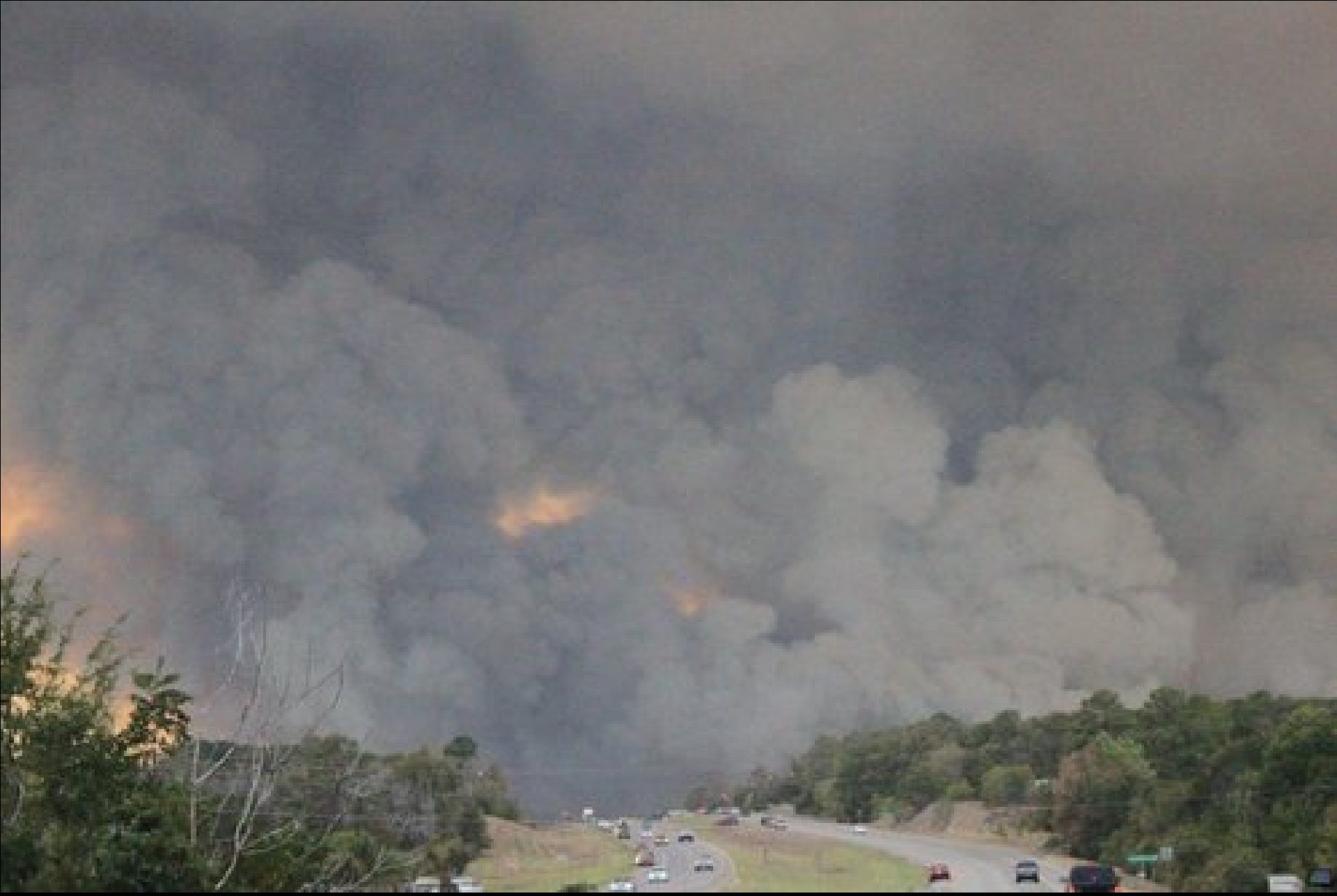


The park features rustic cabins built by CCC crews in the 1930s.

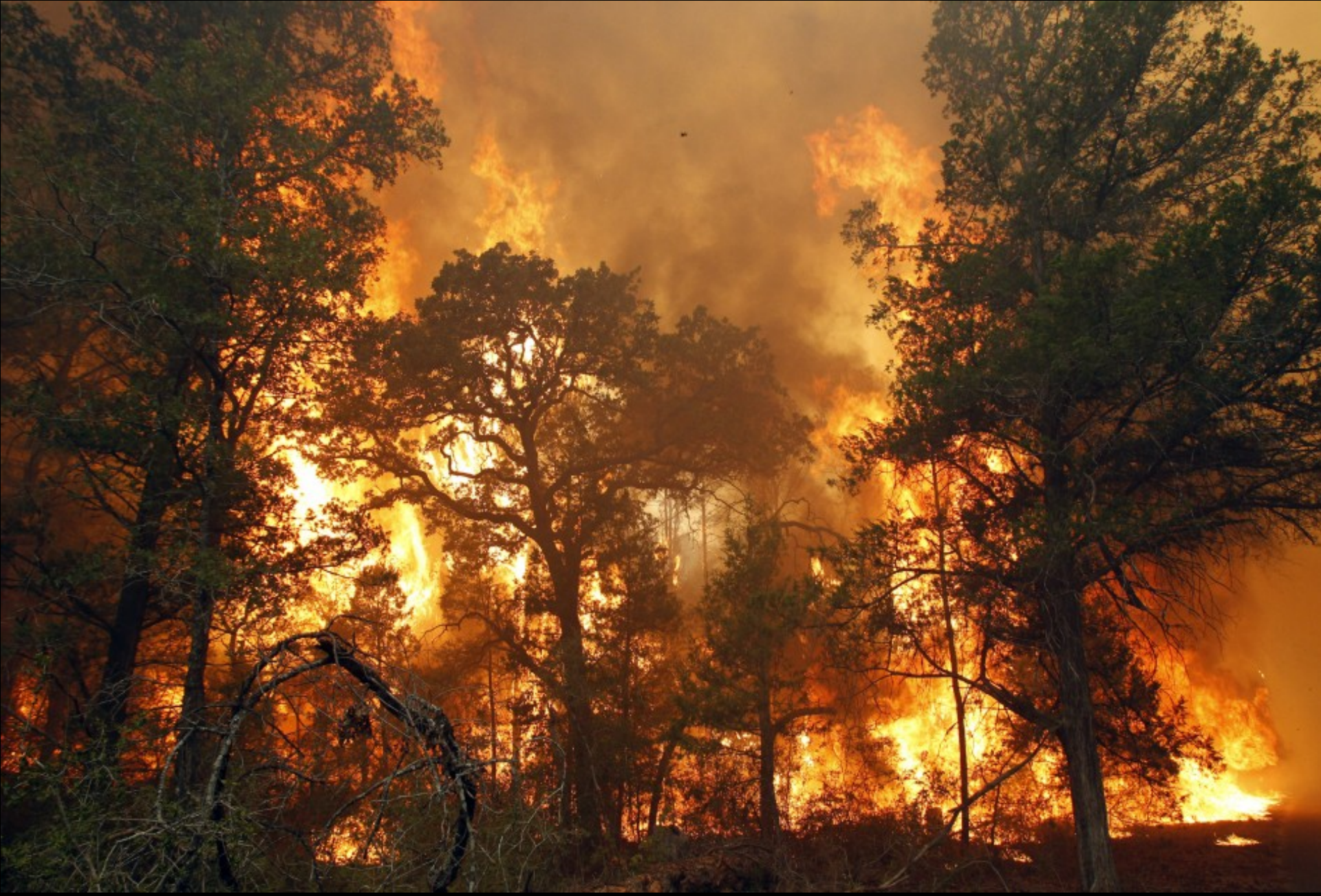




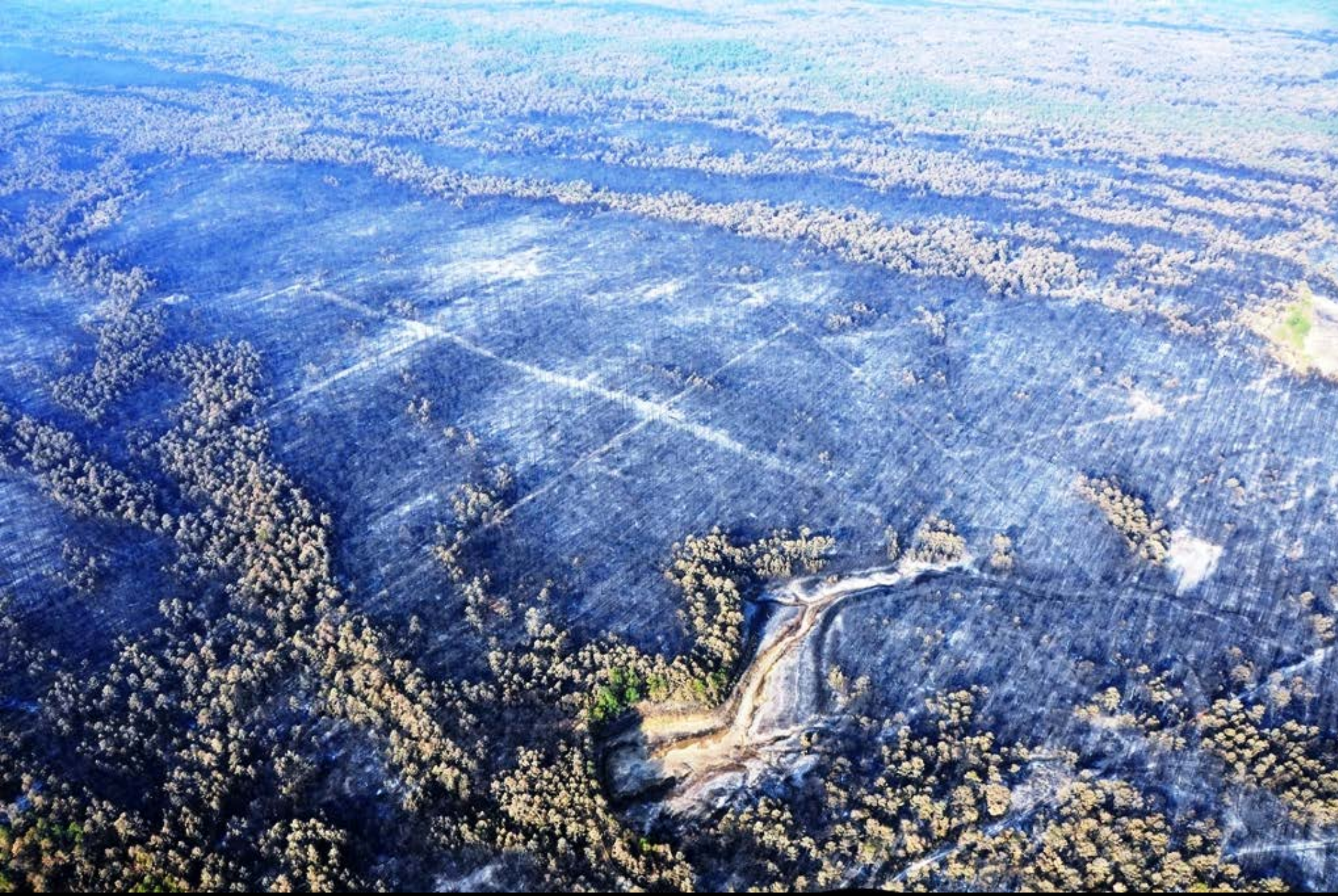
One or more wildfires started from trees falling on power lines - September 4, 2011.



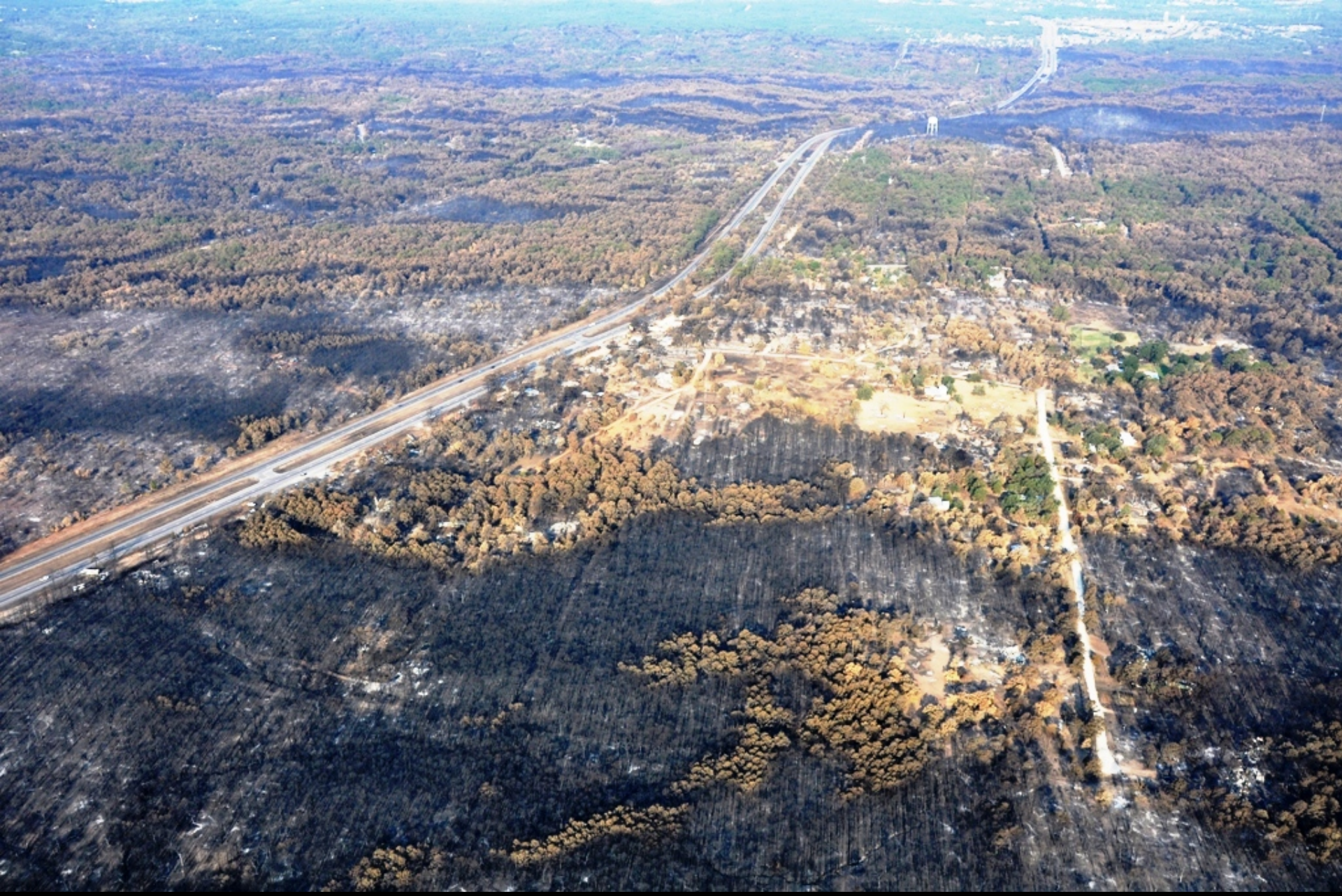
Bastrop Fire along Hwy 79. Photographer unknown.



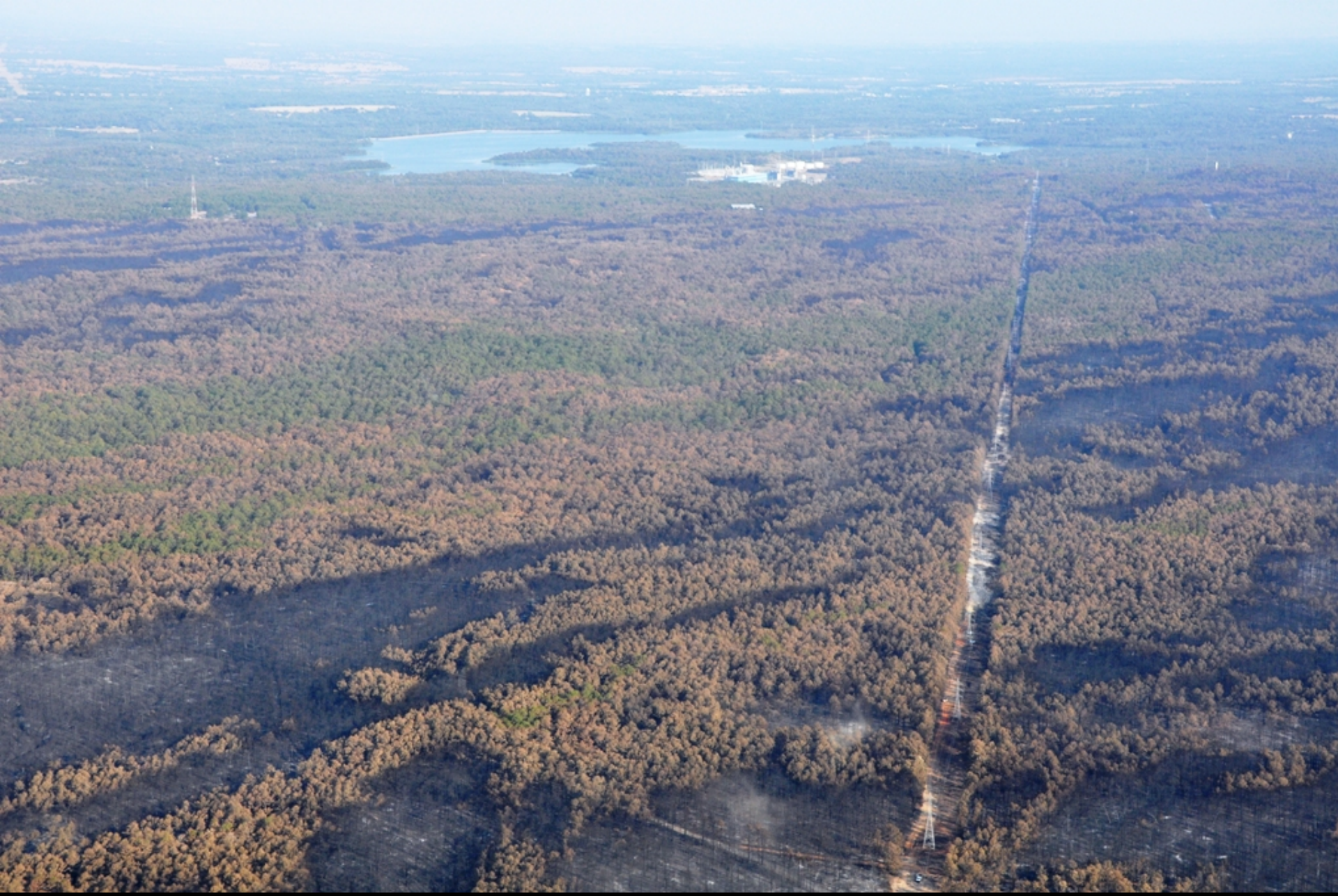
Bastrop Fire at its peak. Photographer unknown.



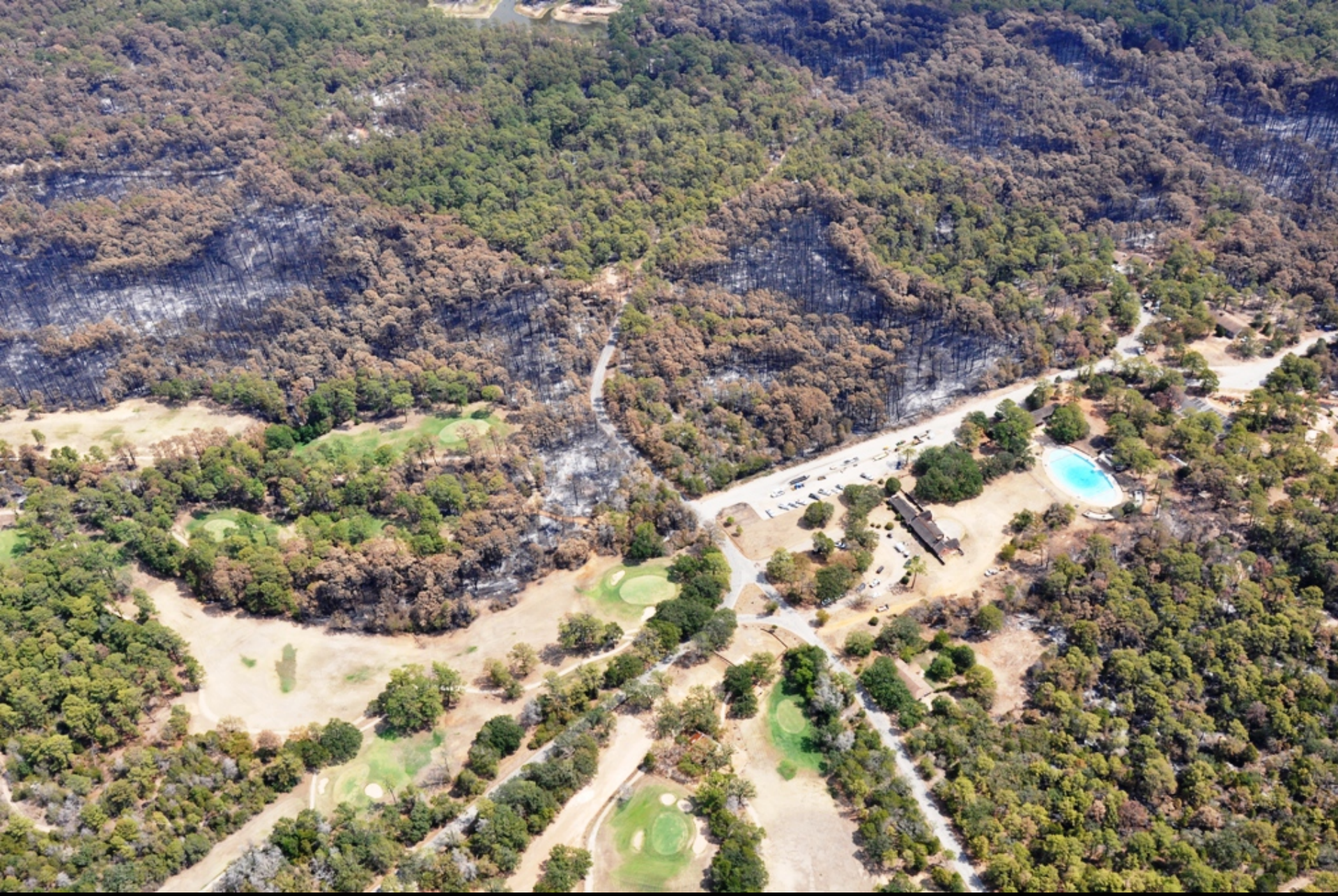
Aerial views taken on September 15, 2011, a few days after the fire was put out.



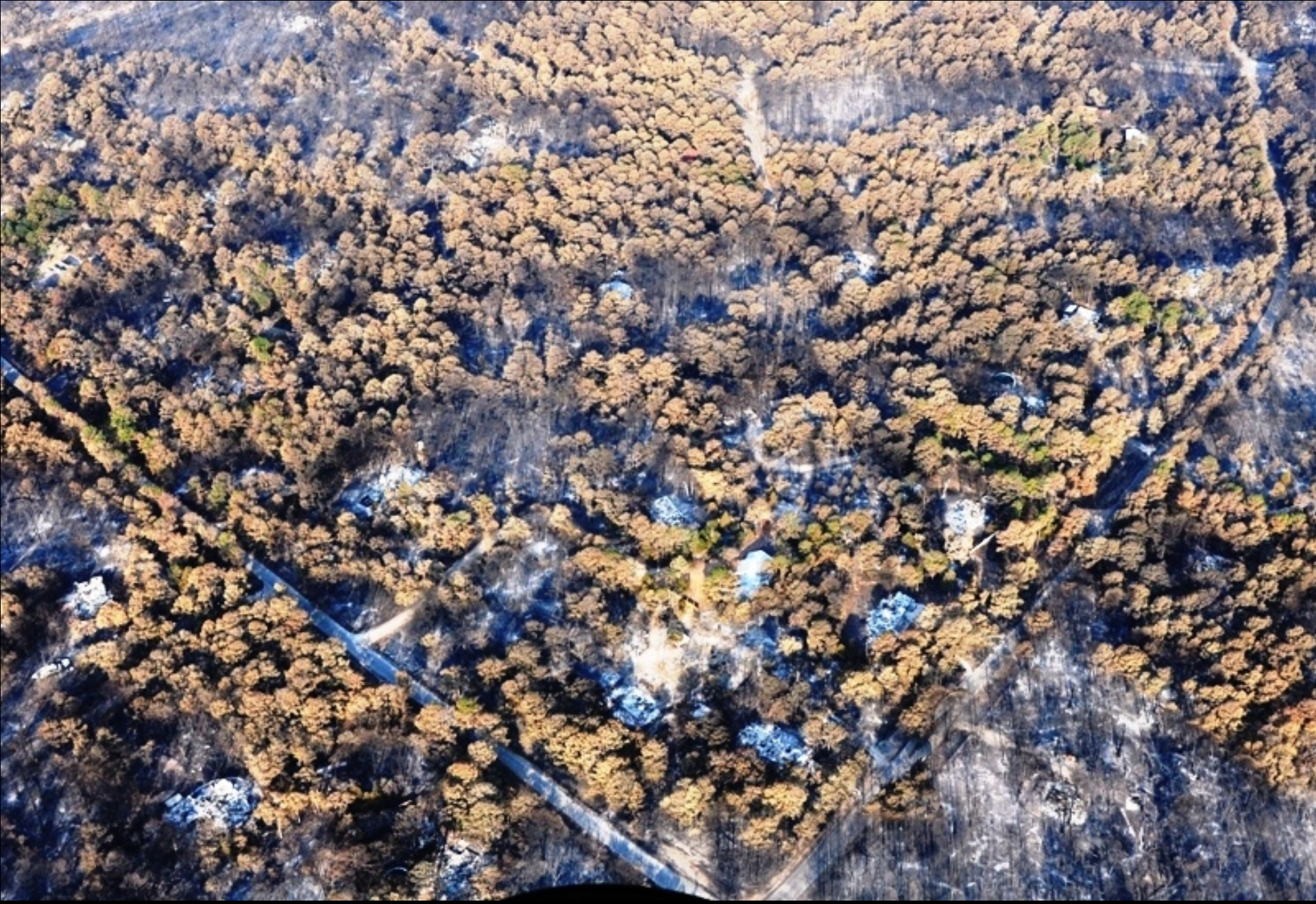
State Highway 21 with Bastrop in background; the fire burned over 32,400 acres.



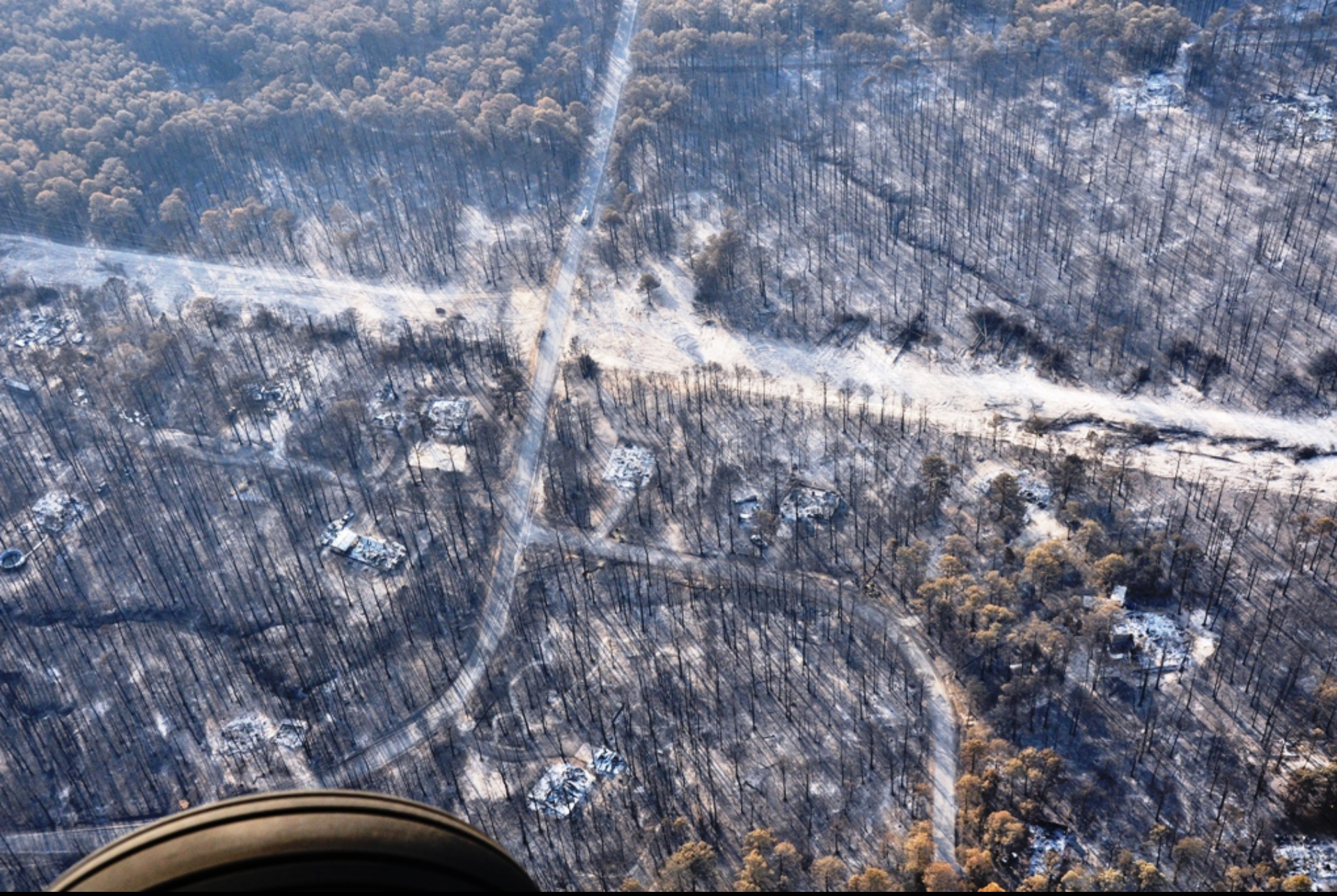
Looking towards Bastrop Lake



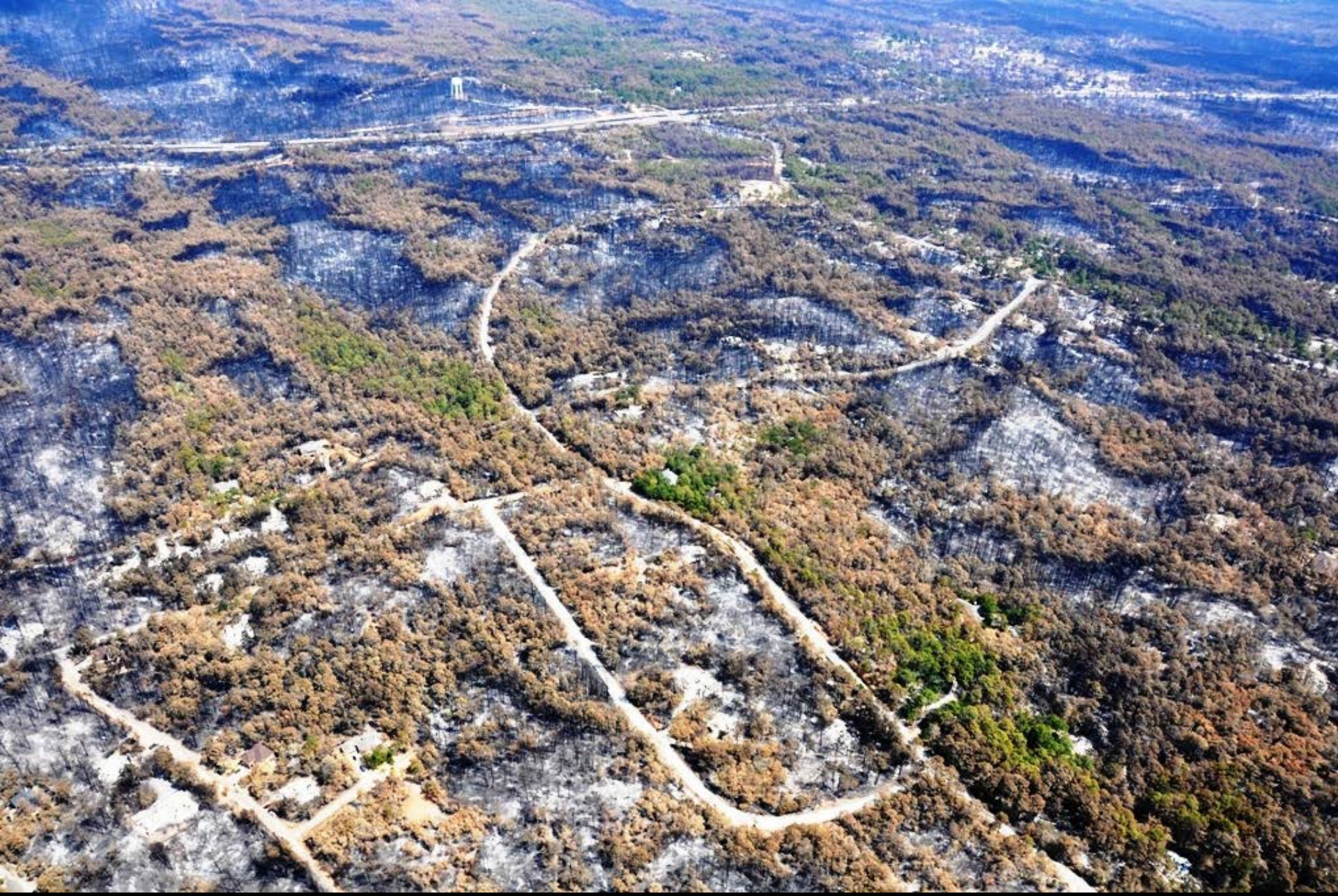
Bastrop State Park pool and golf course

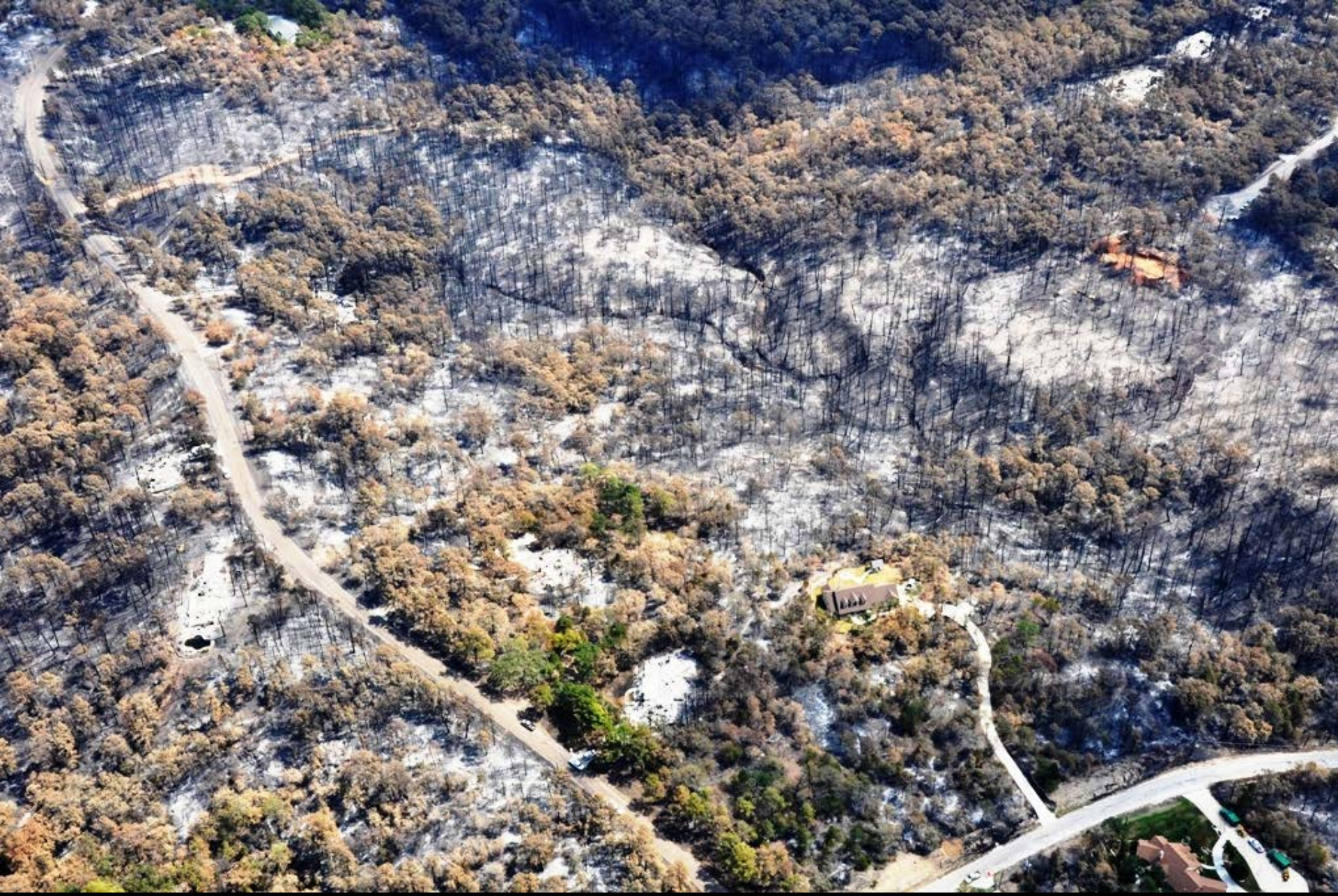


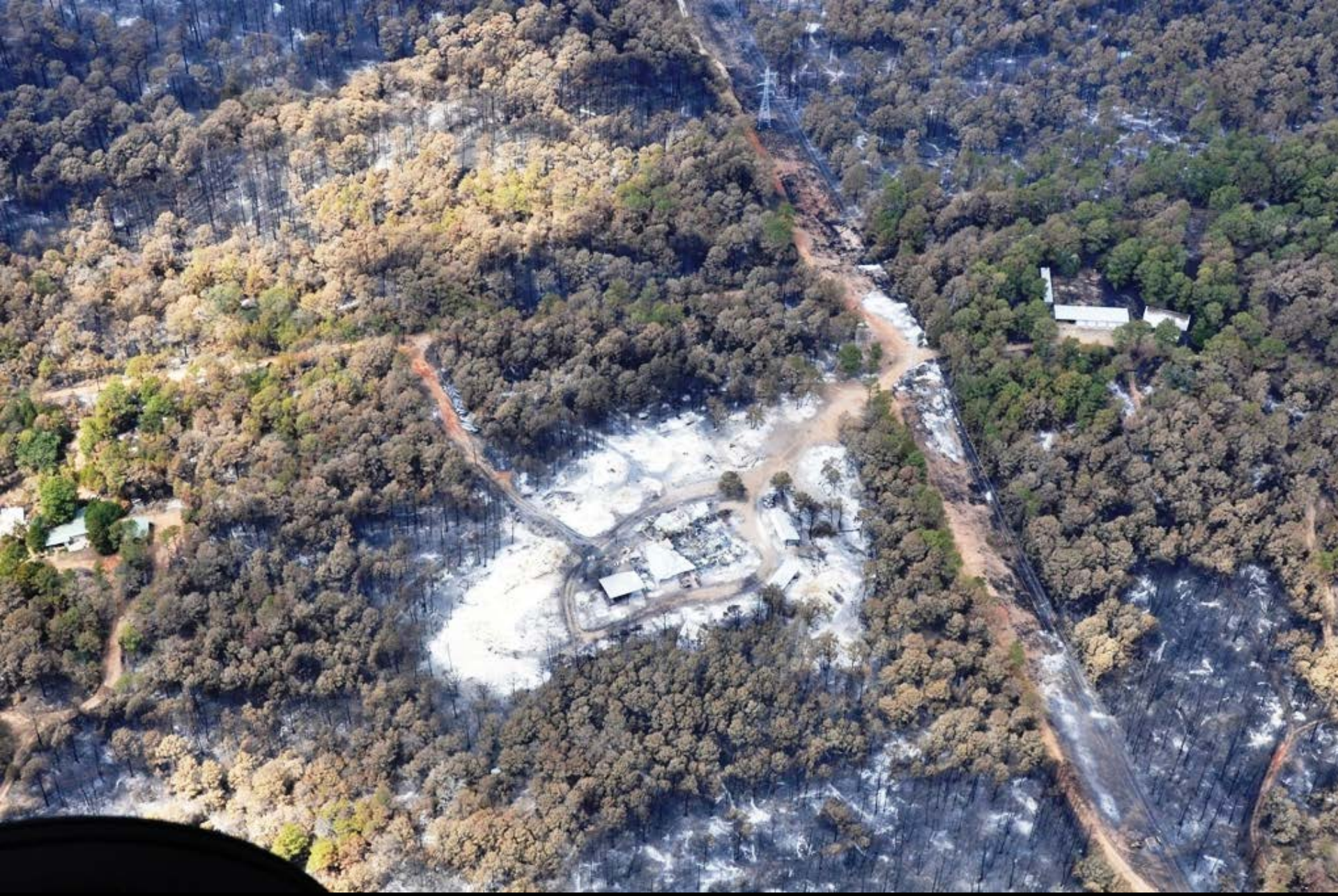
Houses lost in Tahitian Village

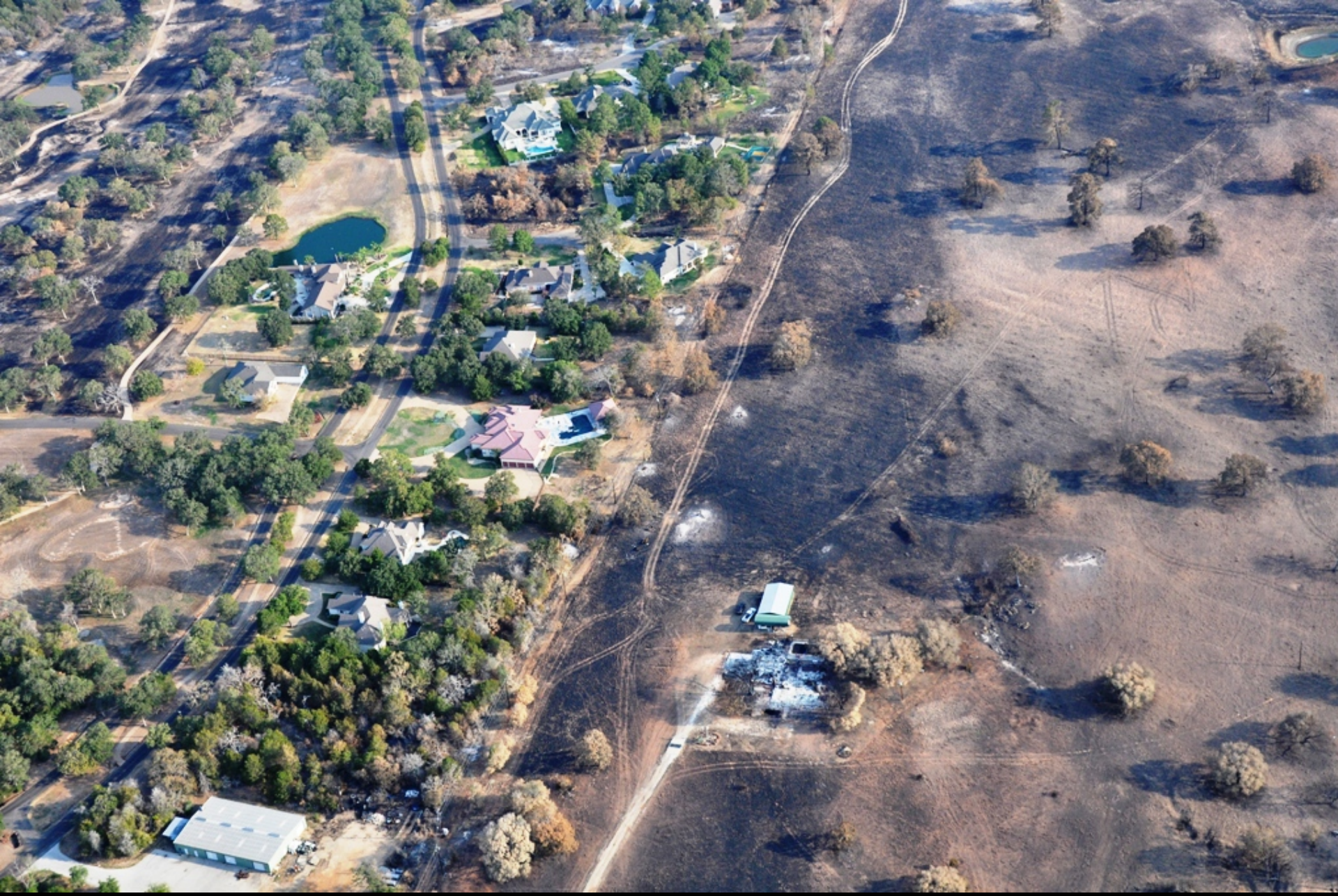


More than 1,600 houses were destroyed in the Bastrop fire.

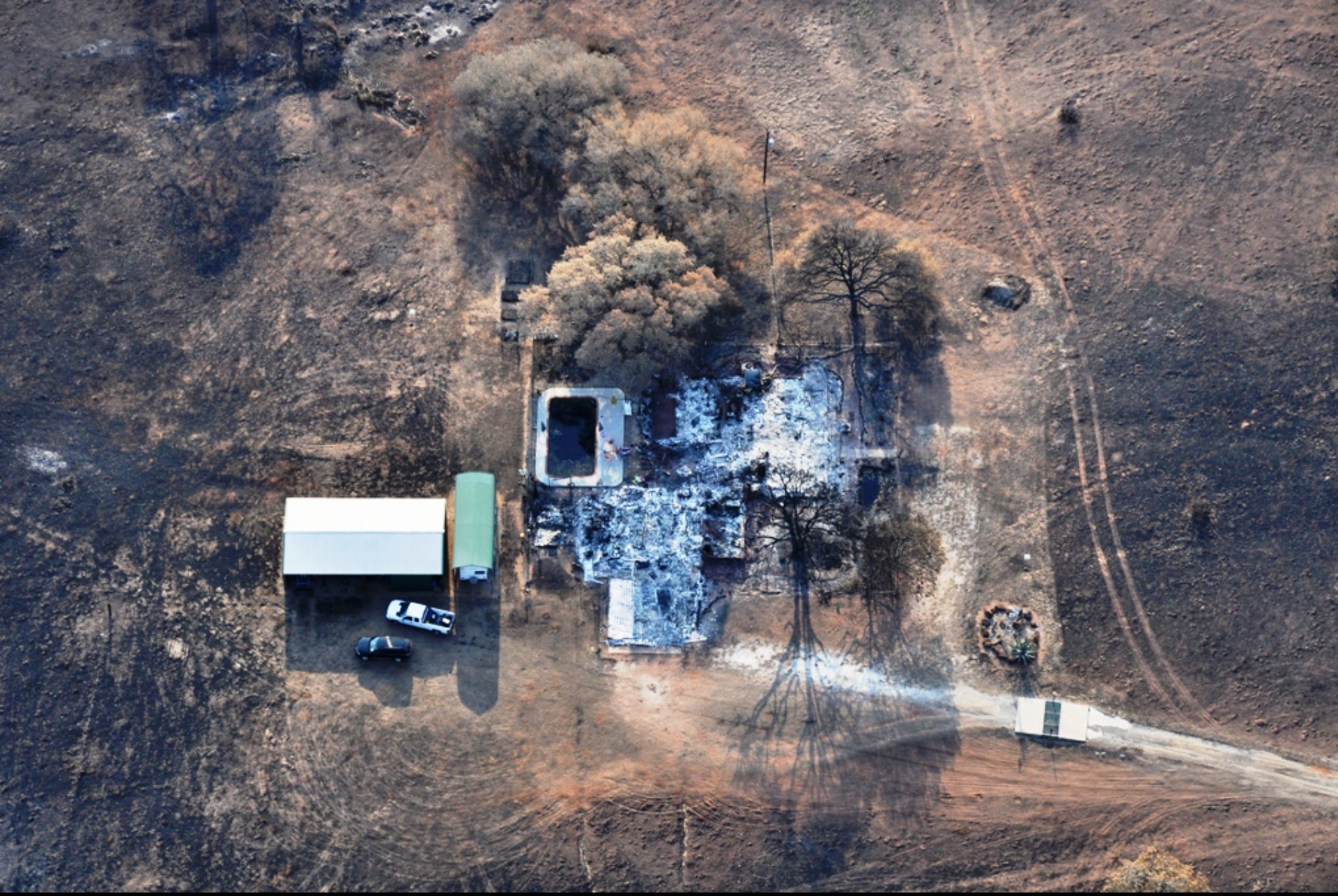




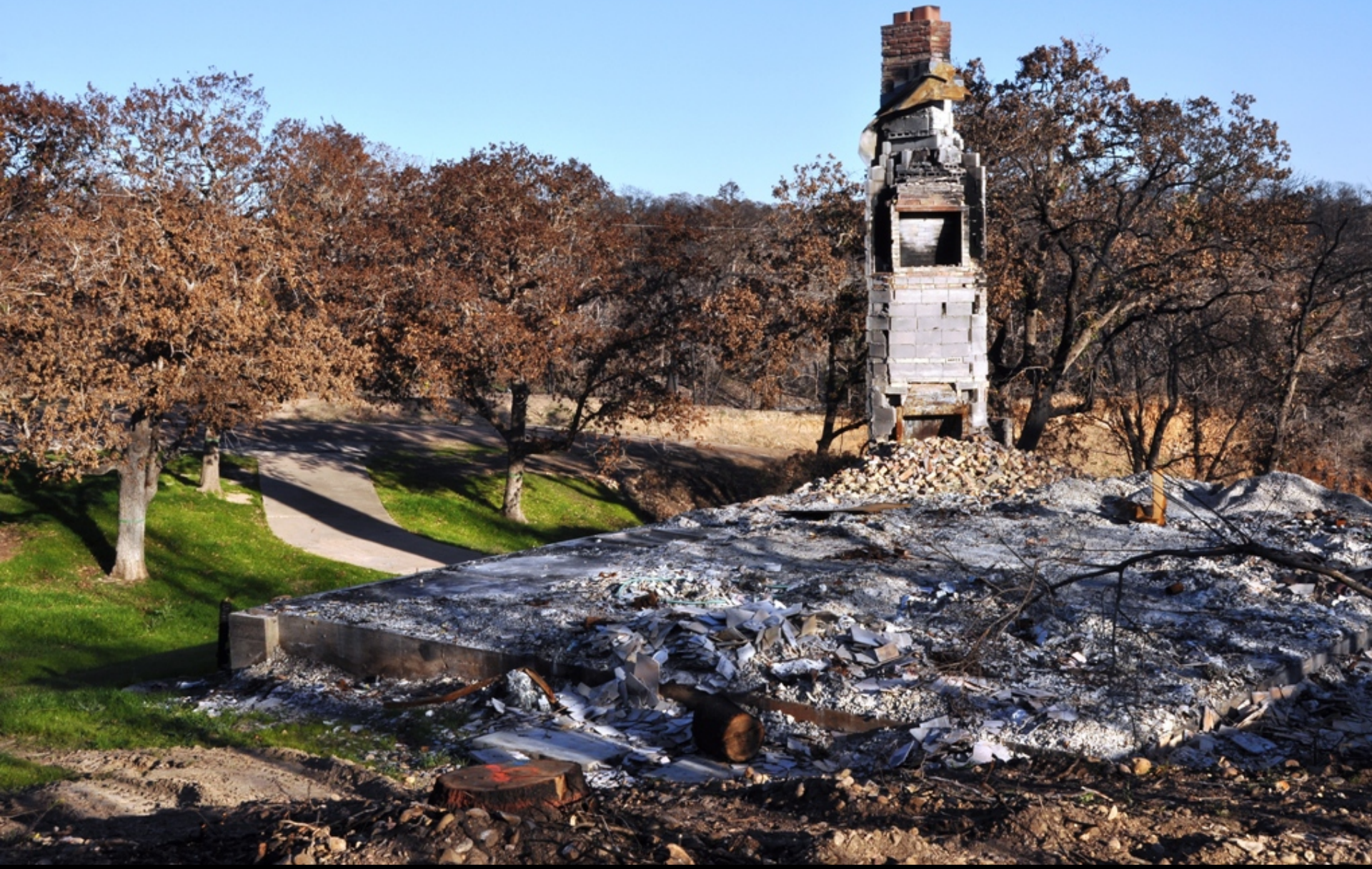




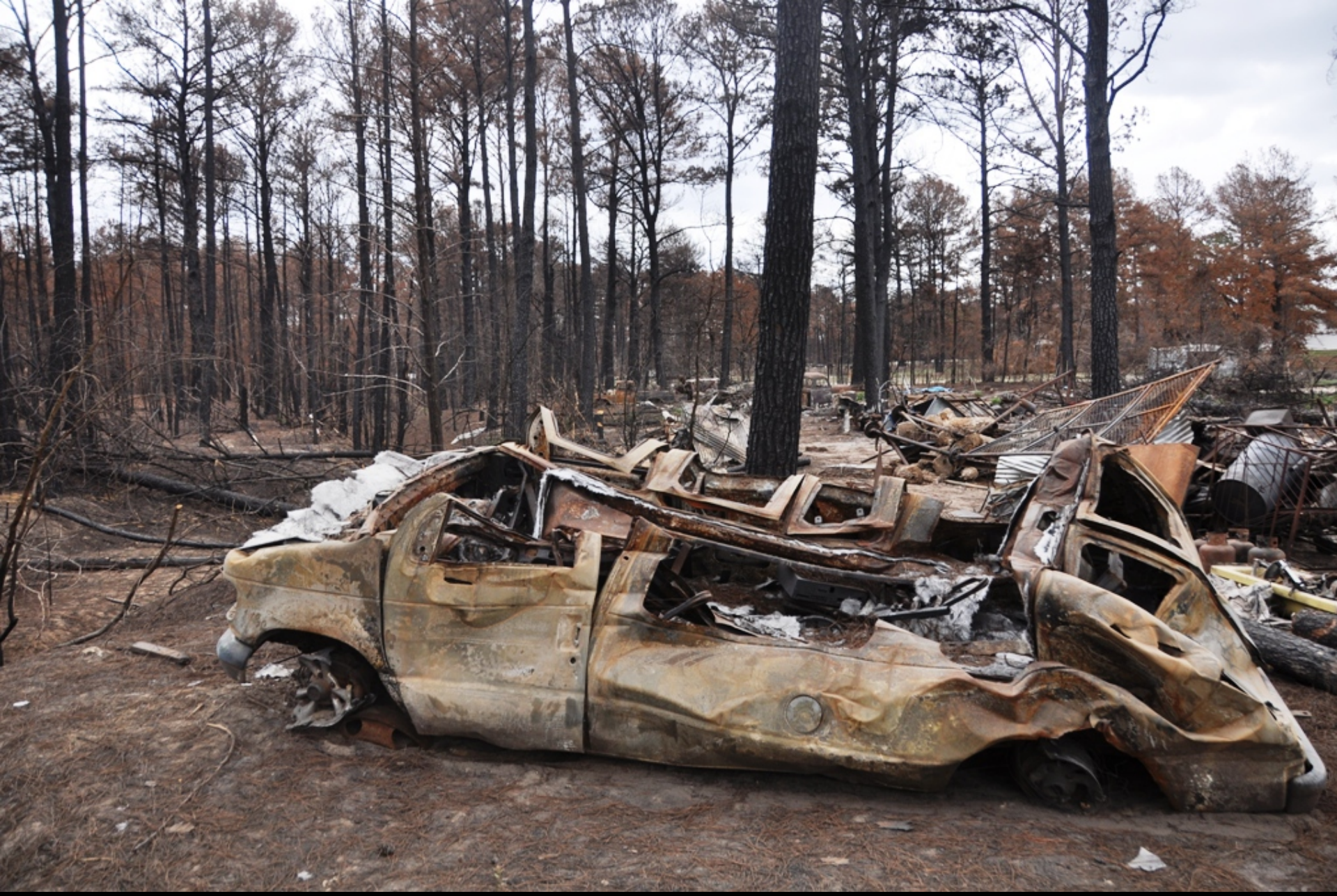
Winners and losers

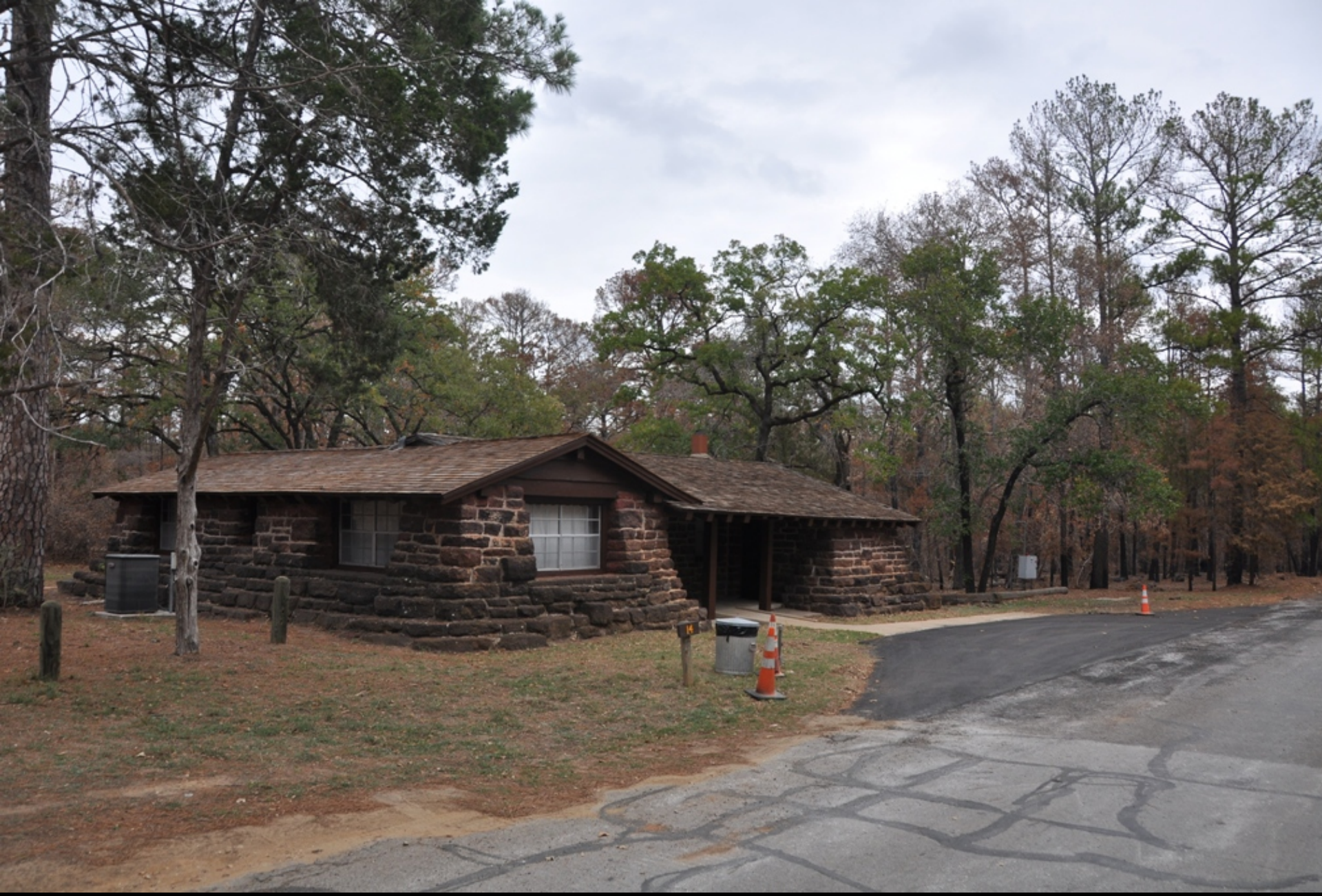


90% of the pines in the park were scorched or destroyed.

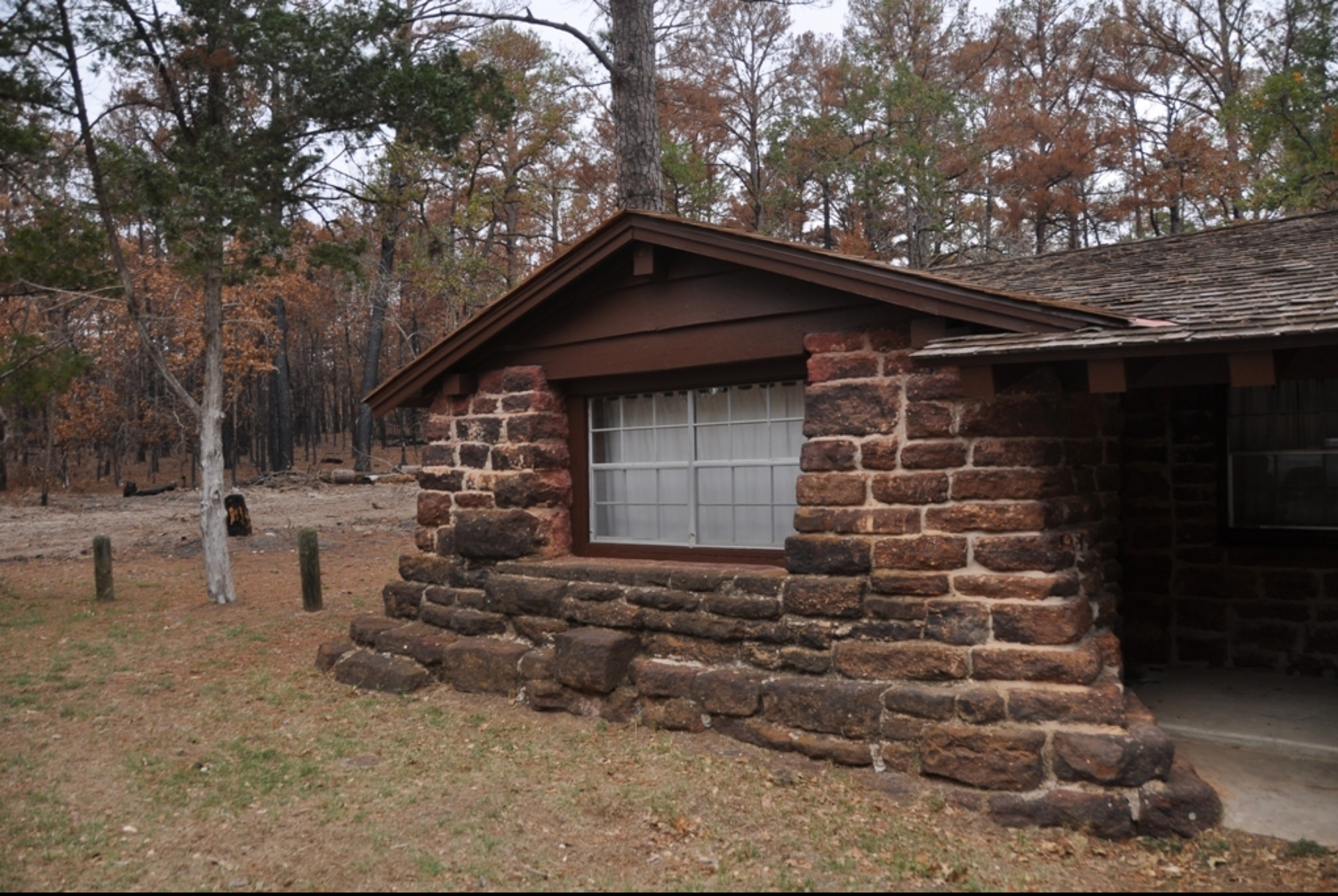


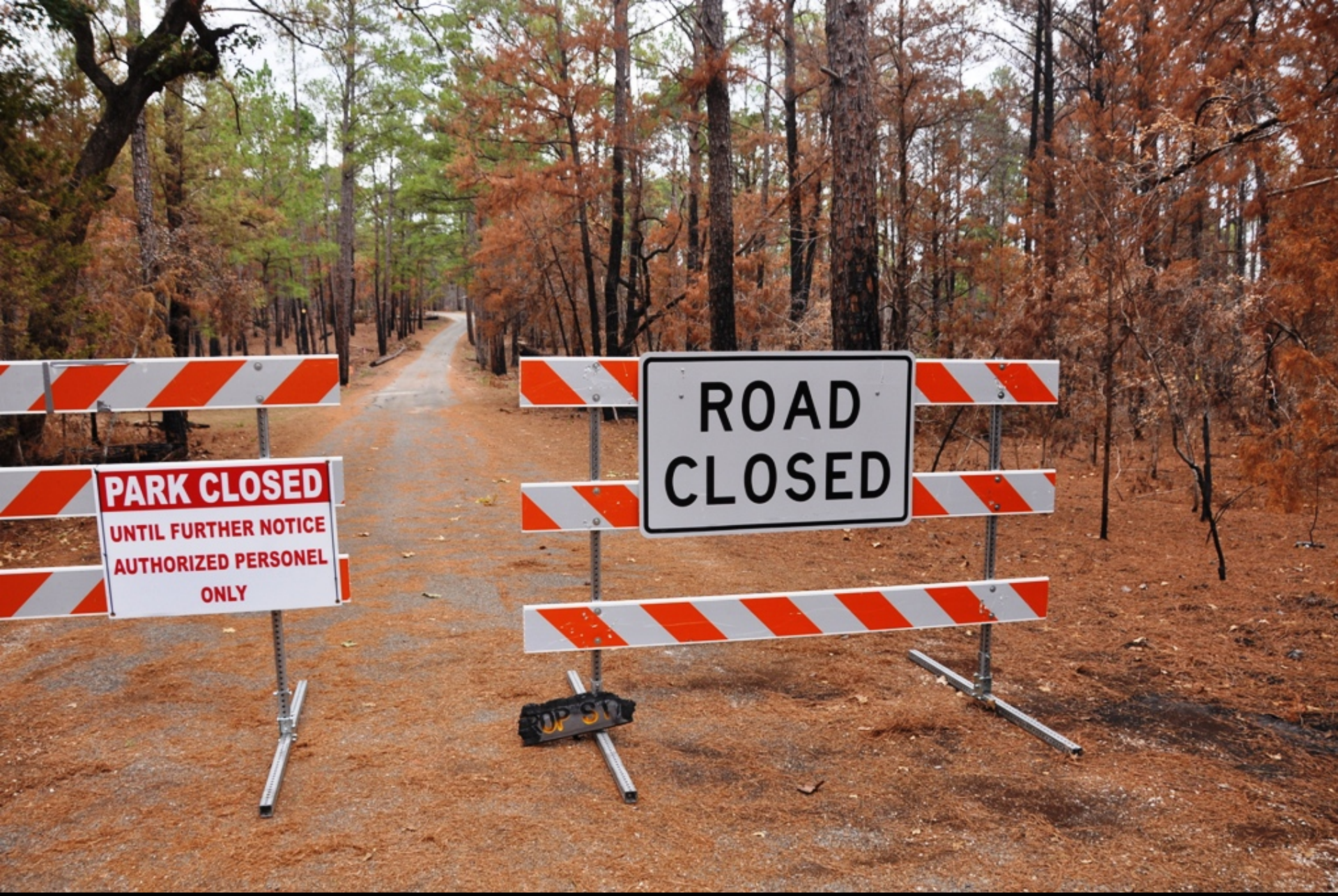
Private property losses were extensive.



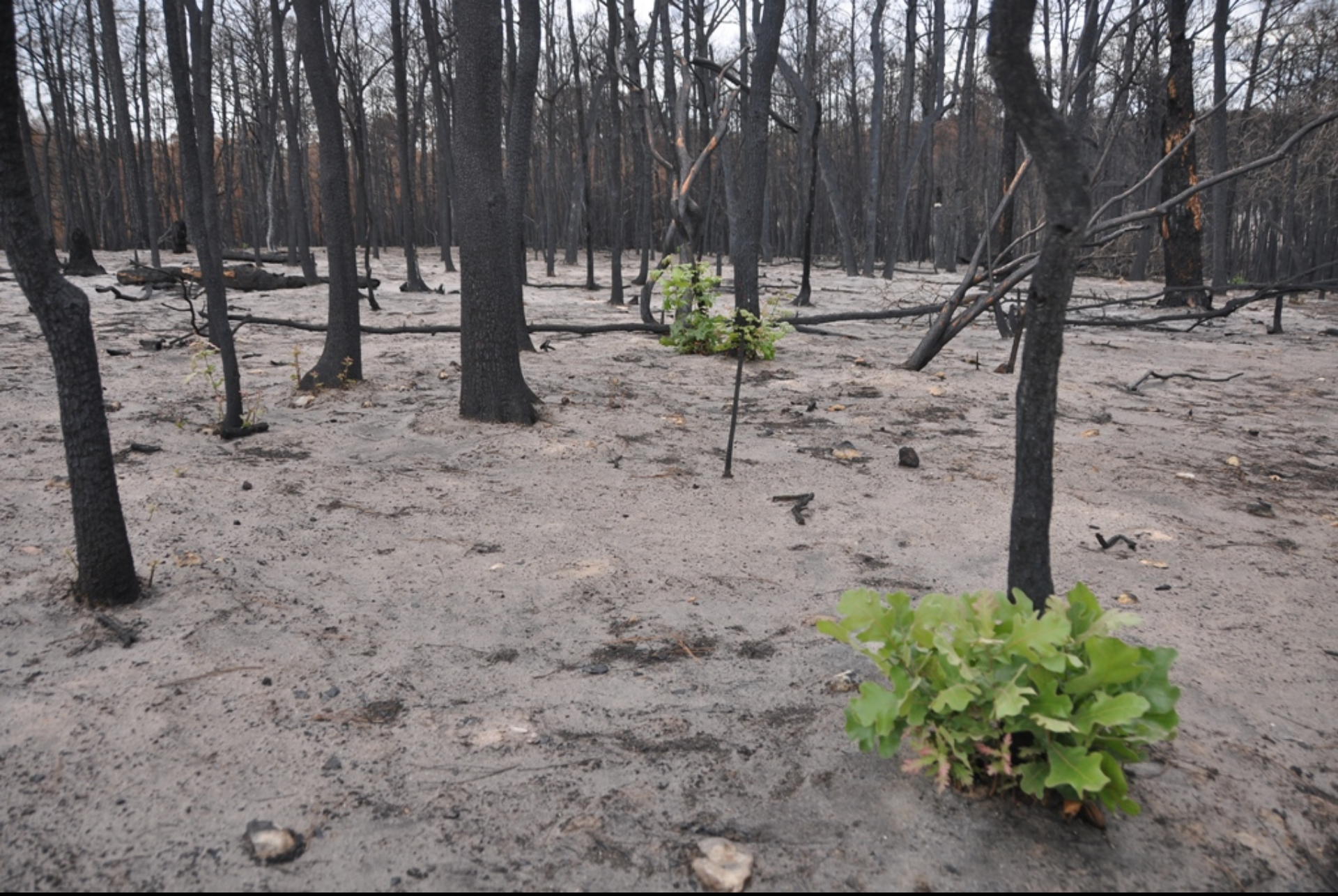


Fortunately, fire fighters were able to save the historic CCC cabins.

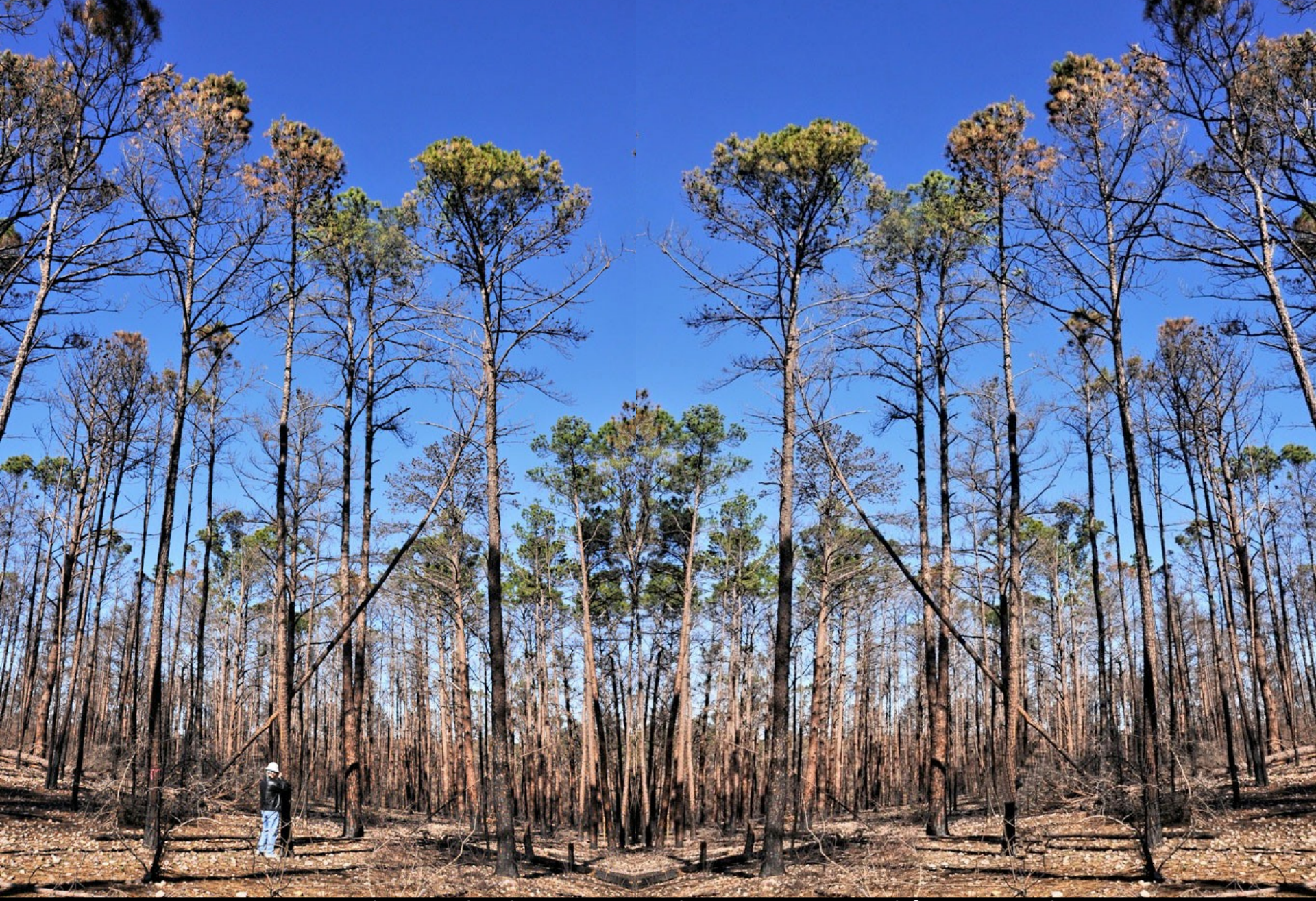




The park road (IC) was closed after the fire. November 2011

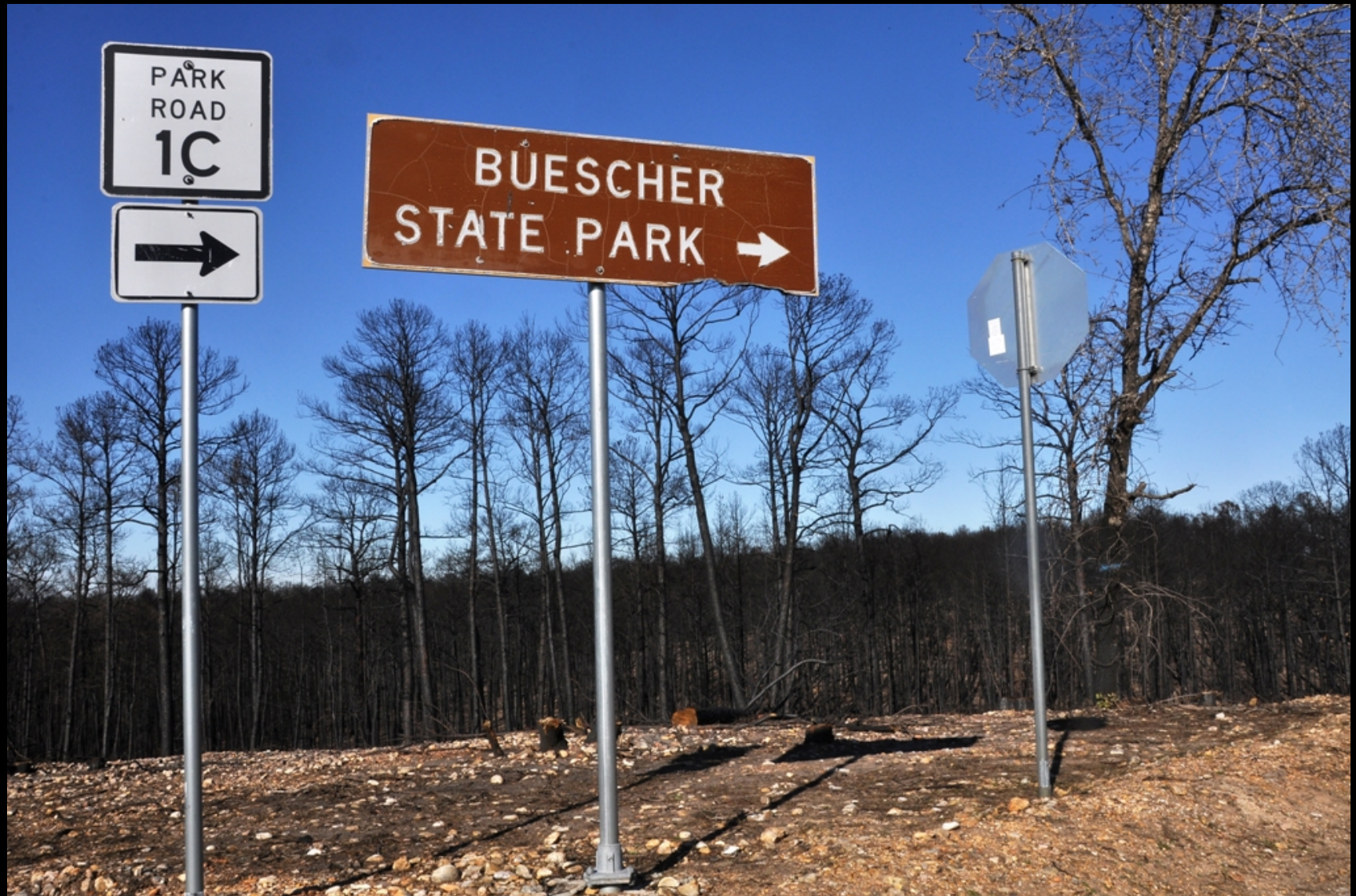


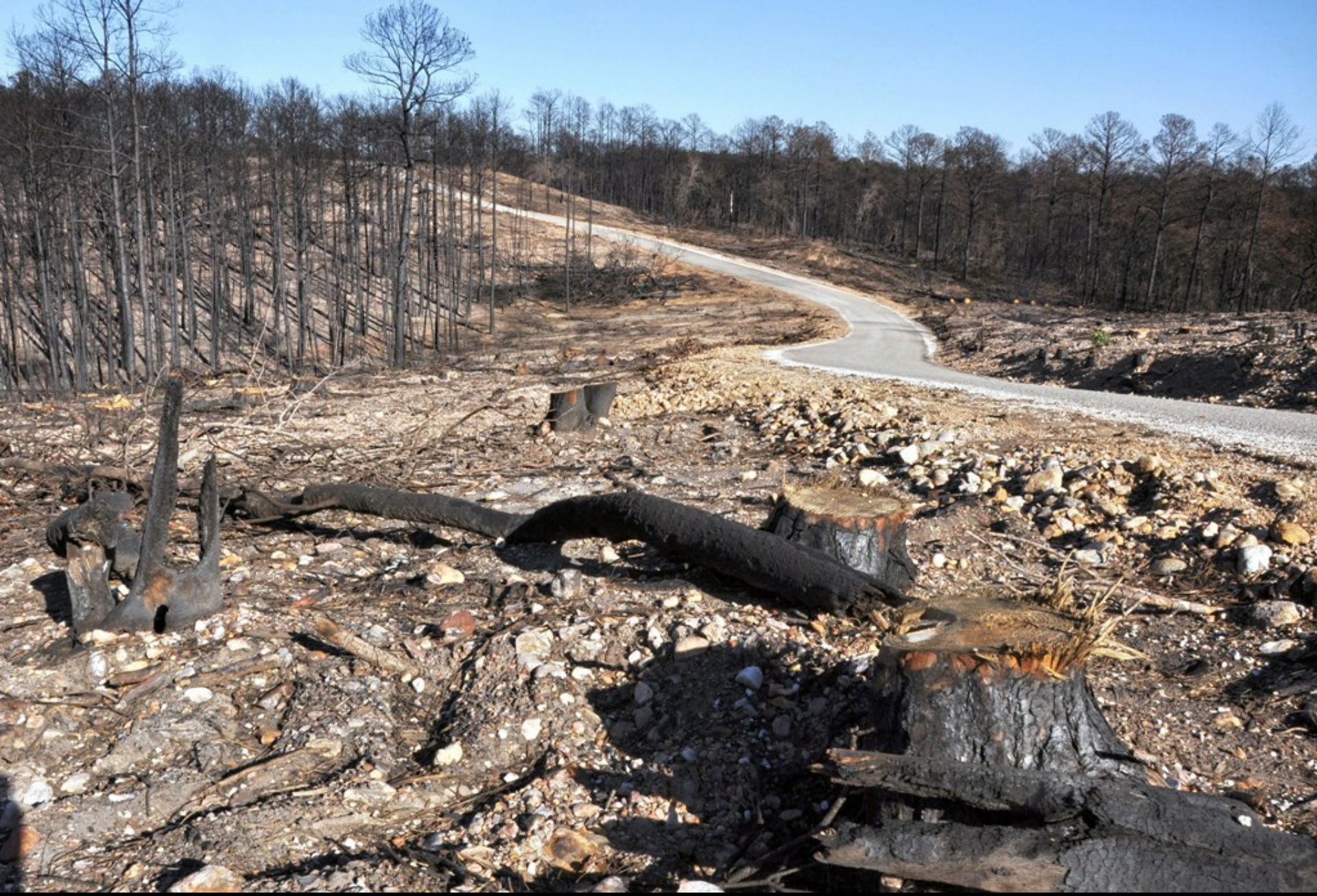
Post oak sprouts were among the first live vegetation to reappear (November 2011).



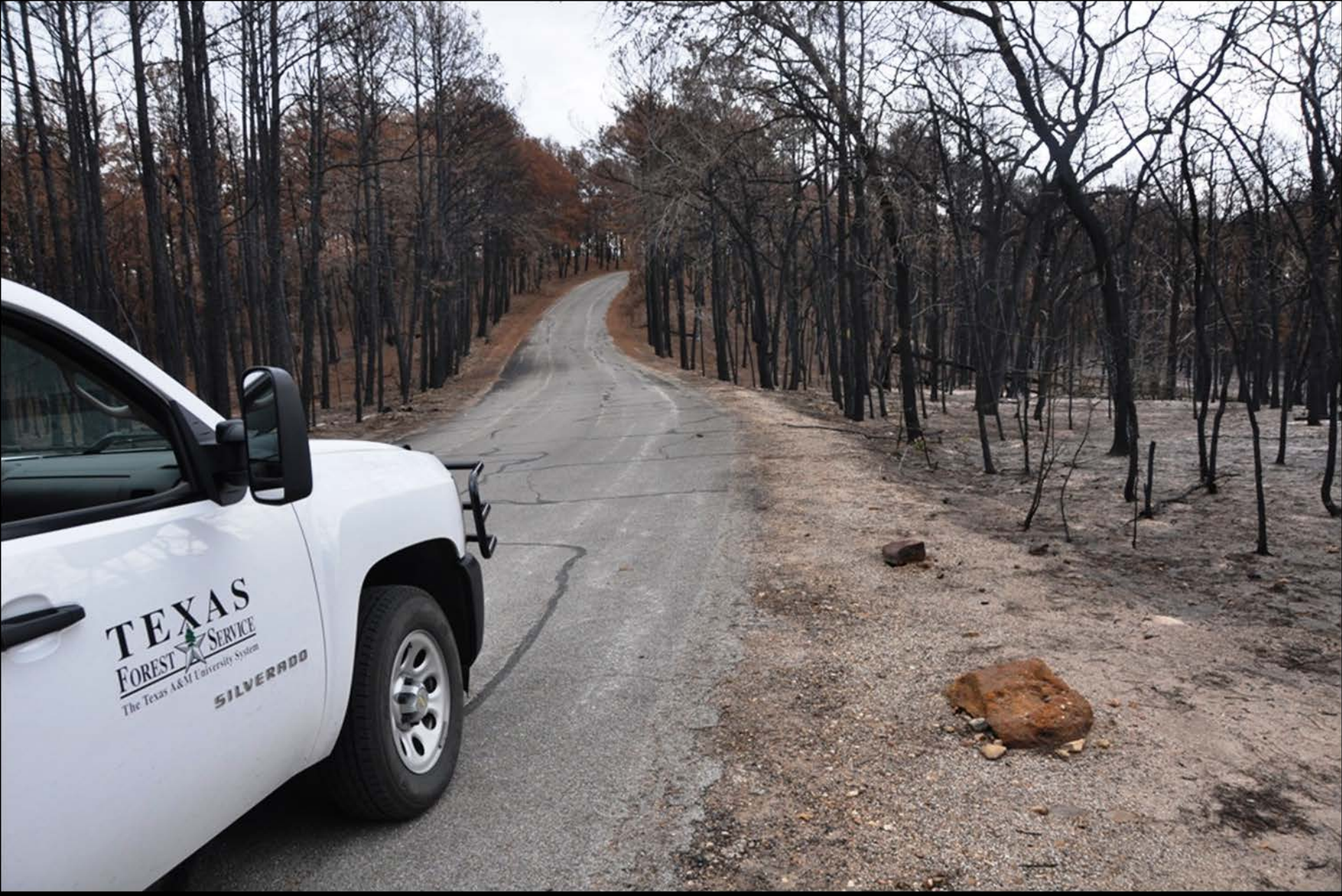
Pines with scorched crowns are being monitored for survival;
some have been killed by bark beetles.

January 2012 - Four months after the fire

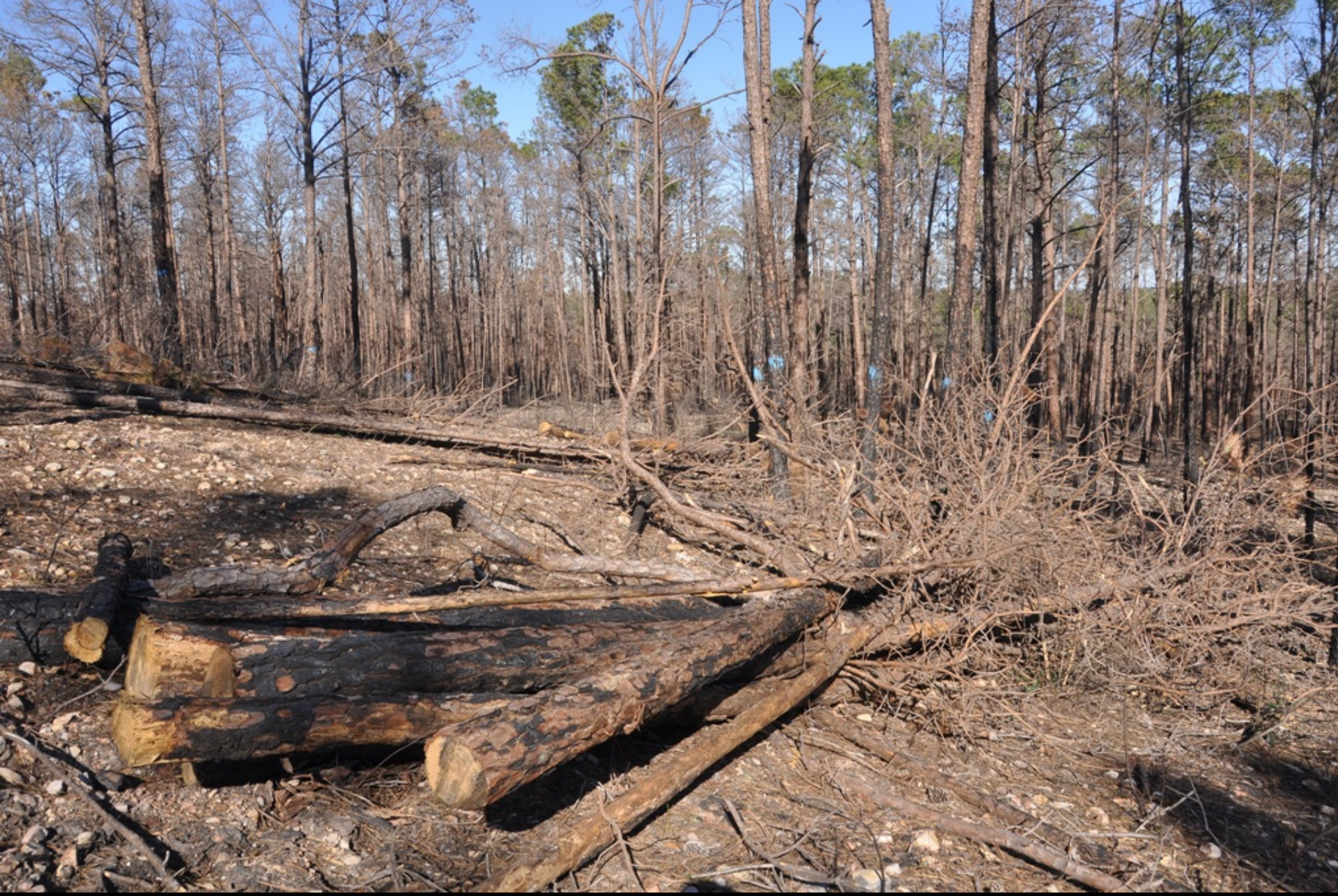




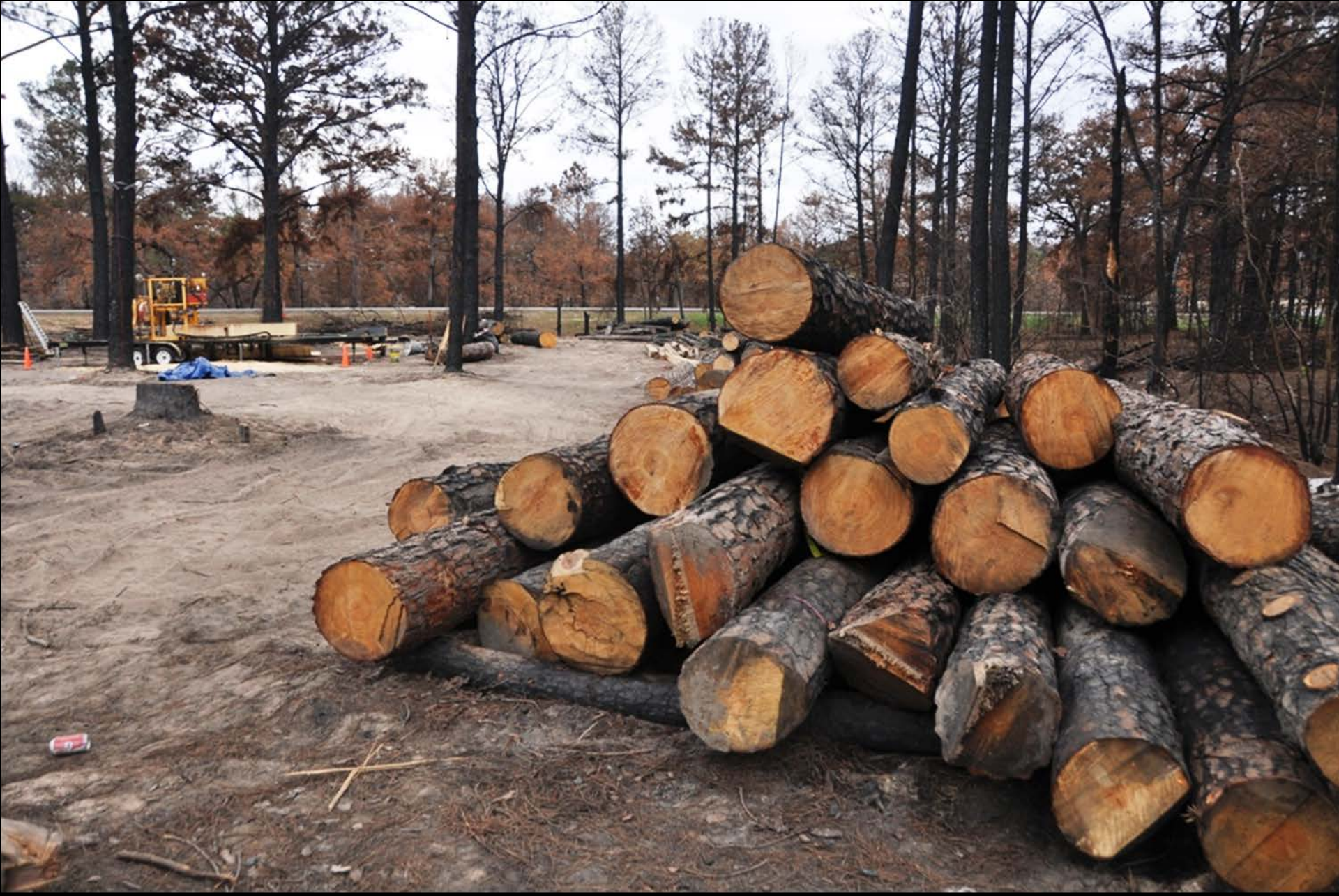
Park Road 1C between Bastrop and Buescher State Parks January 2012



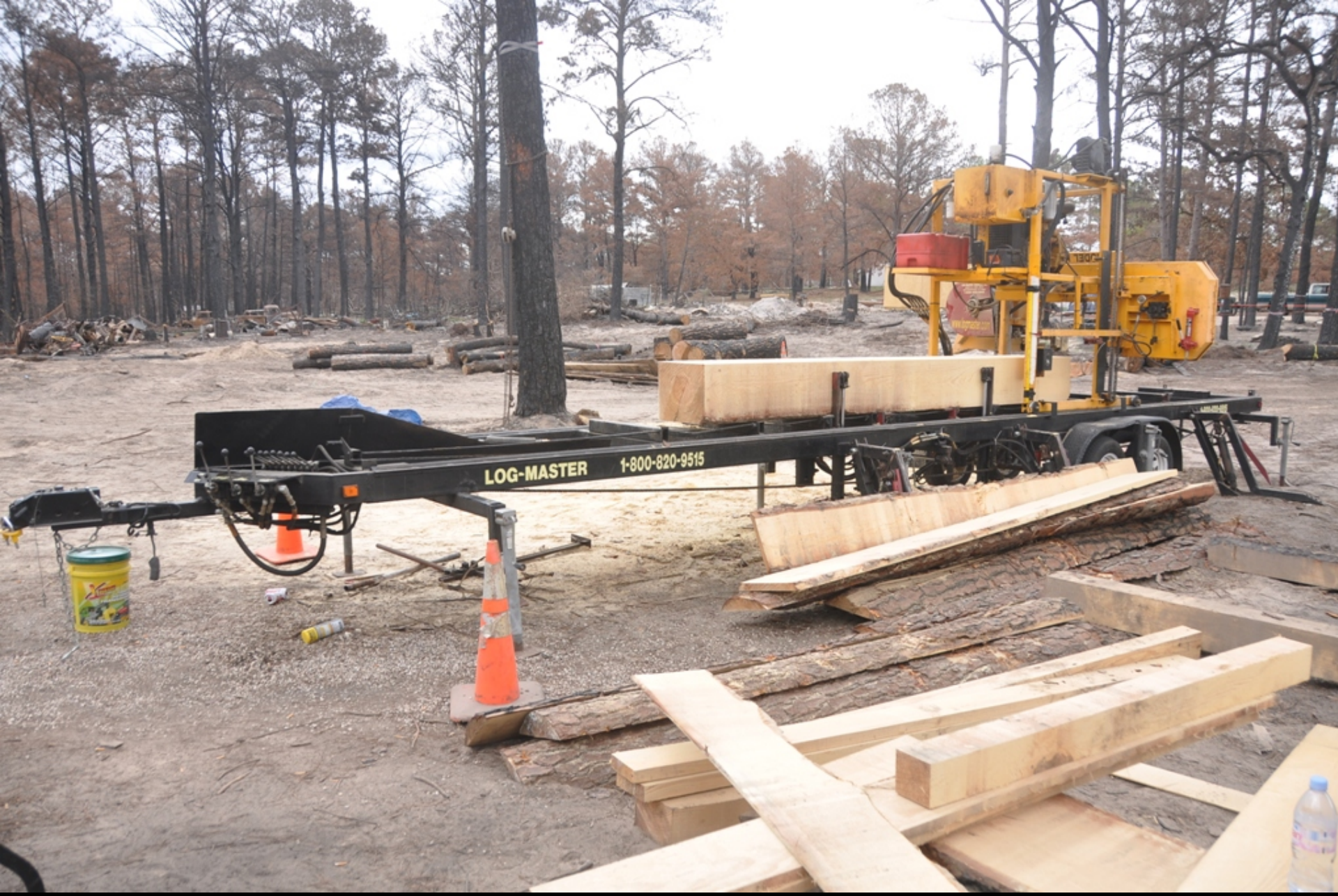
Park Road 1C - January 2012



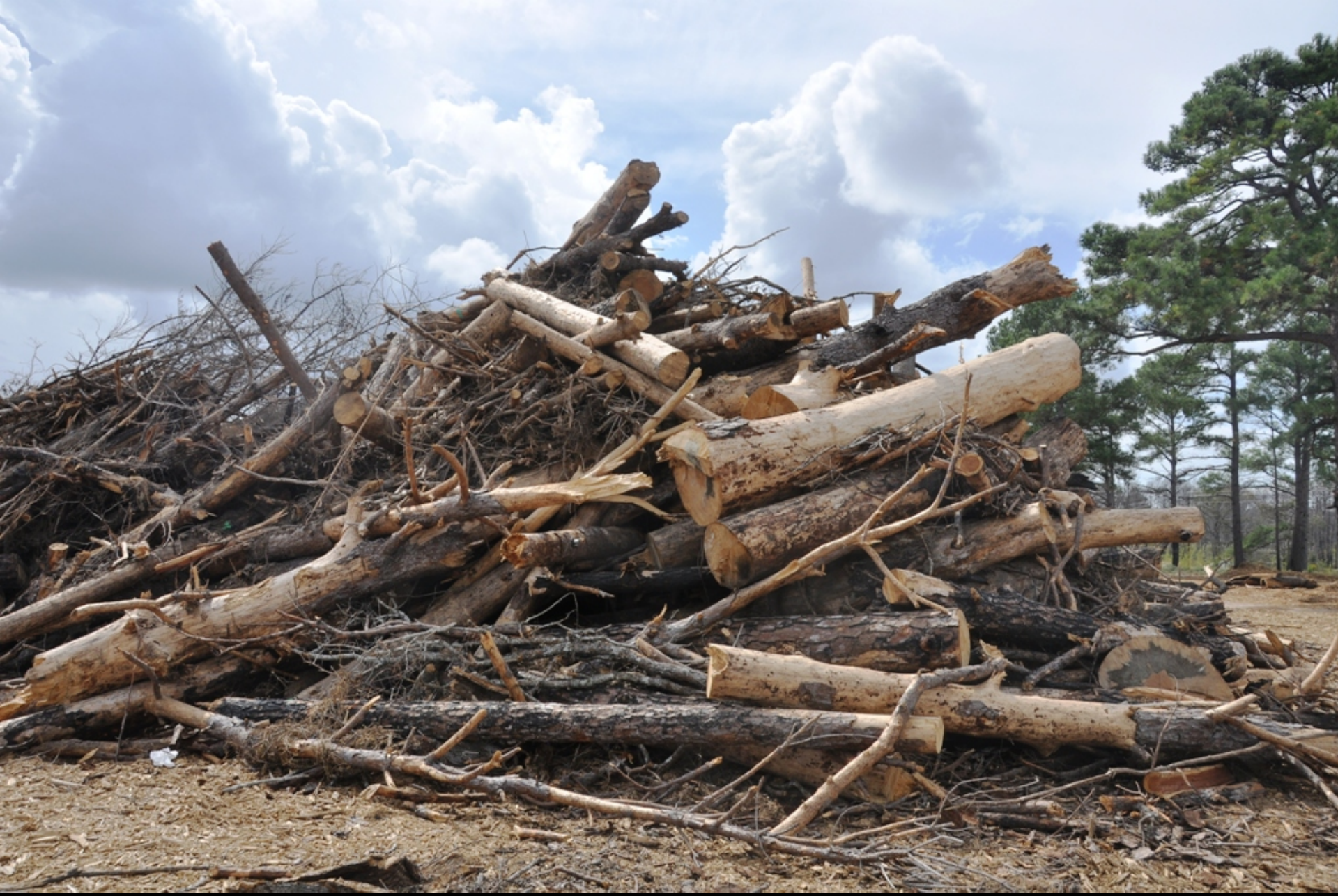
Hazard trees along park roads were felled.



Some logs were salvaged for local use or chipped for mulch.

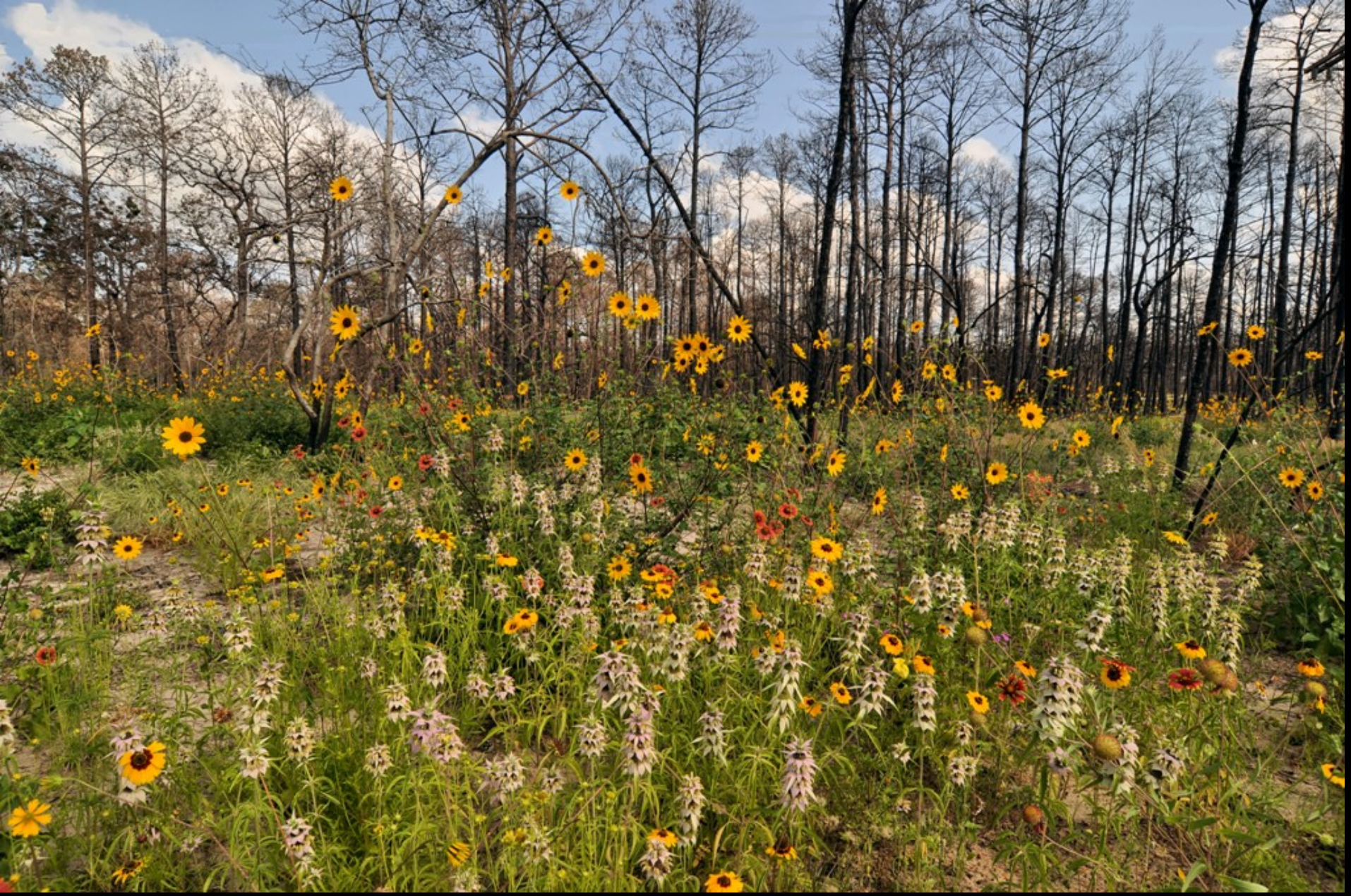


This portable sawmill was used to utilize some of the dead trees.

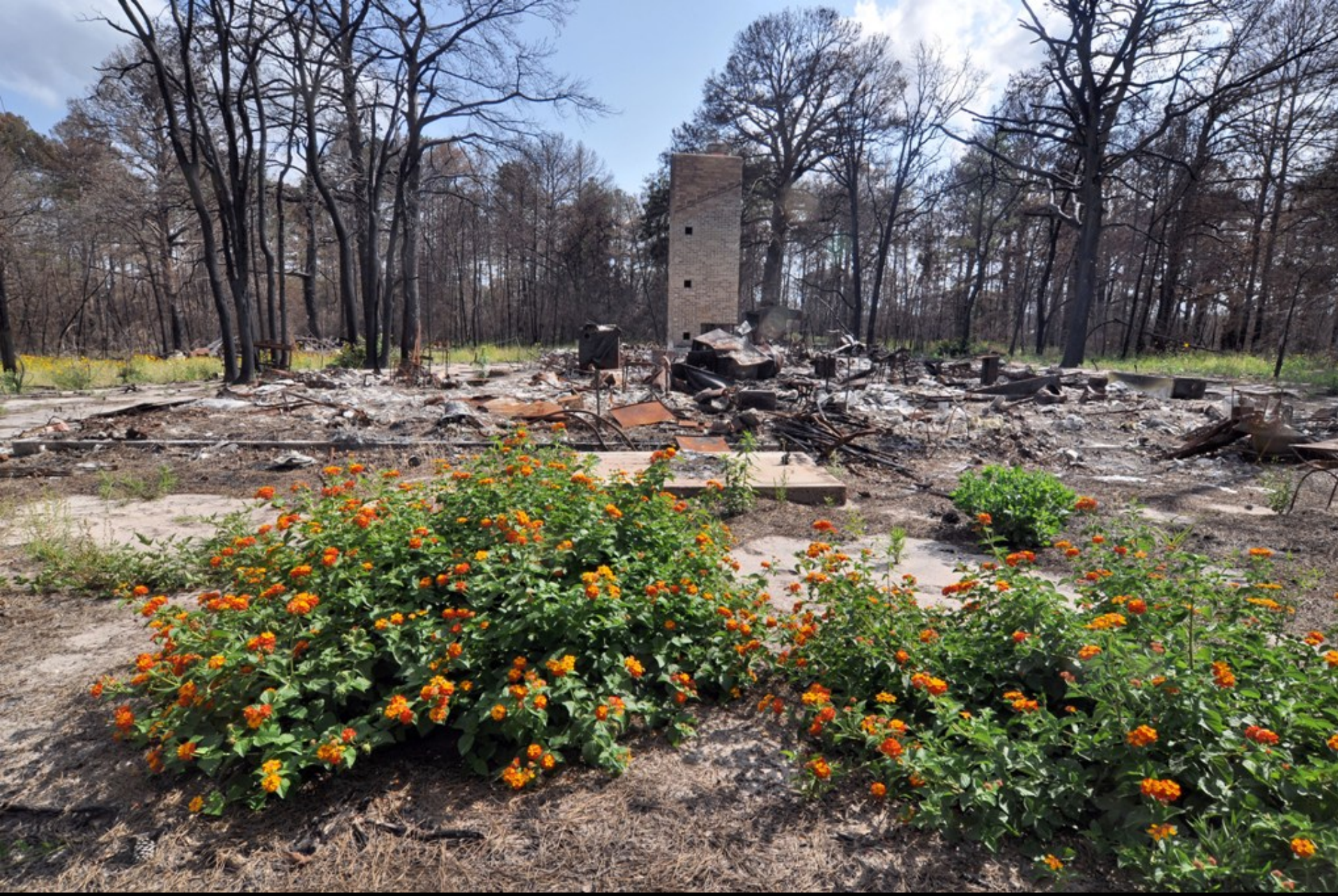


Other trees were piled for chipping into mulch

January 2012

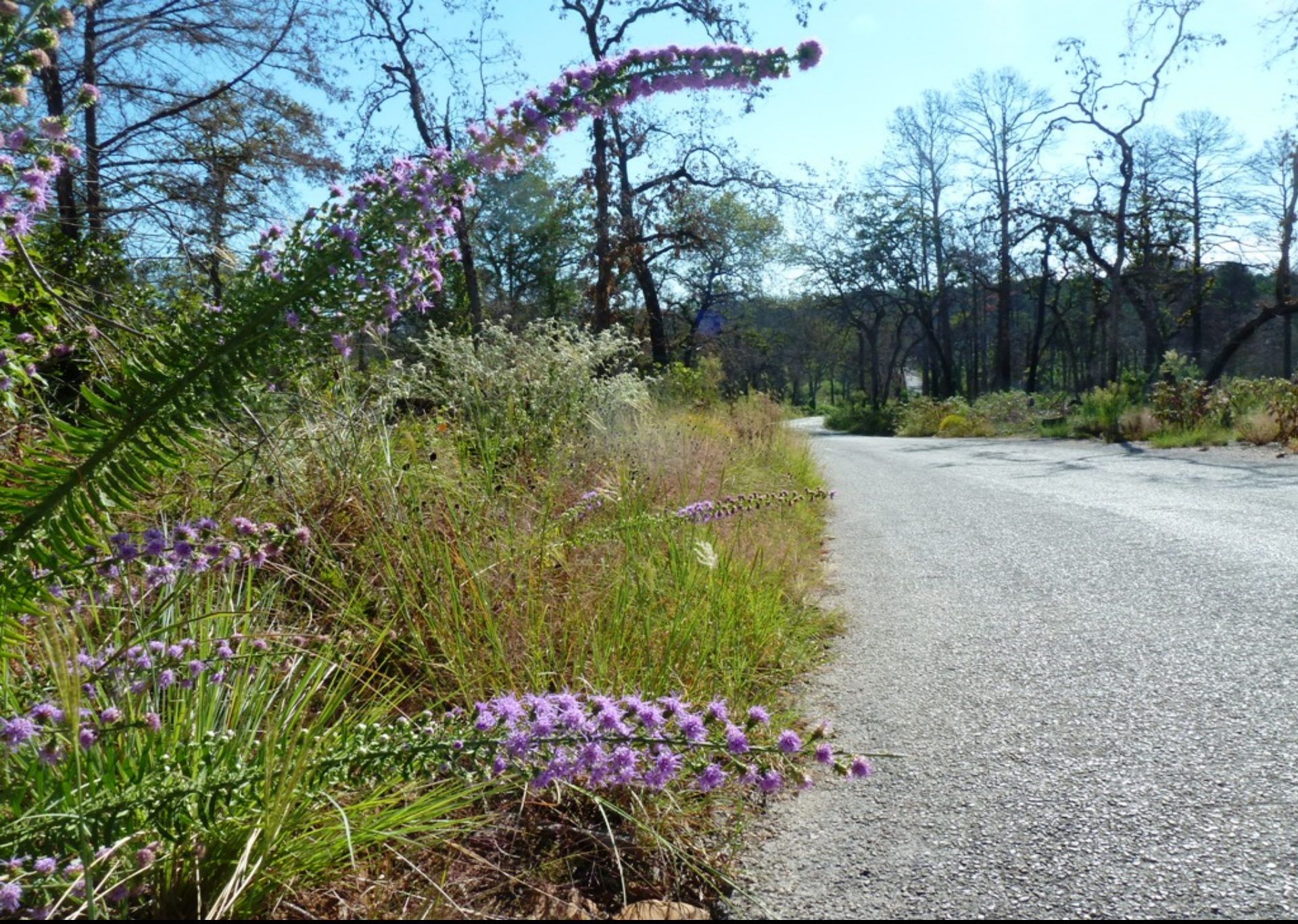


By May 1, 2012 recovery had begin in earnest.

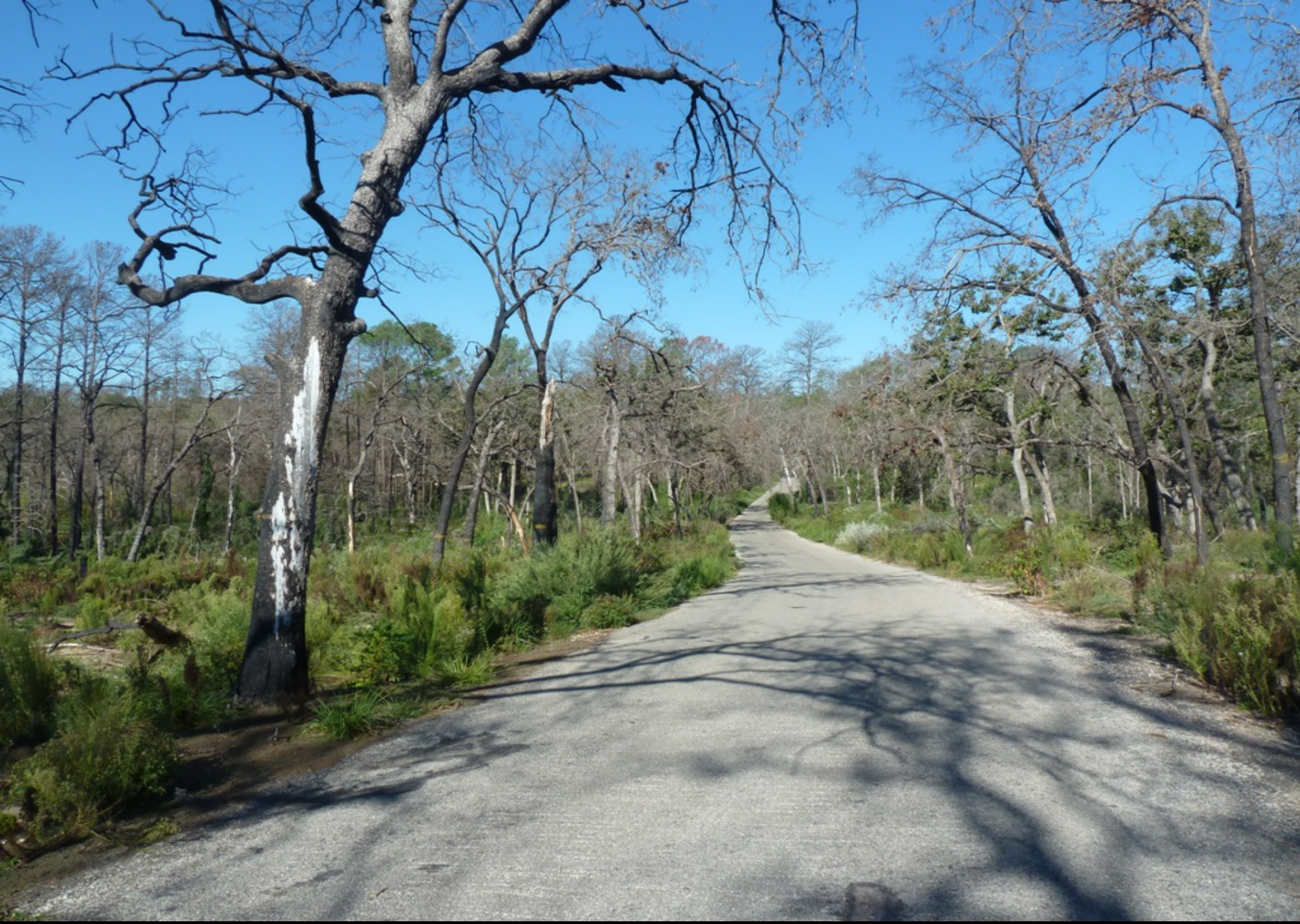


Some landscape flowers survived (*Lantana* spp.).

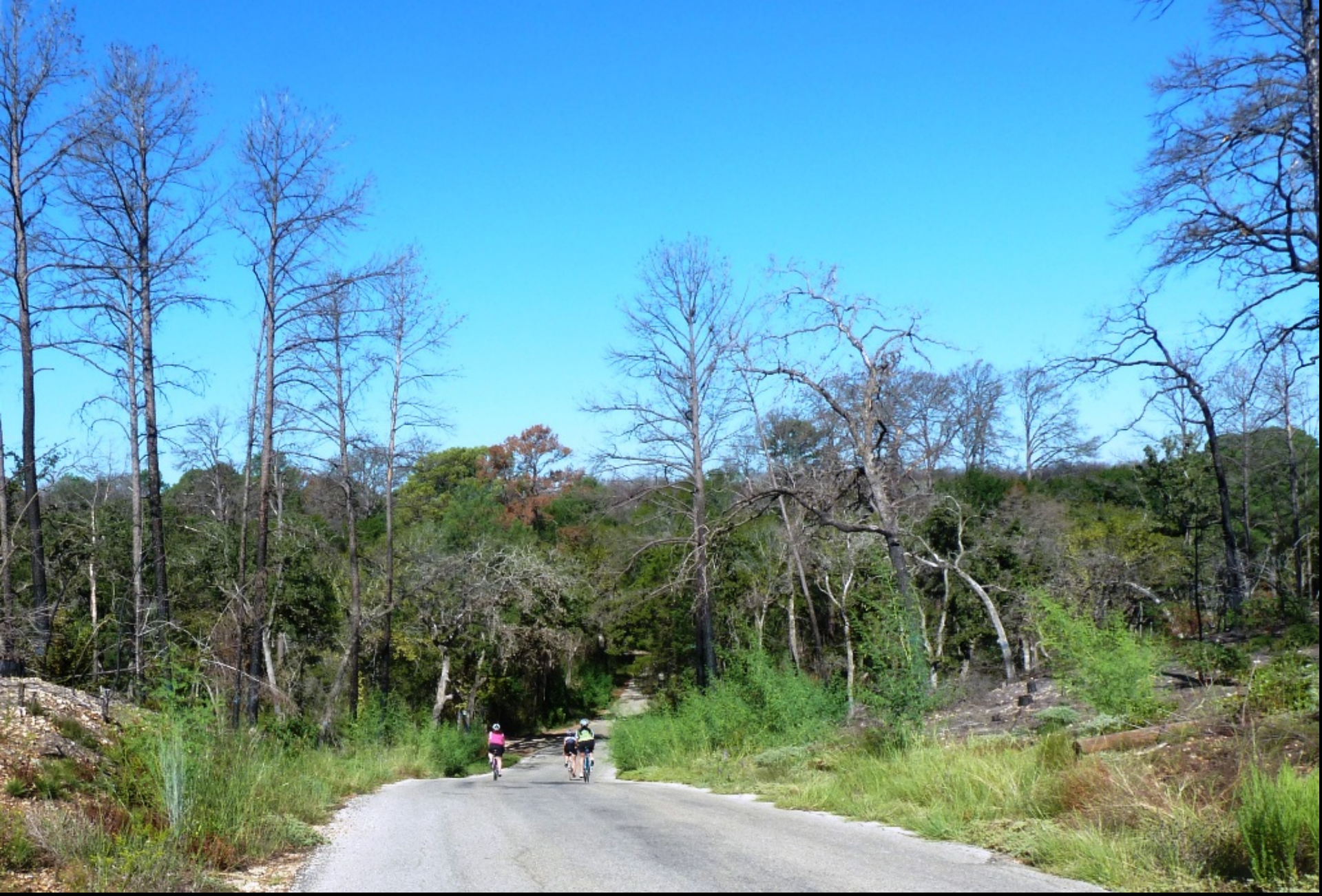
September 2012 – One year later



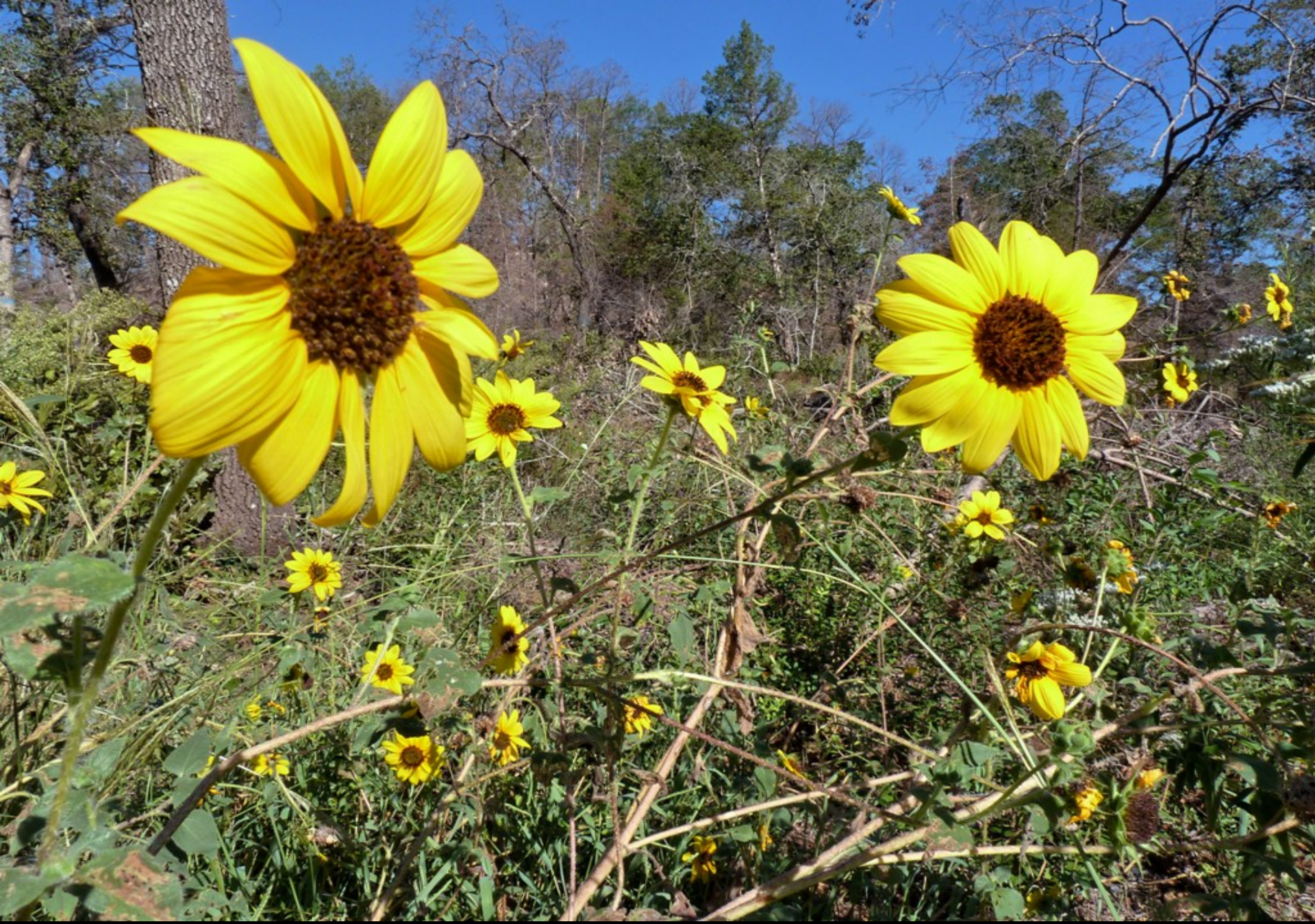
The landscape had greened up along Park Road 1C (*Liatris* spp.).



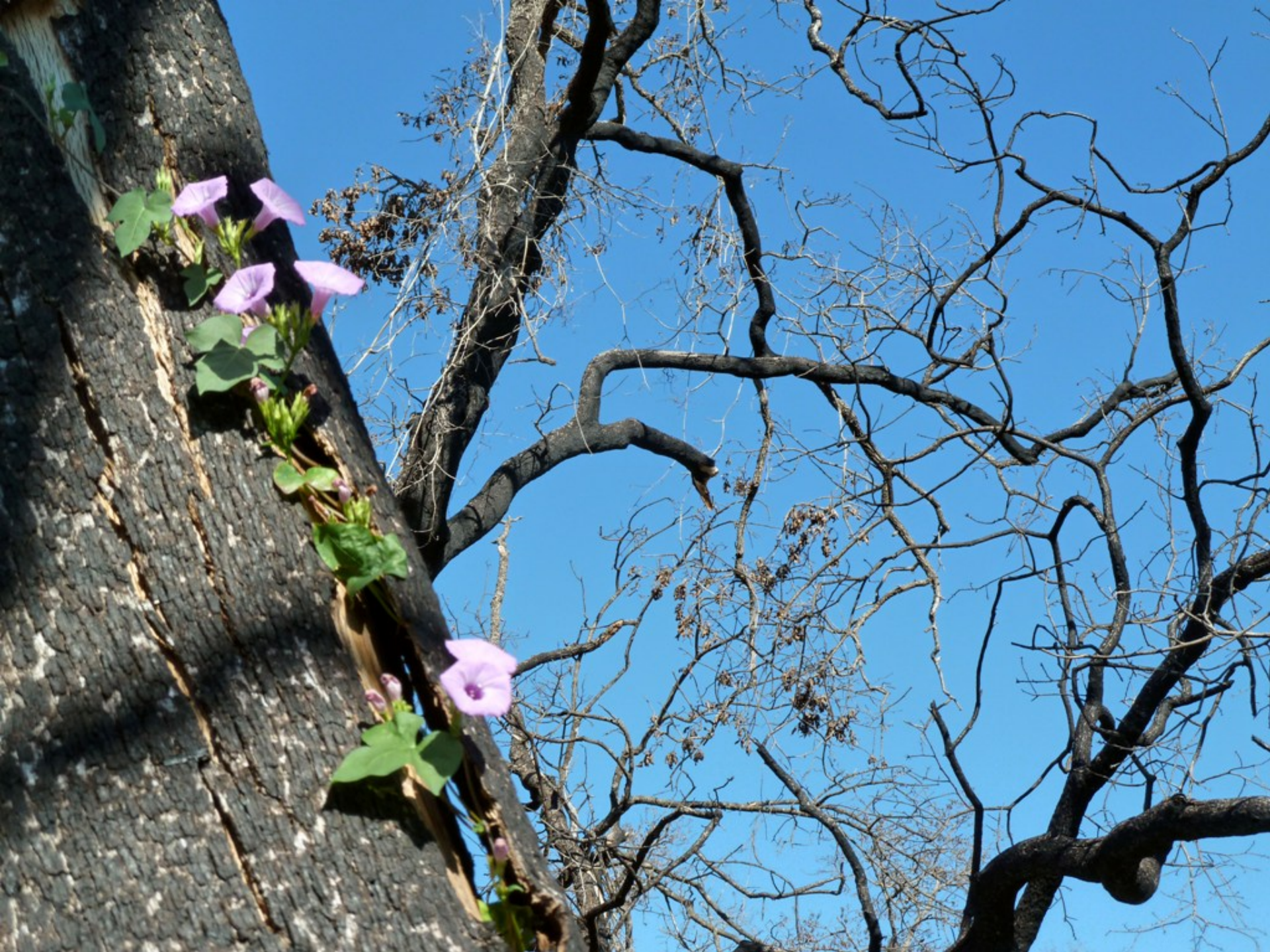
Scenic Park Road 1C between Bastrop and Buescher State Parks – September 2012

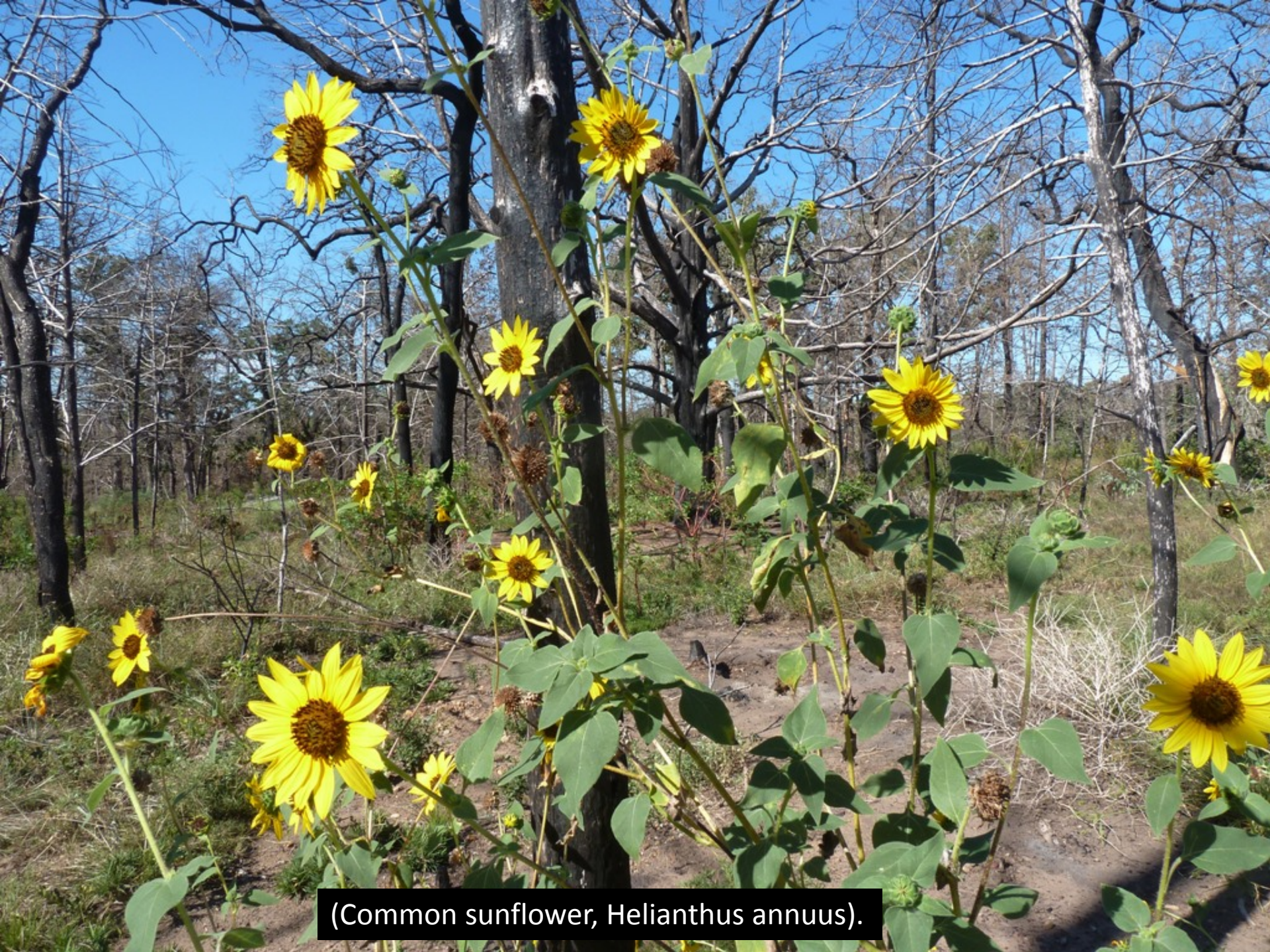


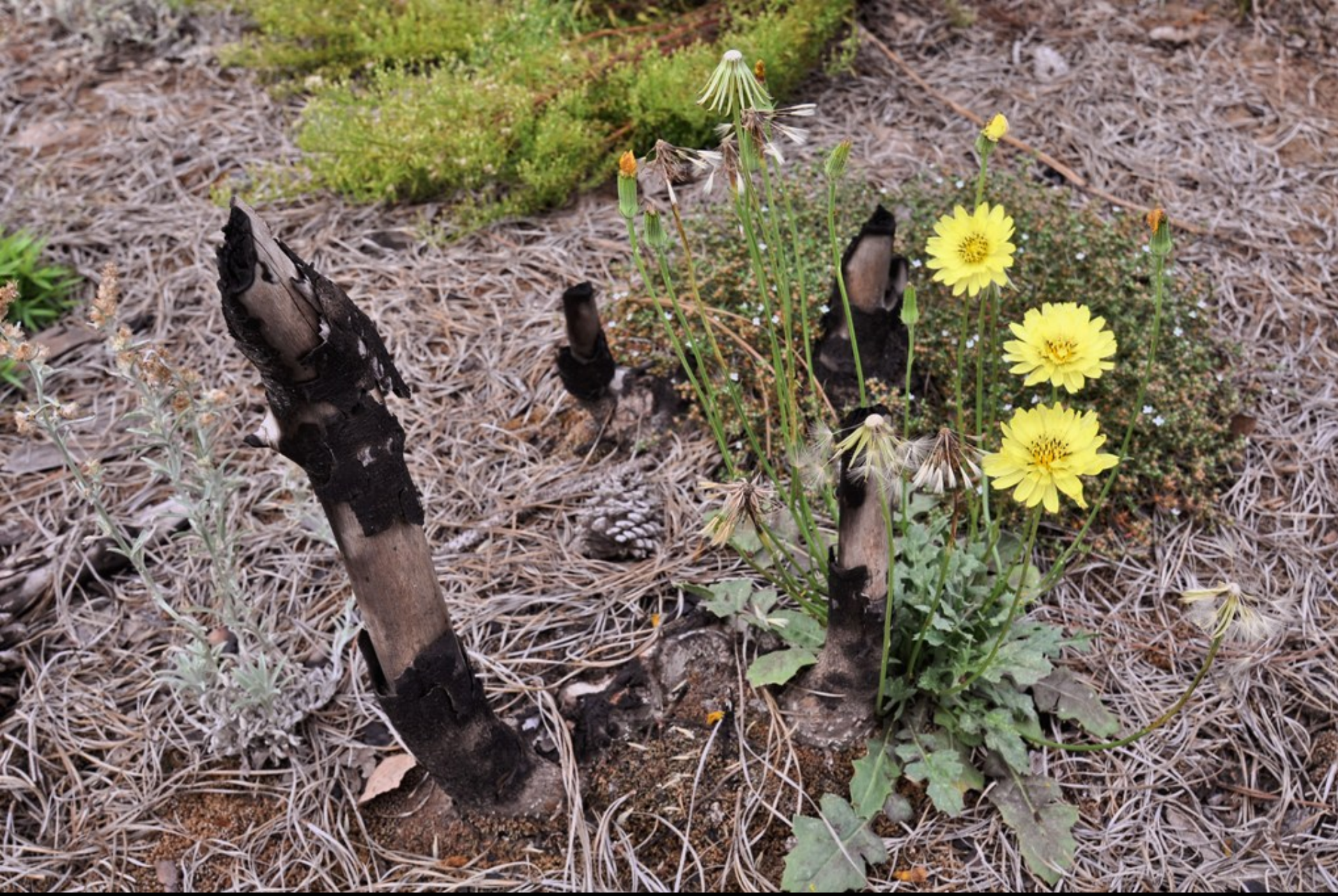
Bicycle riders enjoy a ride along Park Road 1C.



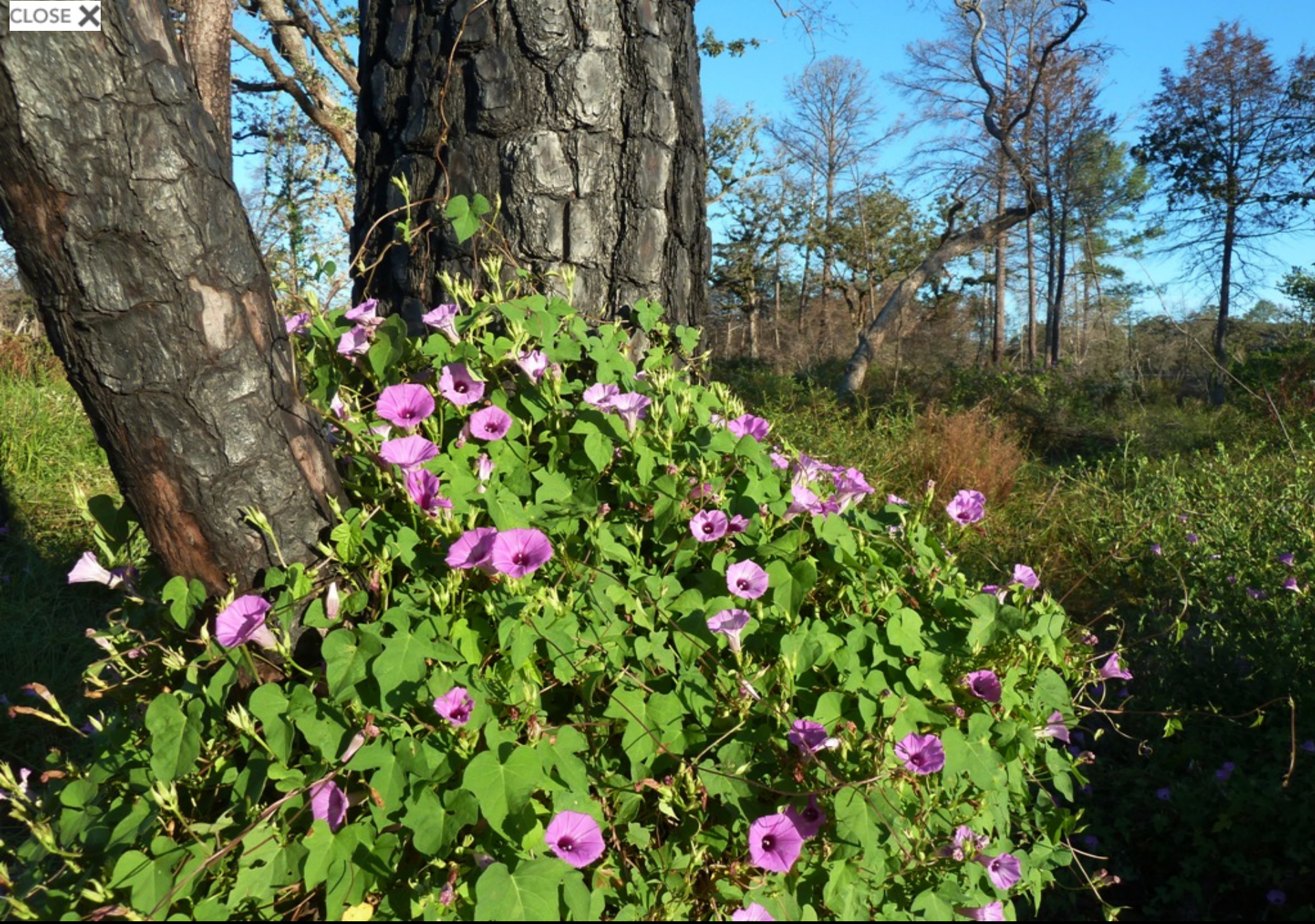
Fall wildflowers once again abound (Common sunflower, *Helianthus annuus*).



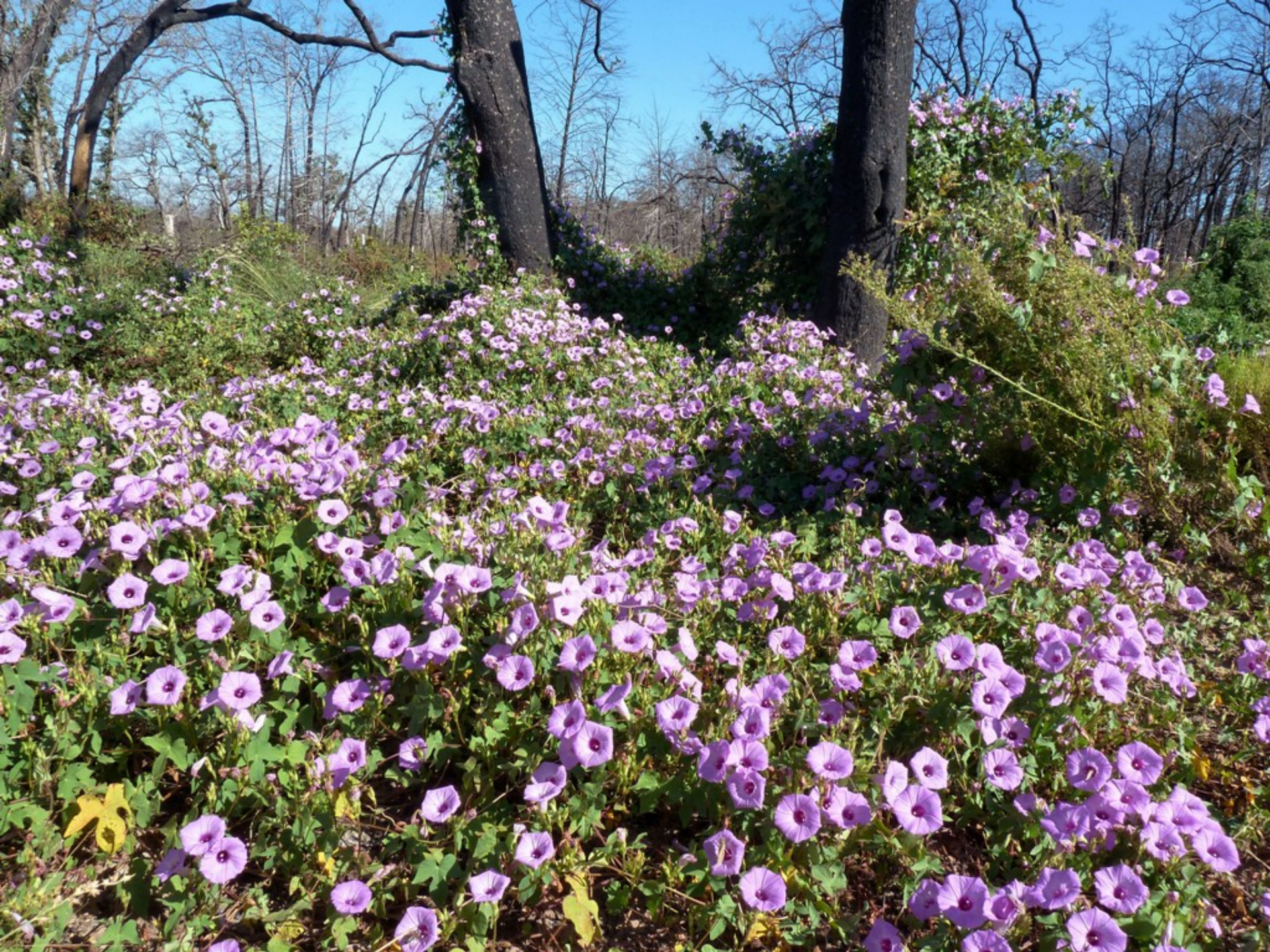

(Common sunflower, Helianthus annuus).

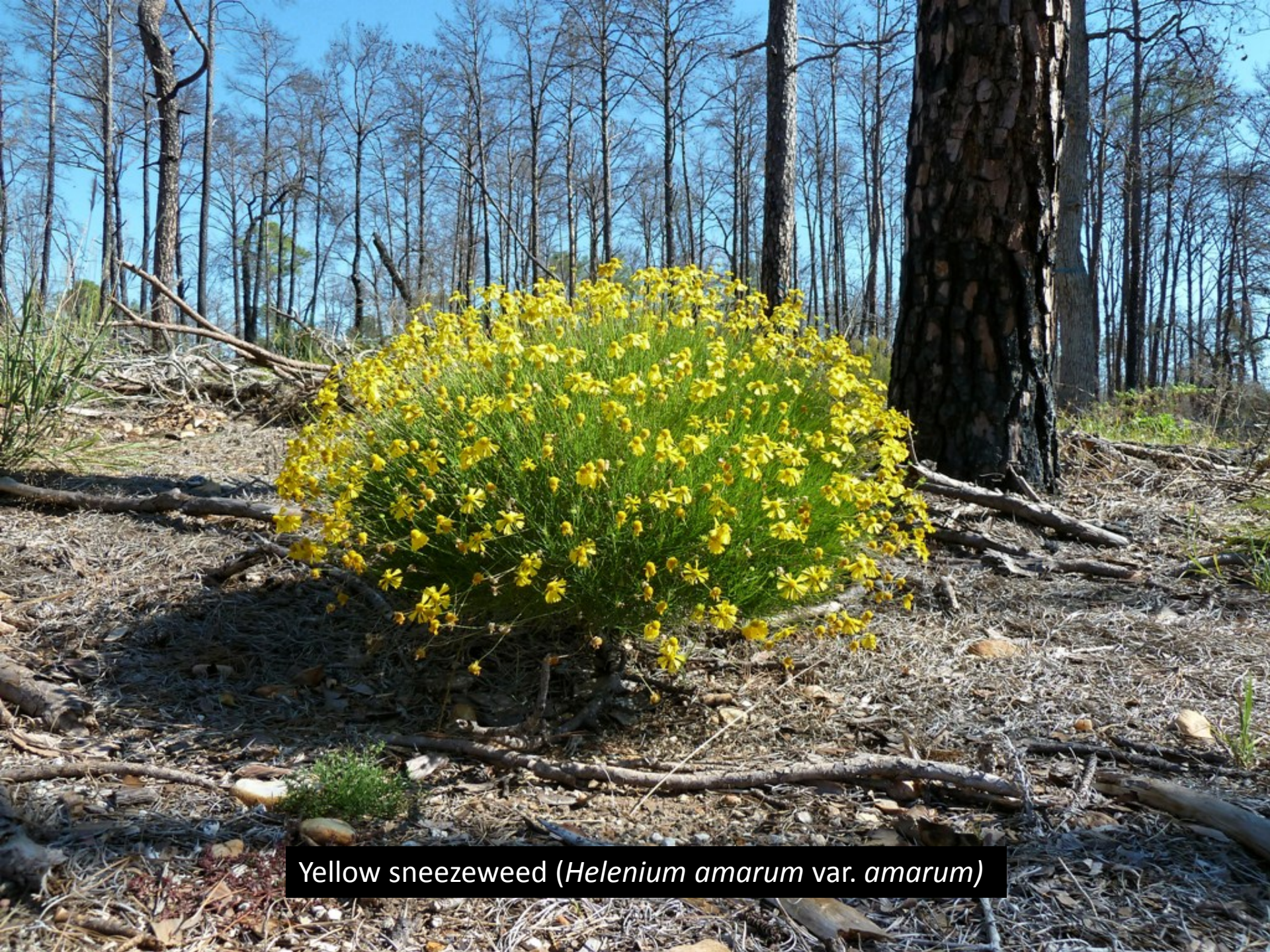


Dwarf dandelion (*Krigia virginica*)

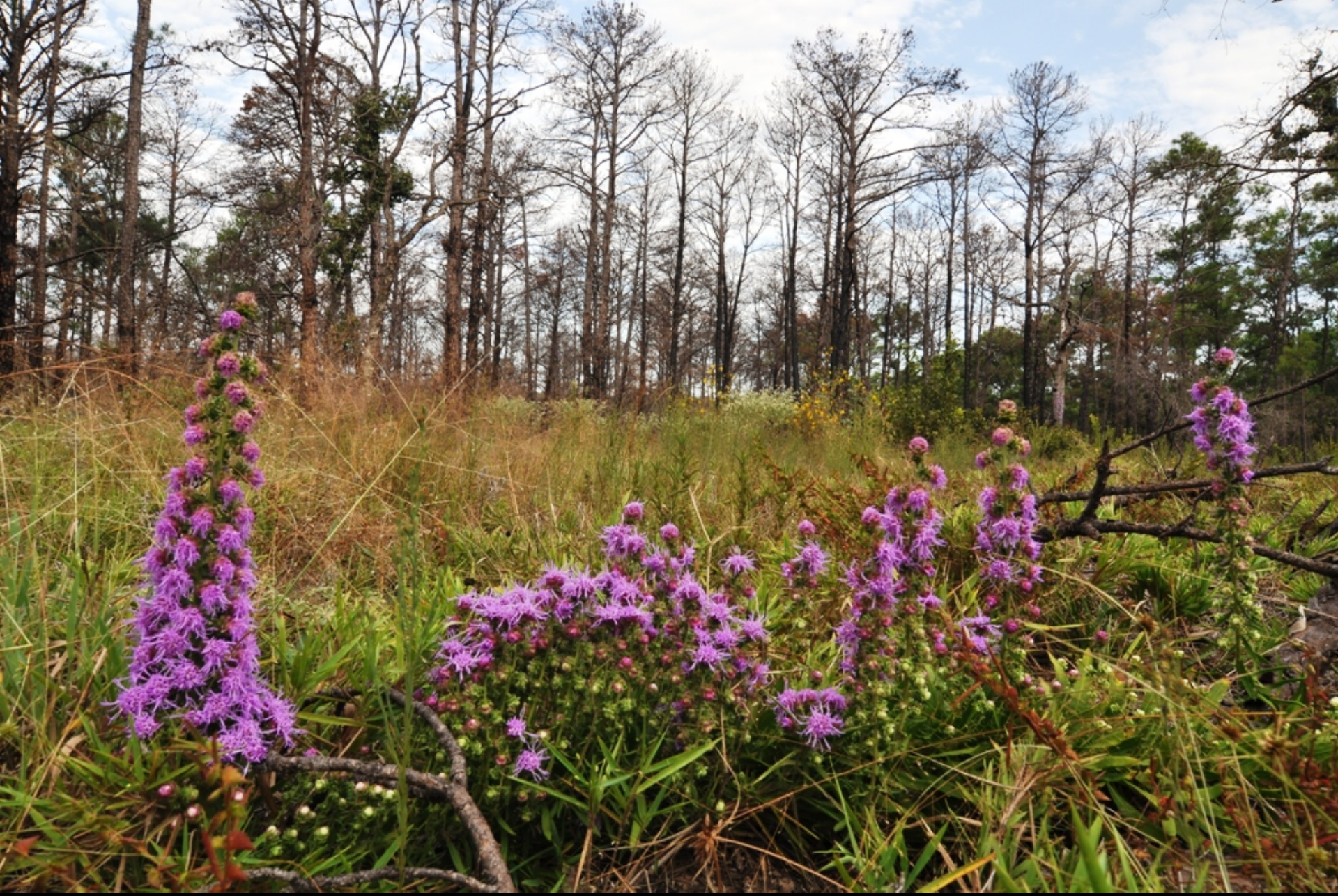


Purple bindweed (*Ipomoea cordatotriloba)*





Yellow sneezeweed (*Helenium amarum* var. *amarum)*

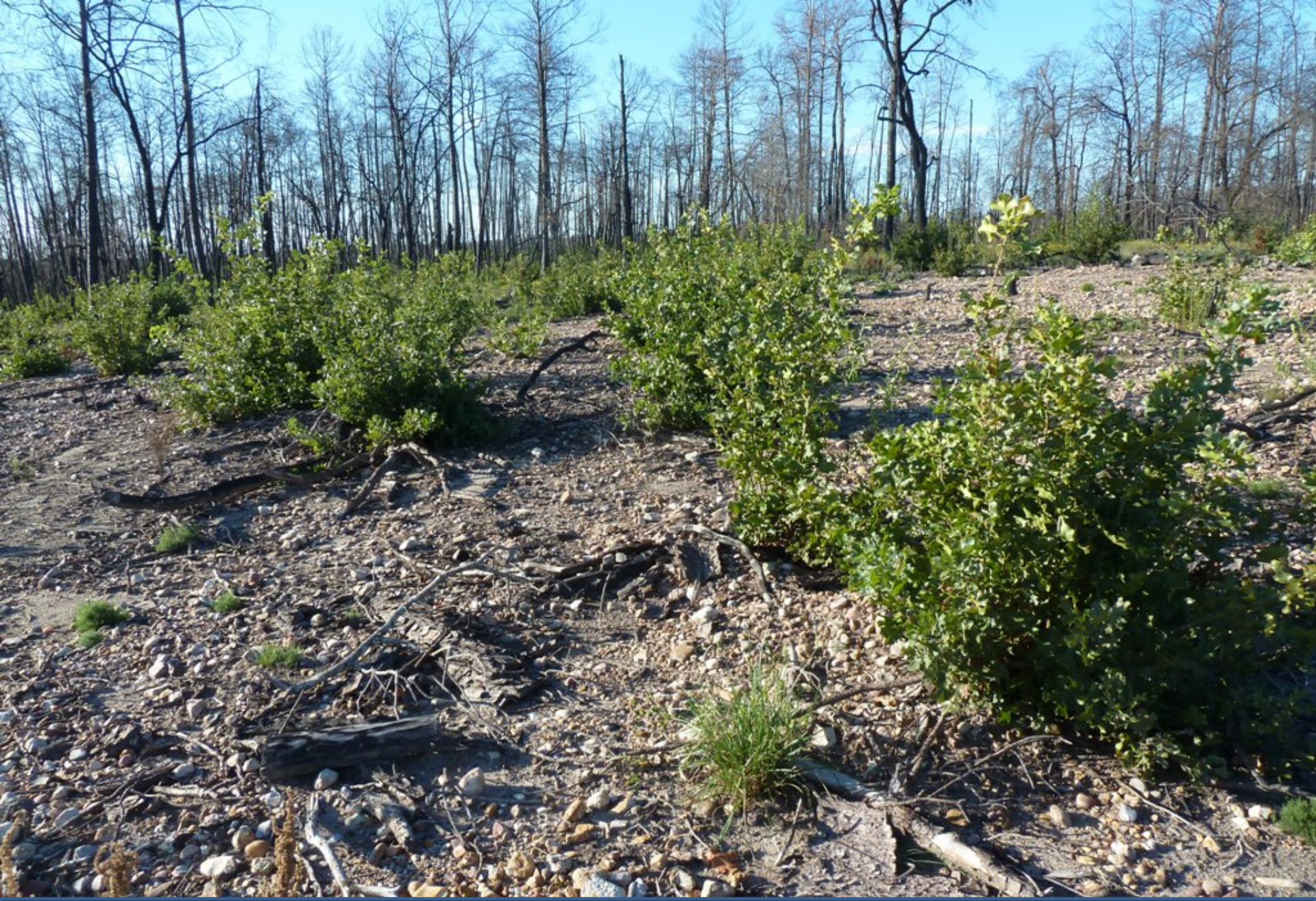


Blazing Star (*Liatris* spp.)

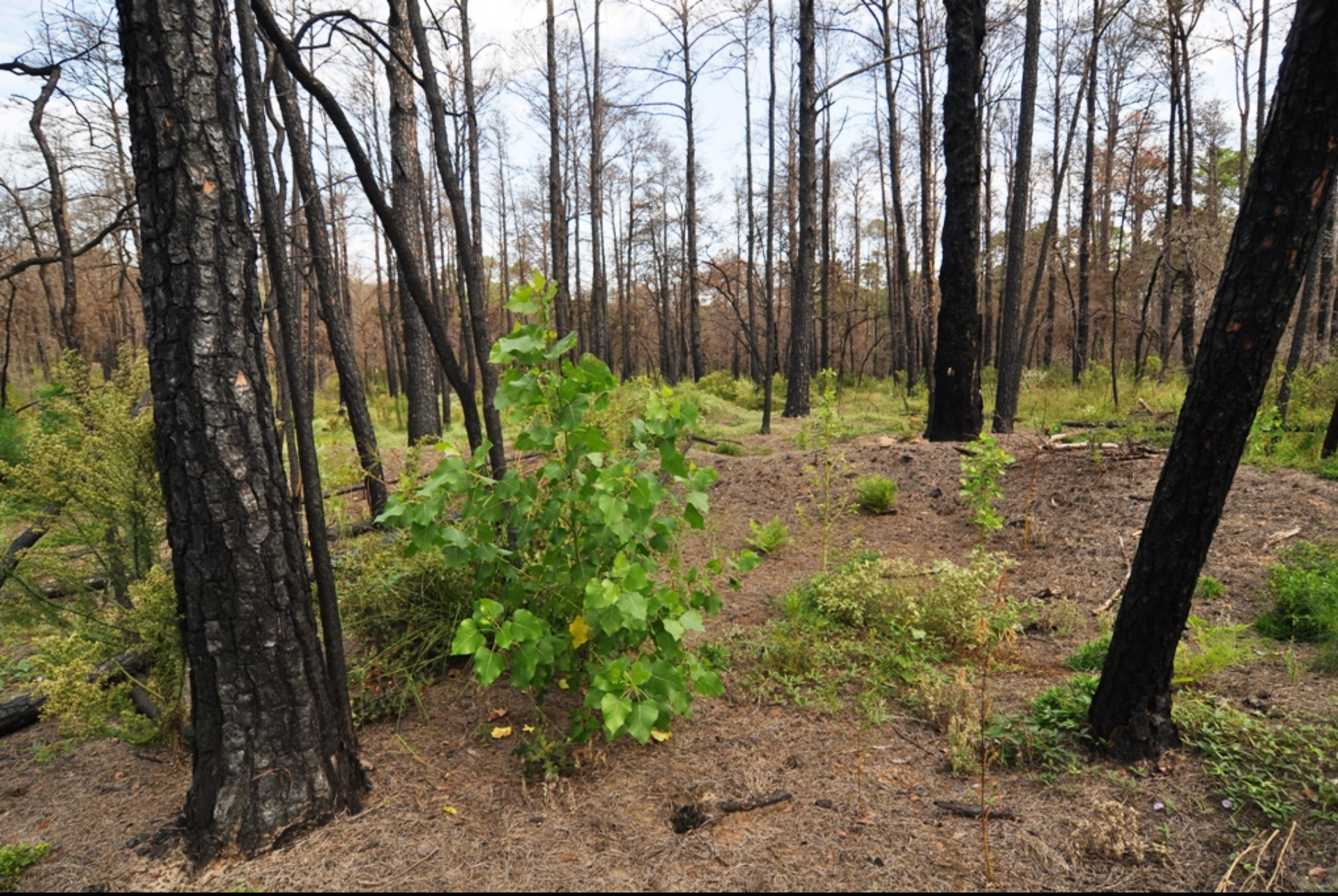
Pinkscale Blazing Star, *Liatris elegans* var. *carizzana*

Wildflowers attract butterflies.

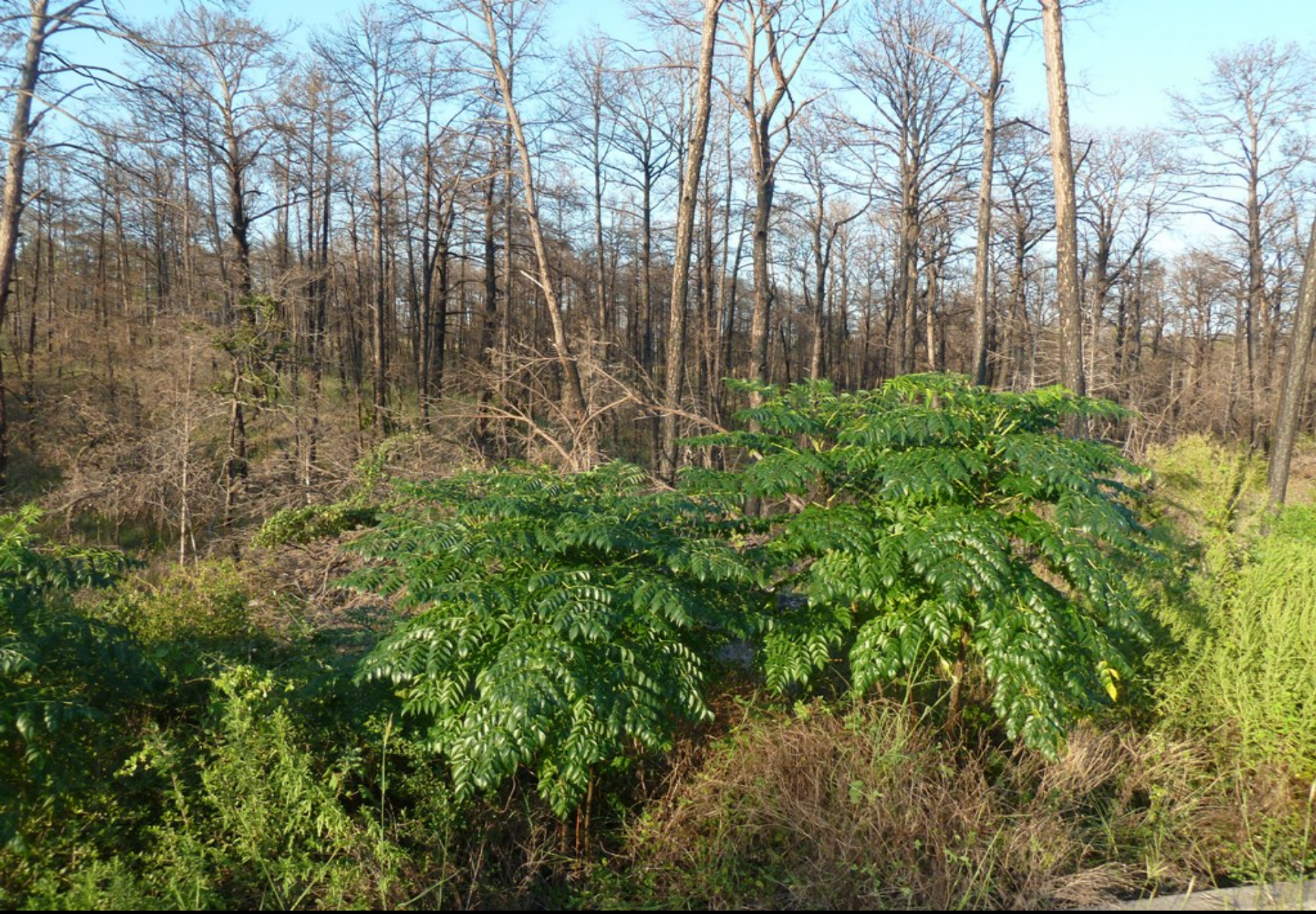
Eastern tiger swallowtail



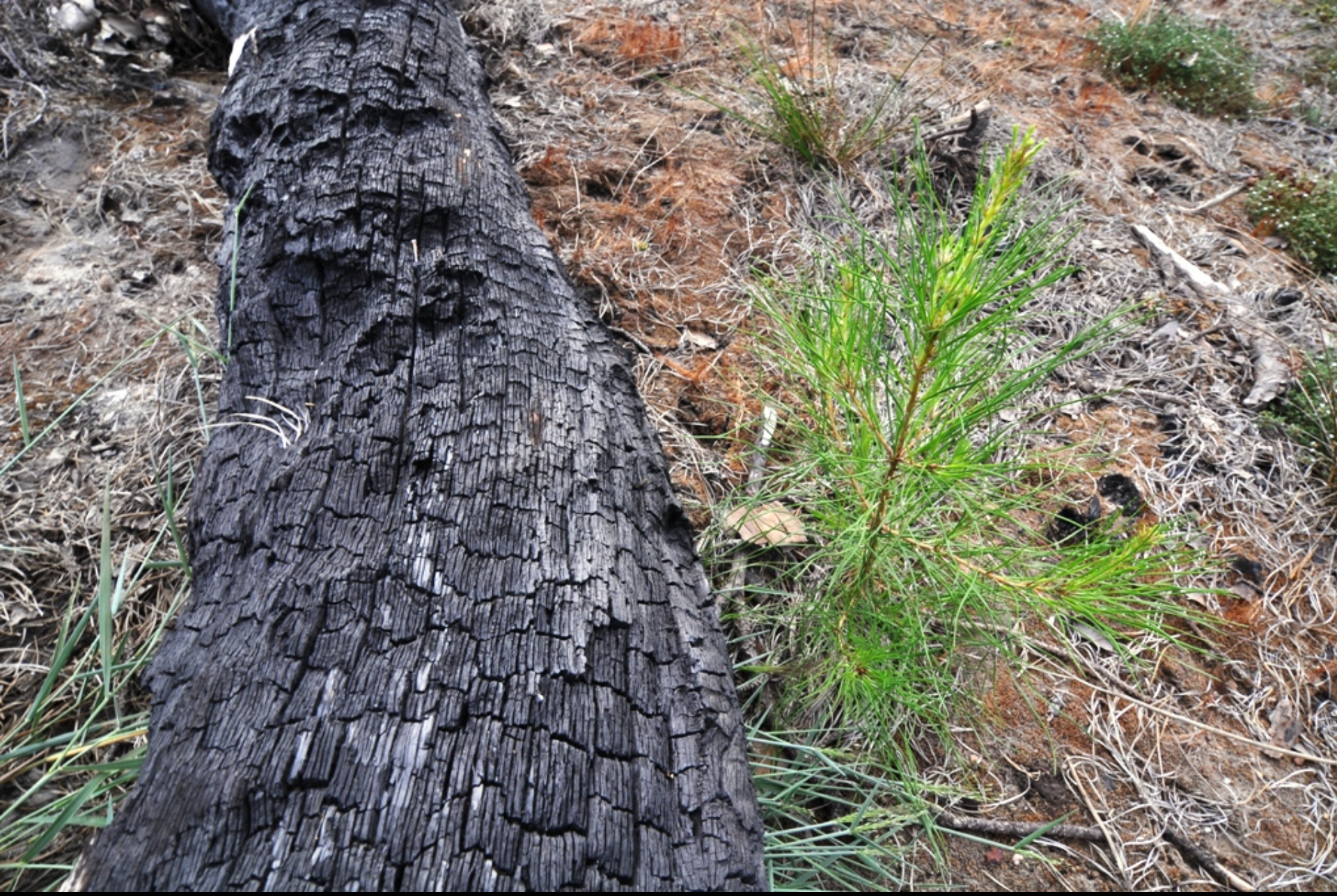
Post oaks have sprouted from stumps.



Hardwood saplings of various species can be seen in some areas (*Populus* spp.).

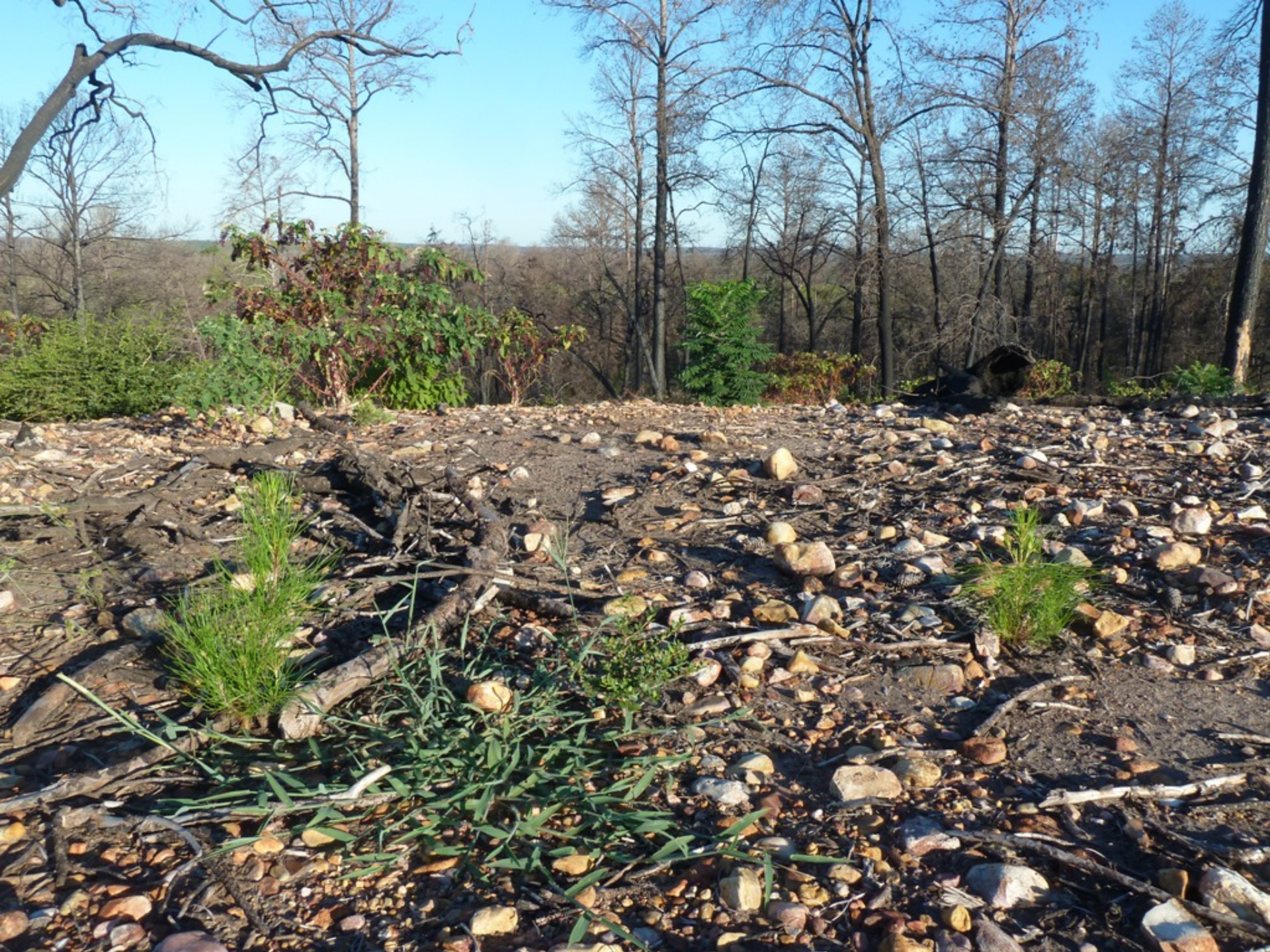


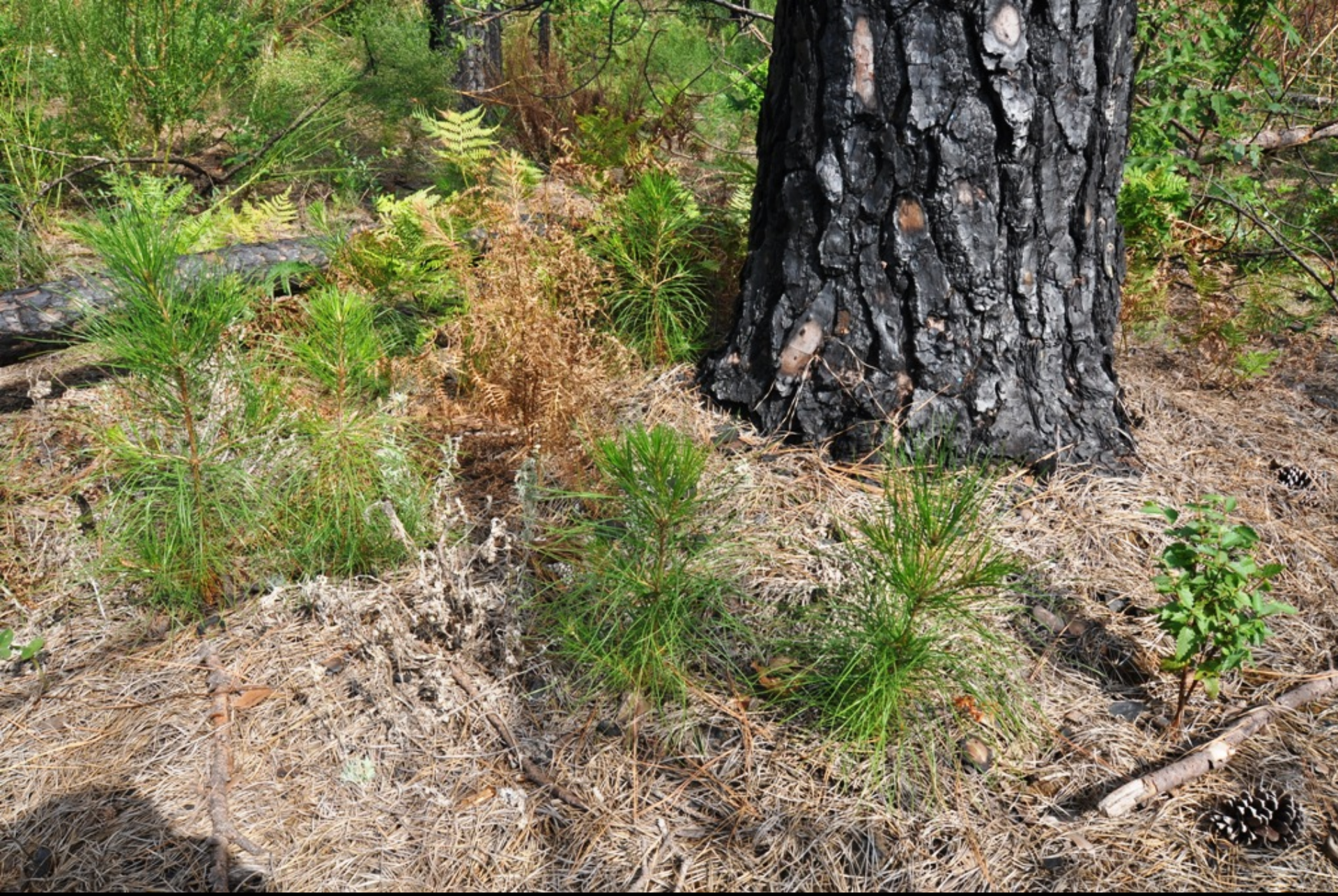
Unfortunately, Chinaberry (*Melia azedarach*) , an invasive plant, also is showing up.

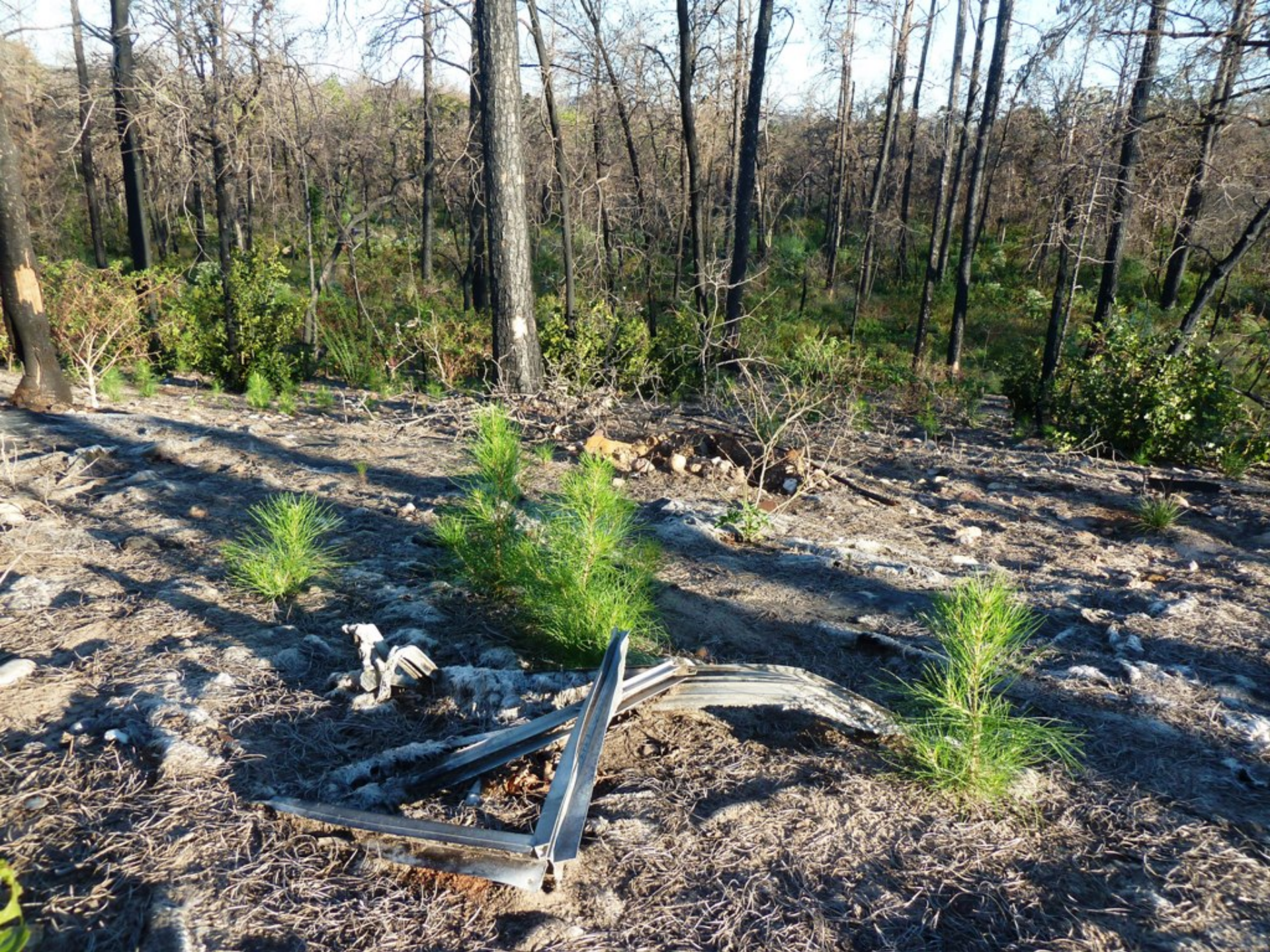


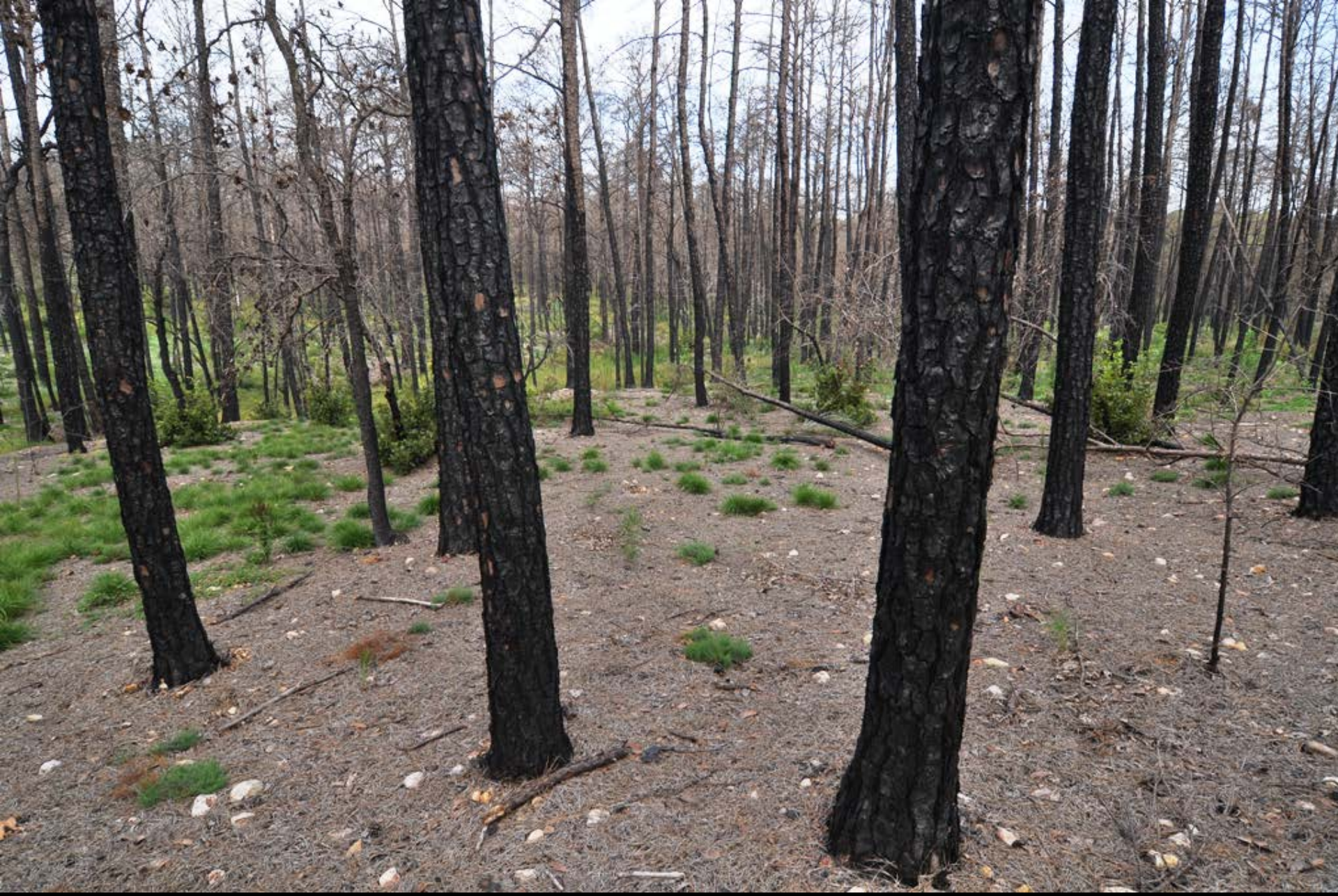
Good news! Loblolly pines are regenerating in areas where some parent trees survived.

Loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*)

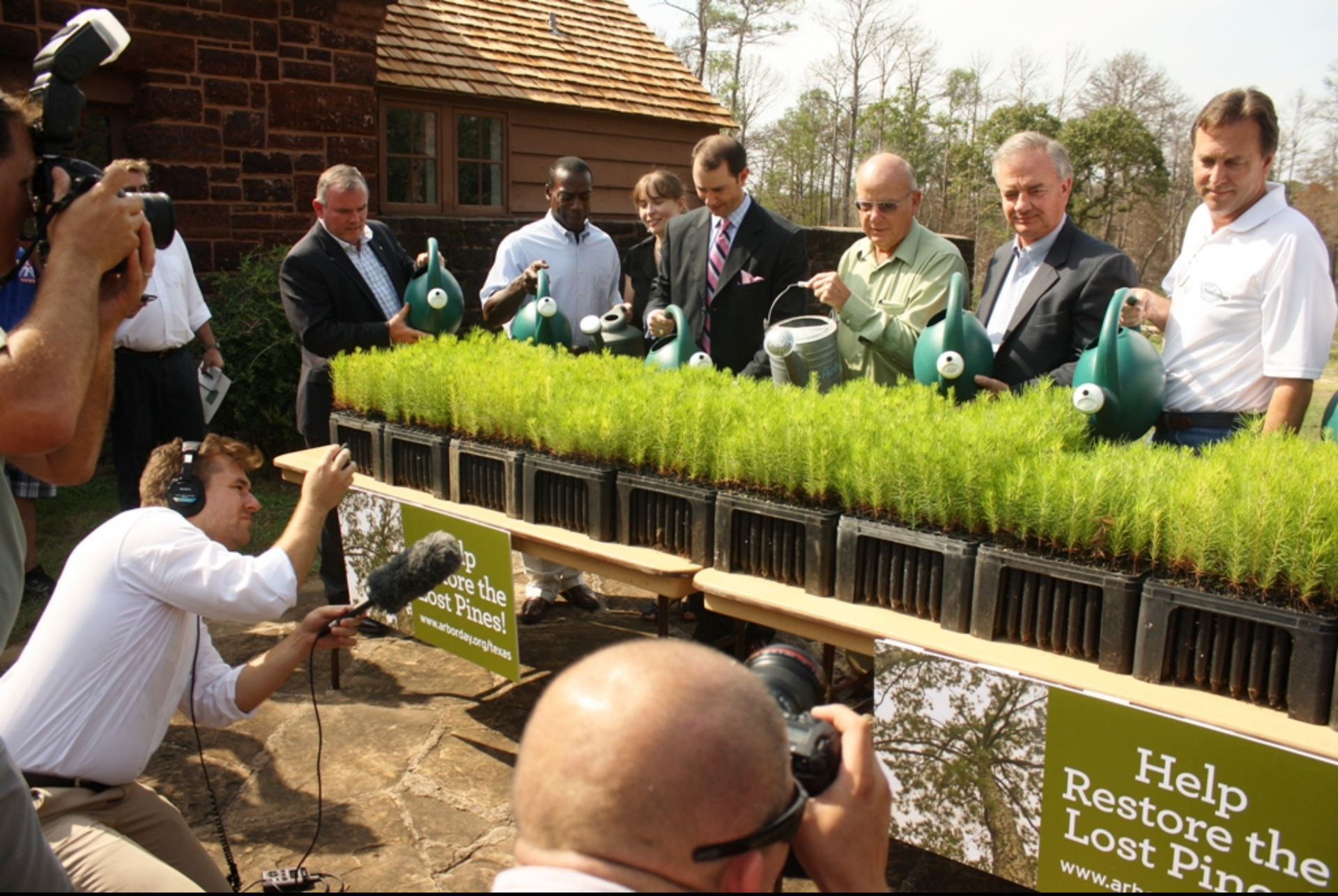




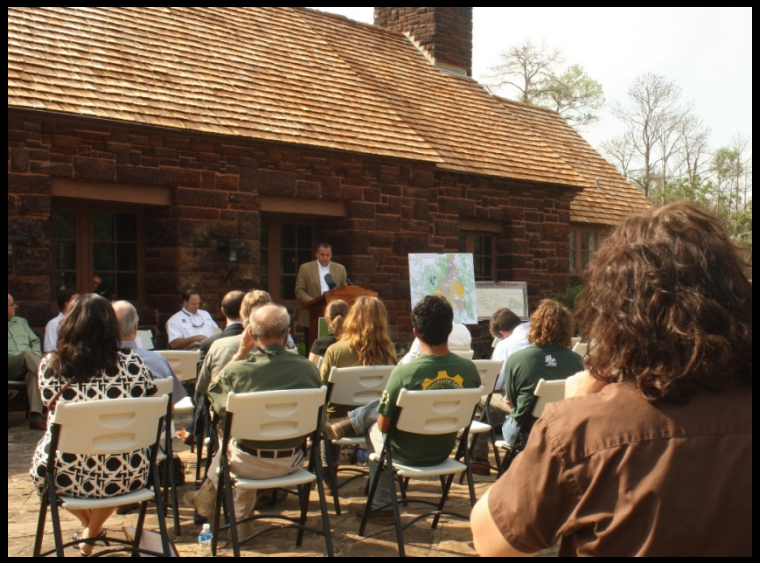




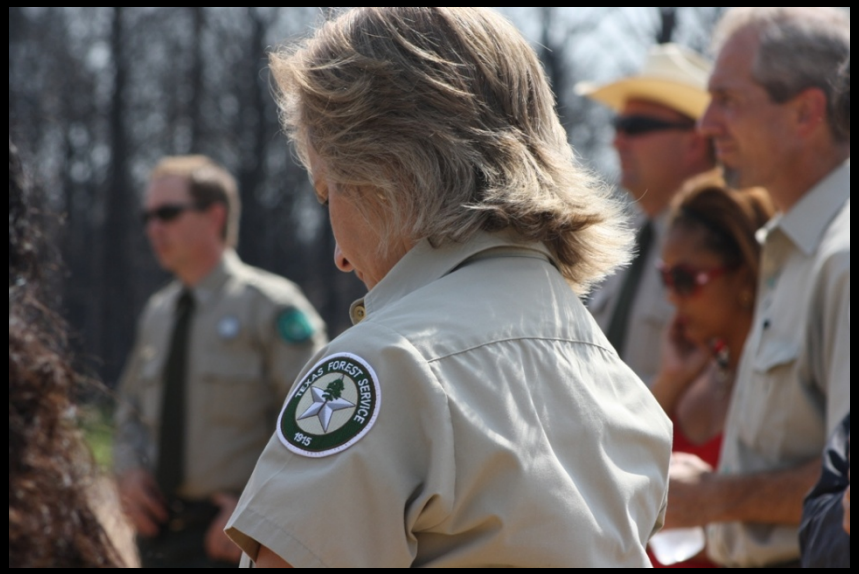
In areas with no pine survival, restoration will require planting thousands of native pine seedlings produced from seeds collected prior to the fire.



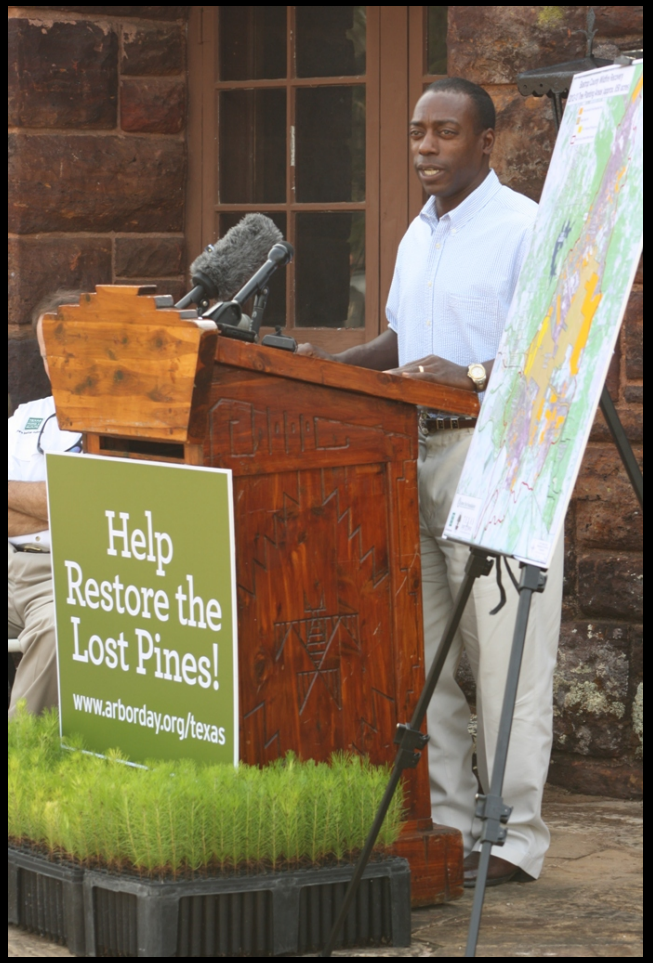
The Lost Pines Forest Recovery Campaign proposes to plant 4 million trees on 16,000 acres.



Arbor Day Foundation

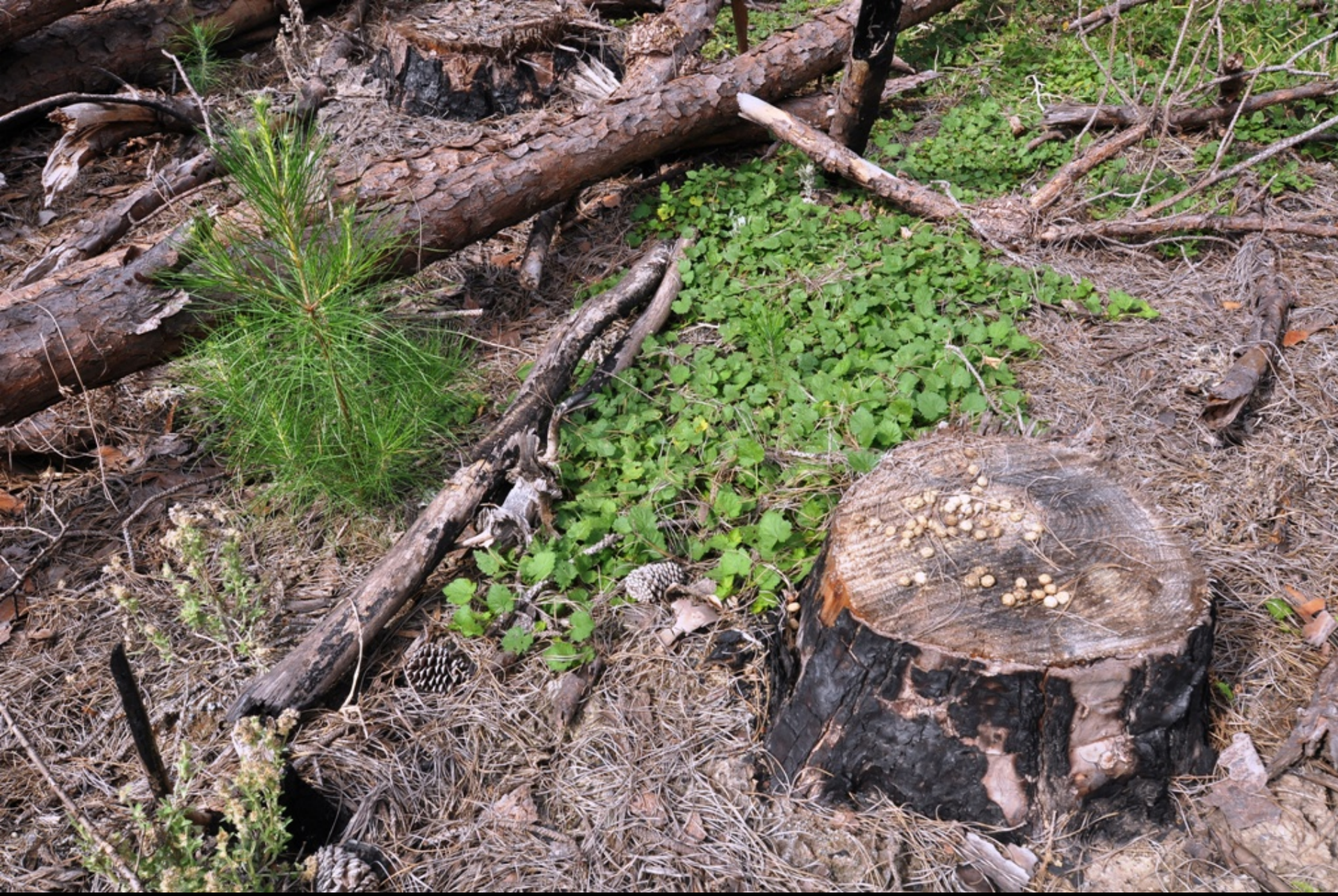


Texas A&M Forest Service

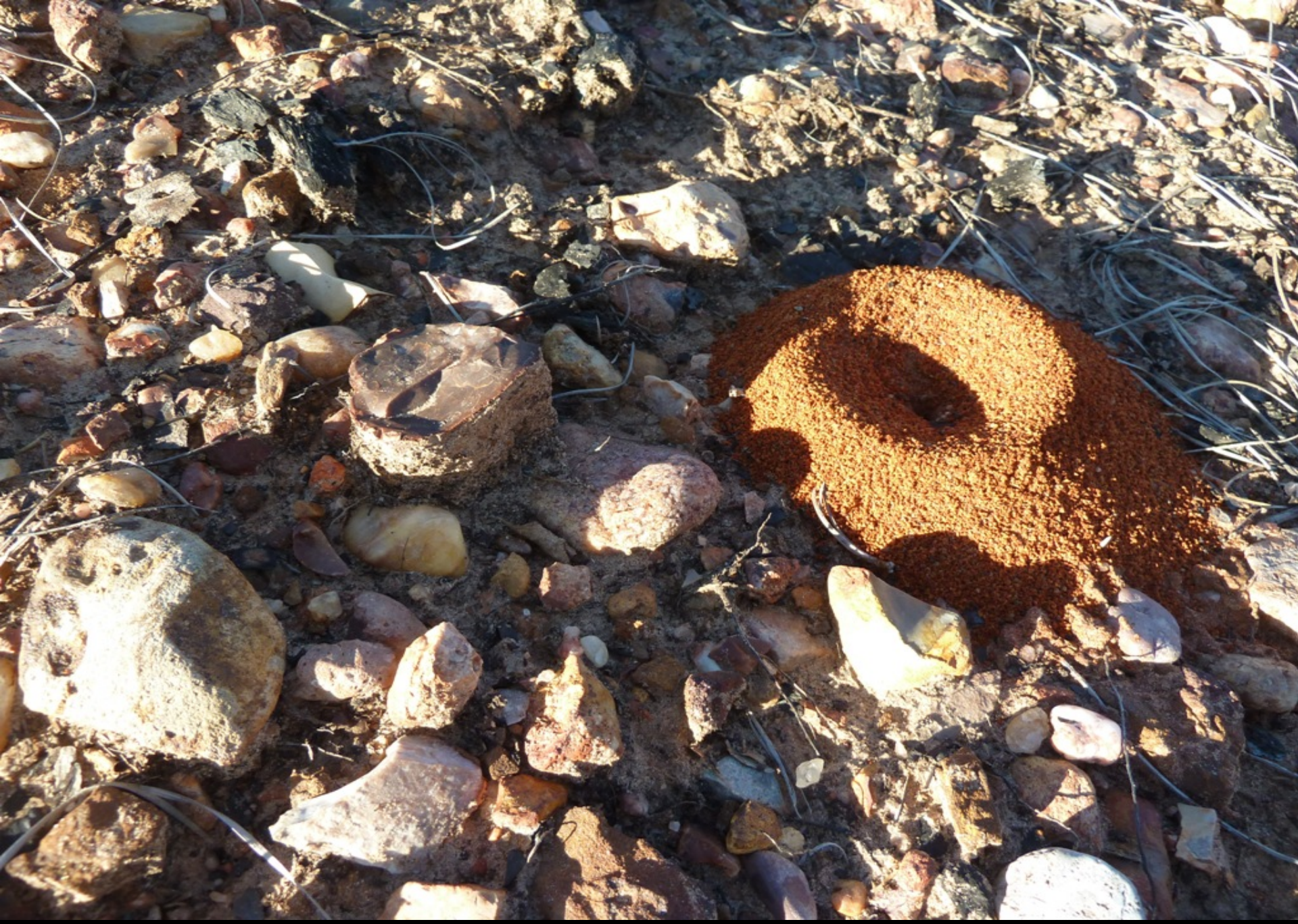


Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Partners in the $4 million Recovery Campaign at initiation ceremony on August 28, 2012



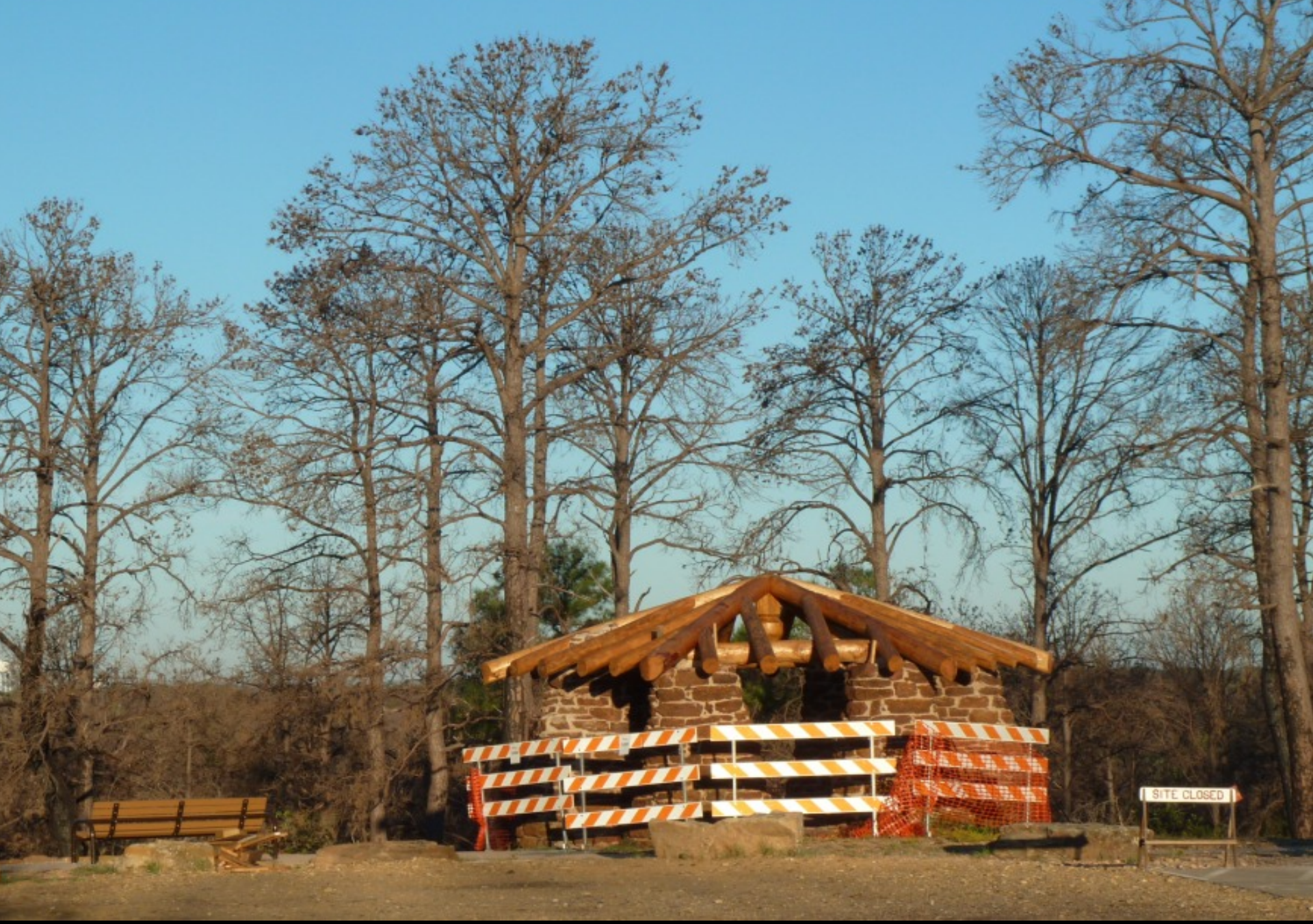
Meanwhile, wildlife has returned to the park.



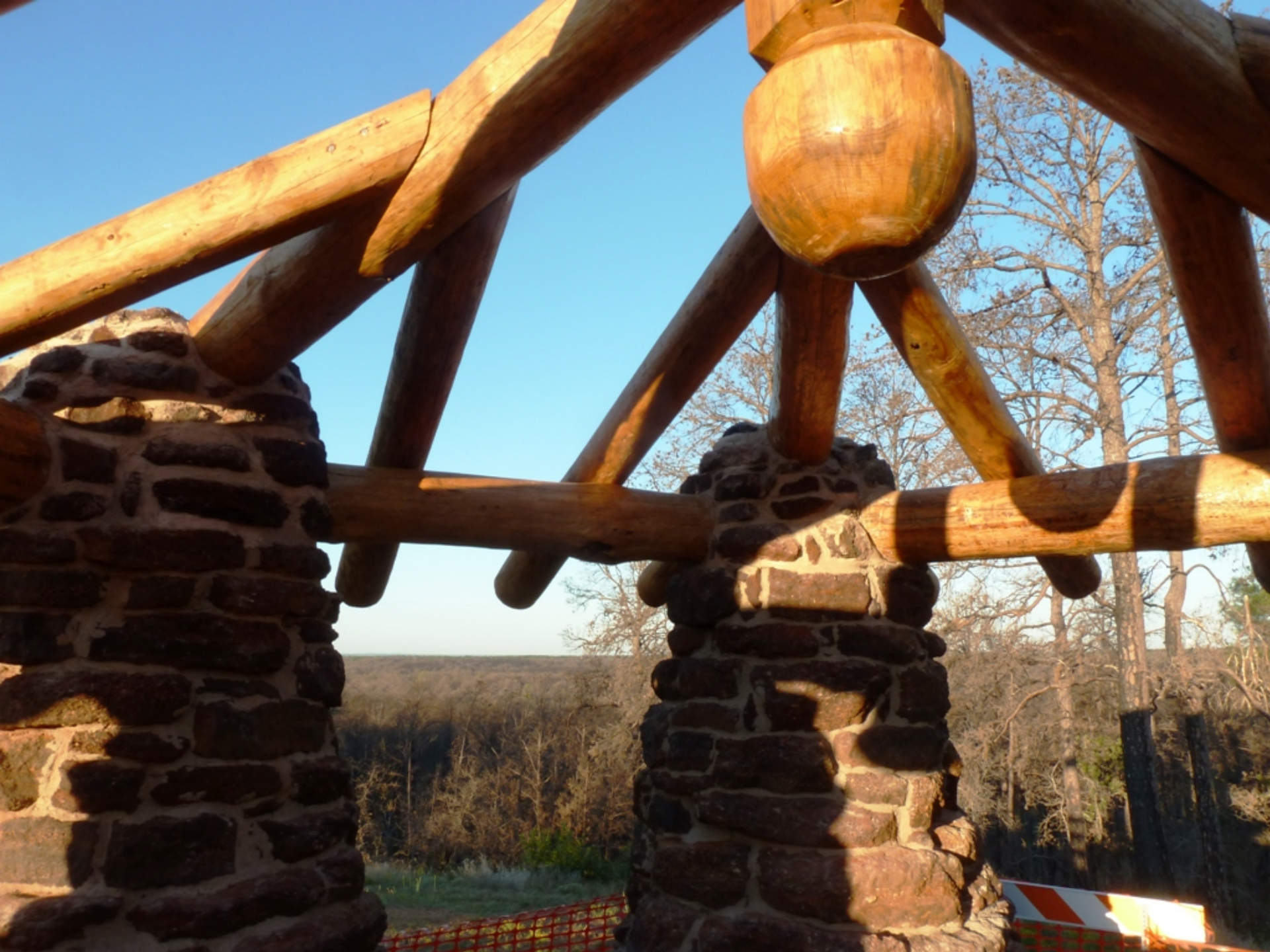
Ants and other soil-inhabiting insects survived.

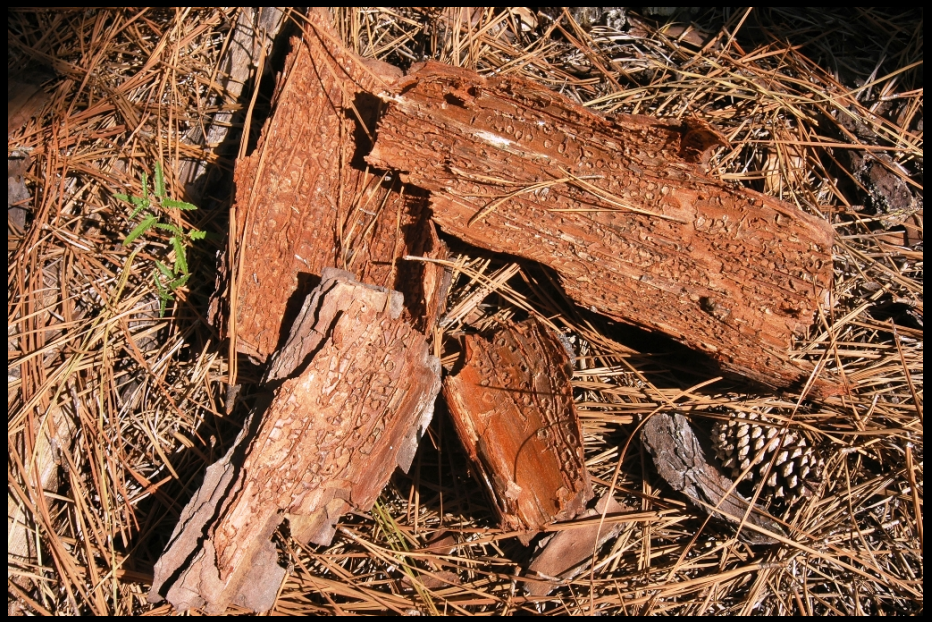
Status of the endangered Houston Toad (*Bufo houstonensis)* remains uncertain.
(Photographer unknown)

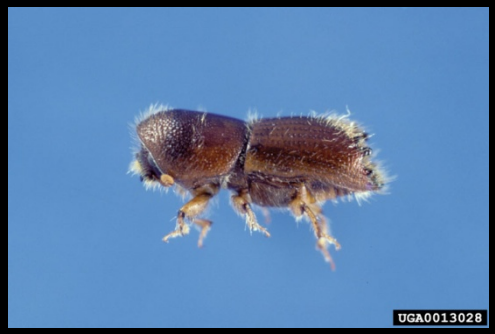
Most hiking trails in the park have been reopened.



Scenic overlook shelter on Hwy 1A gets a new roof.

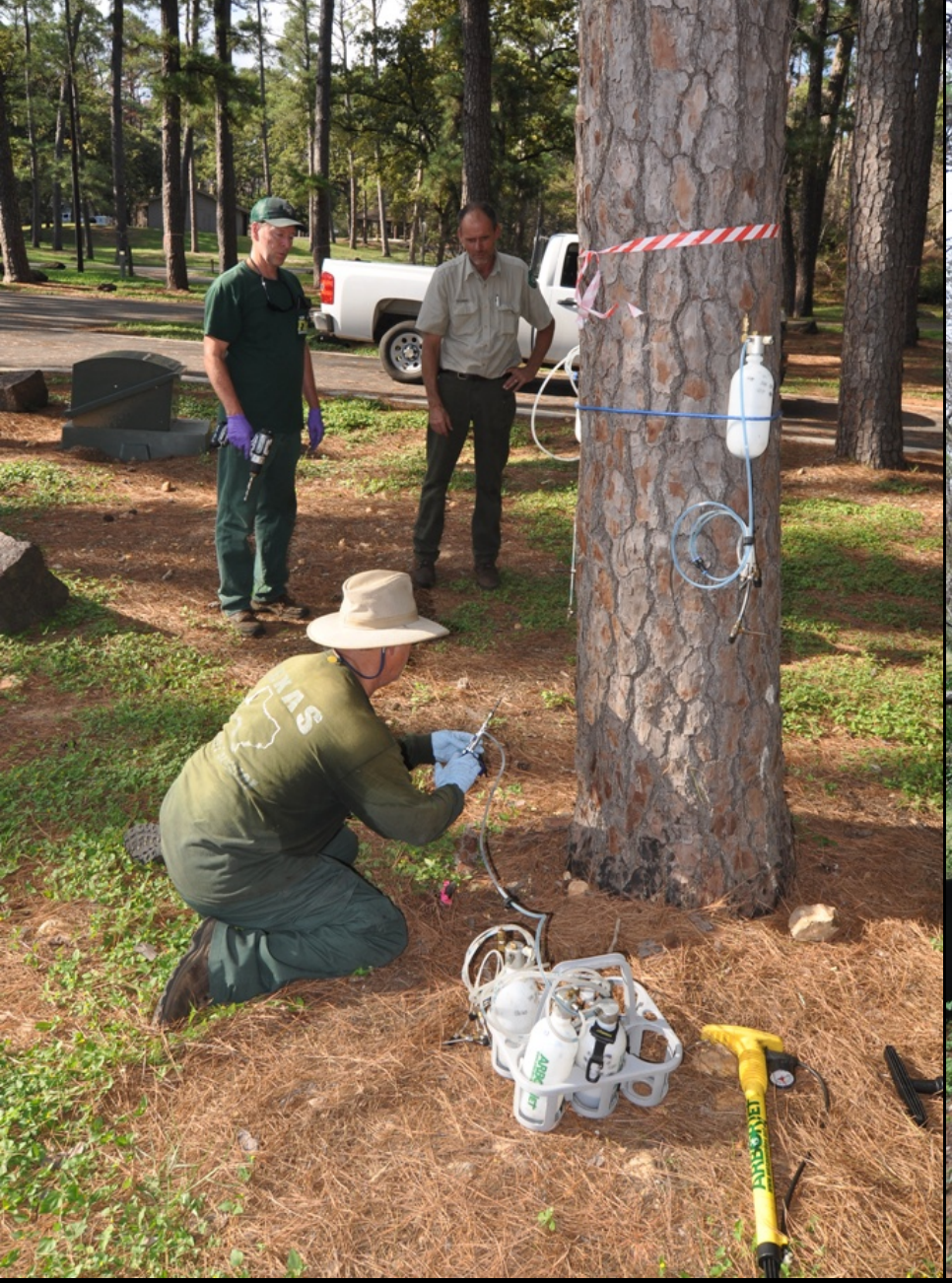




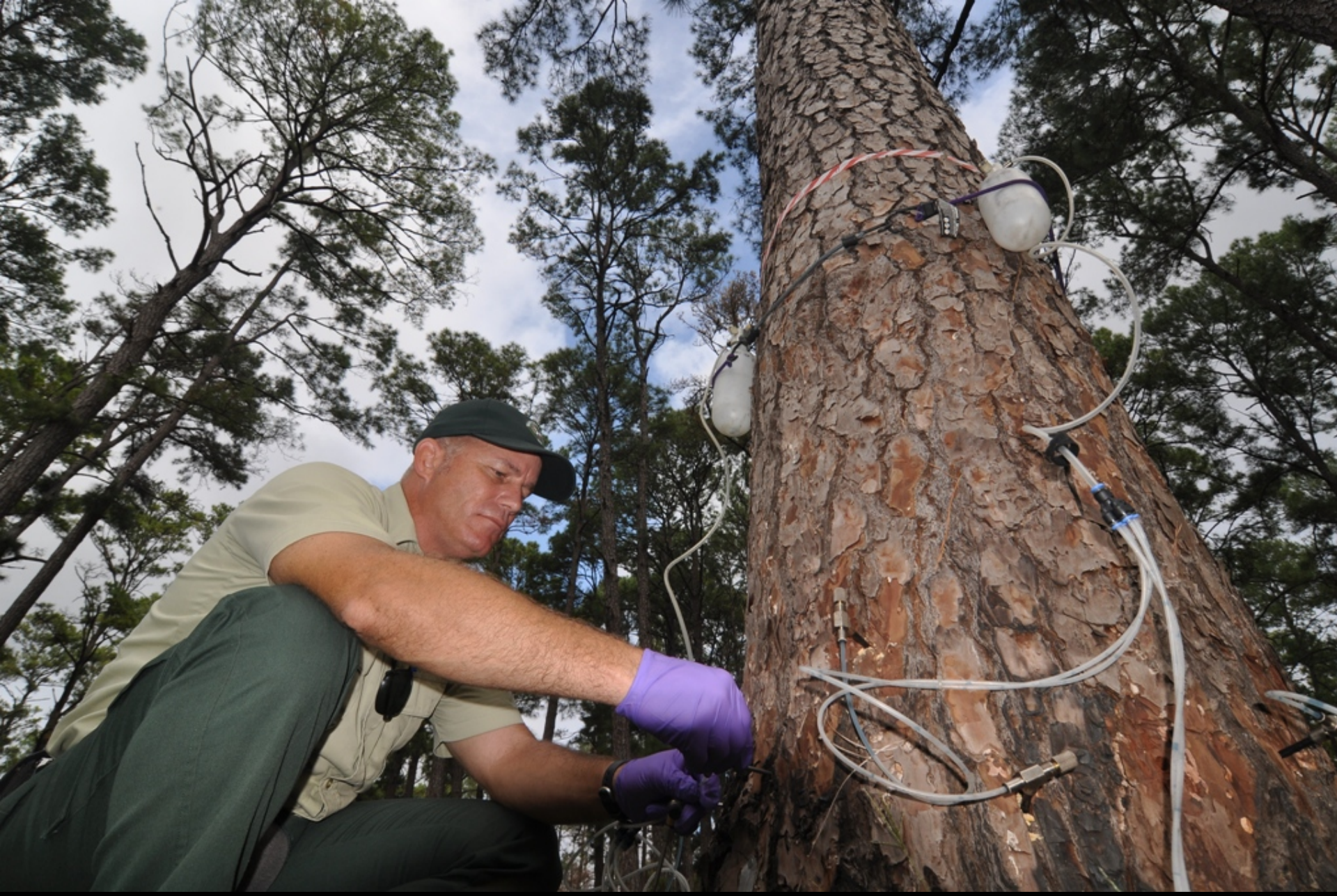


Pines are still being lost to *Ips* bark beetles, impacting park campgrounds.

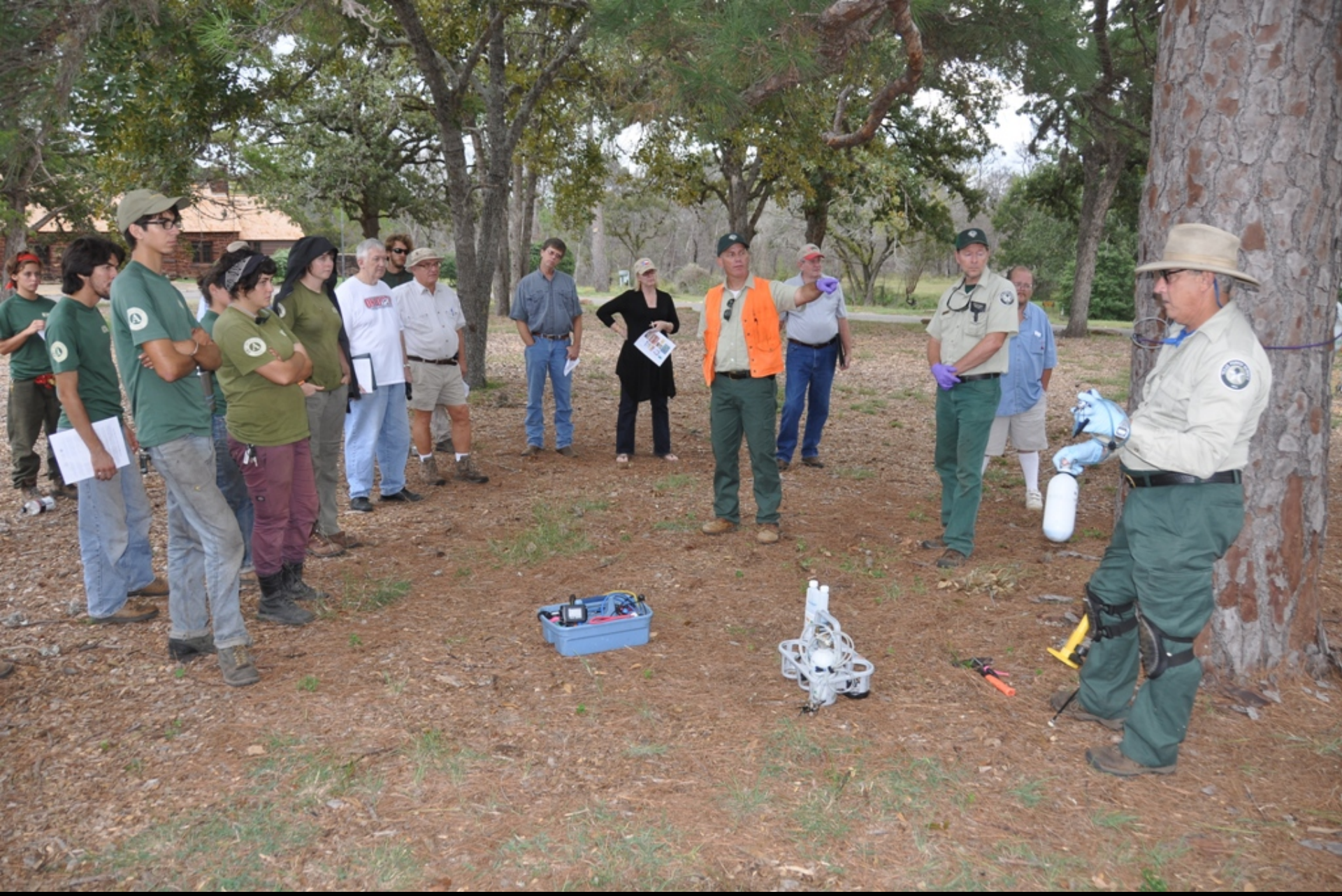
September 2012



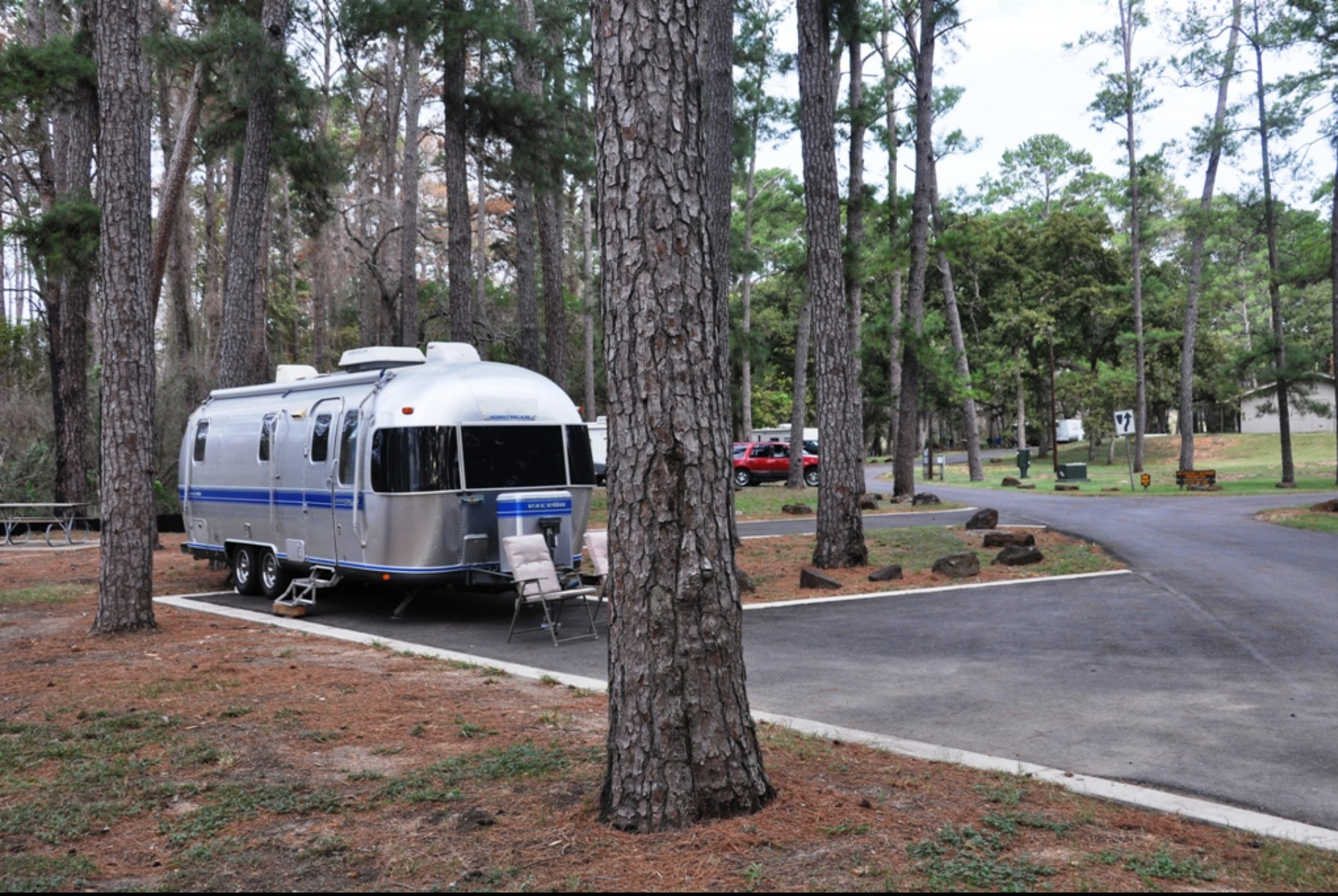
To protect valuable shade trees from engraver beetle attacks,70 pines were injected with a systemic insecticide at Copperas Creek Campground in October, 2012.



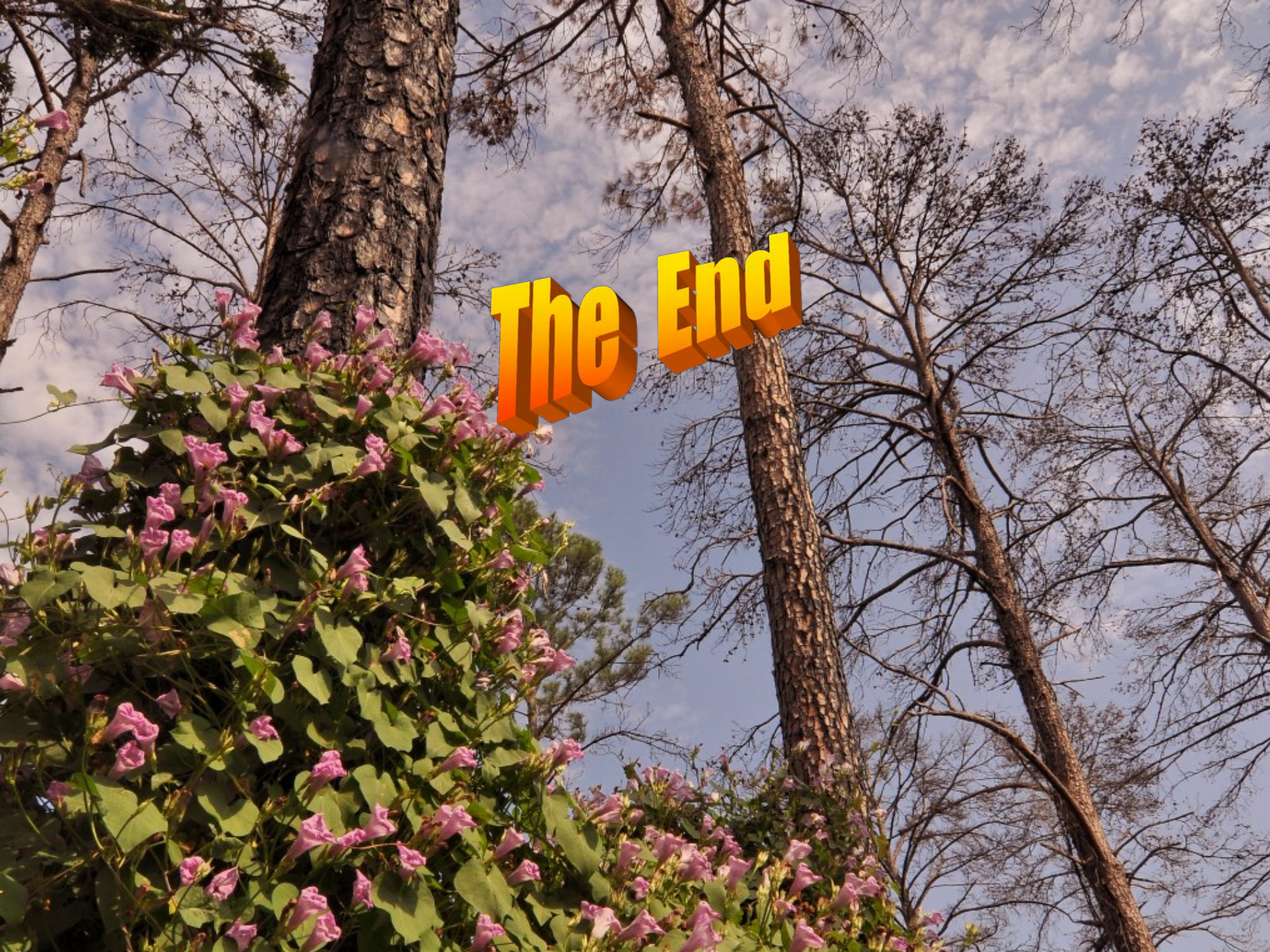
TFS entomologist Dr. Don Grosman developed the insecticide to prevent bark beetle attacks.

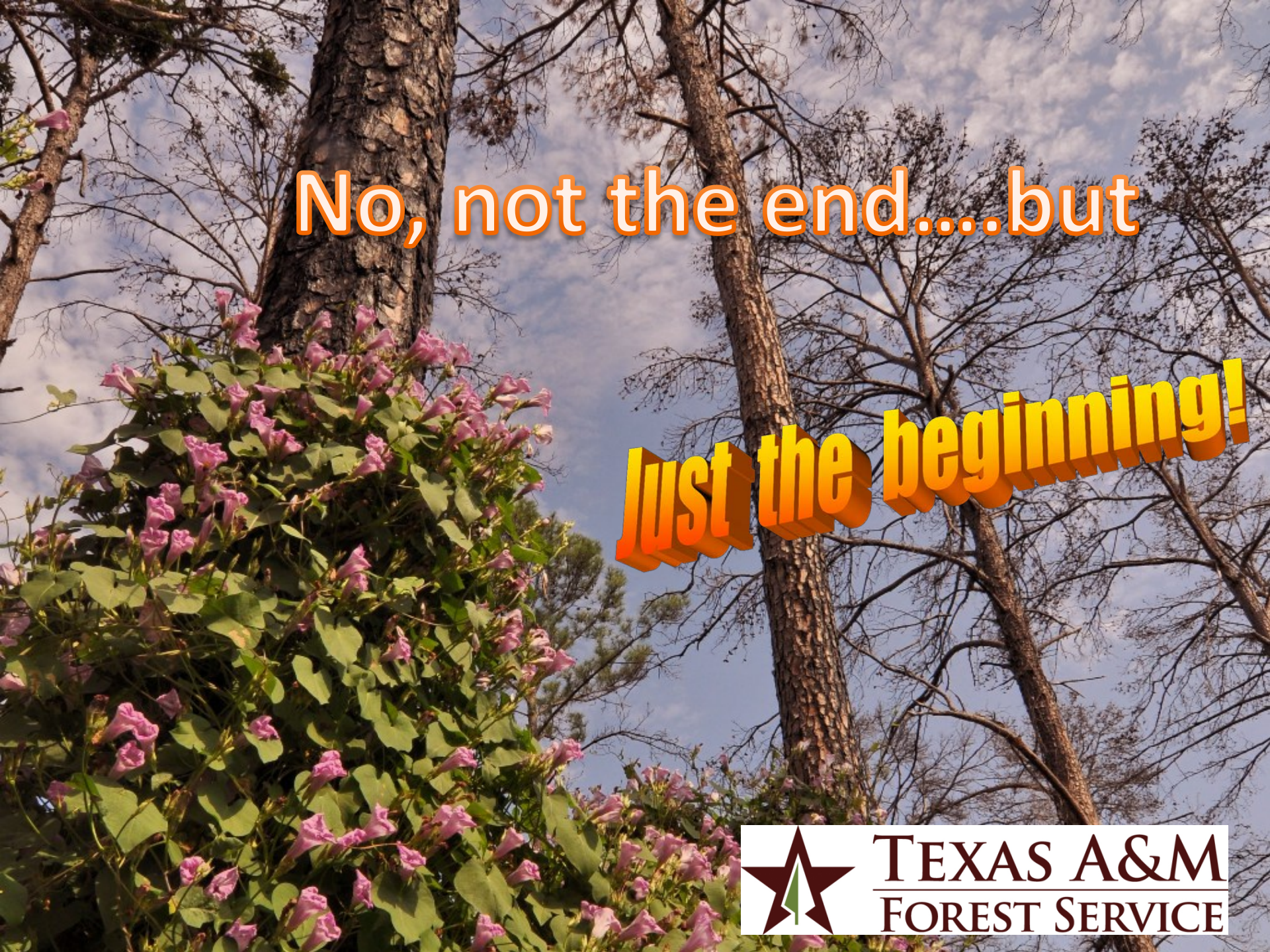


On October 11, 2012, TFS hosted a public demonstration of the injection technology at Bastrop State Park.



Tourists are returning.


The End


No, not the end….but
Just the beginning!
TEXAS A&M
FOREST SERVICE