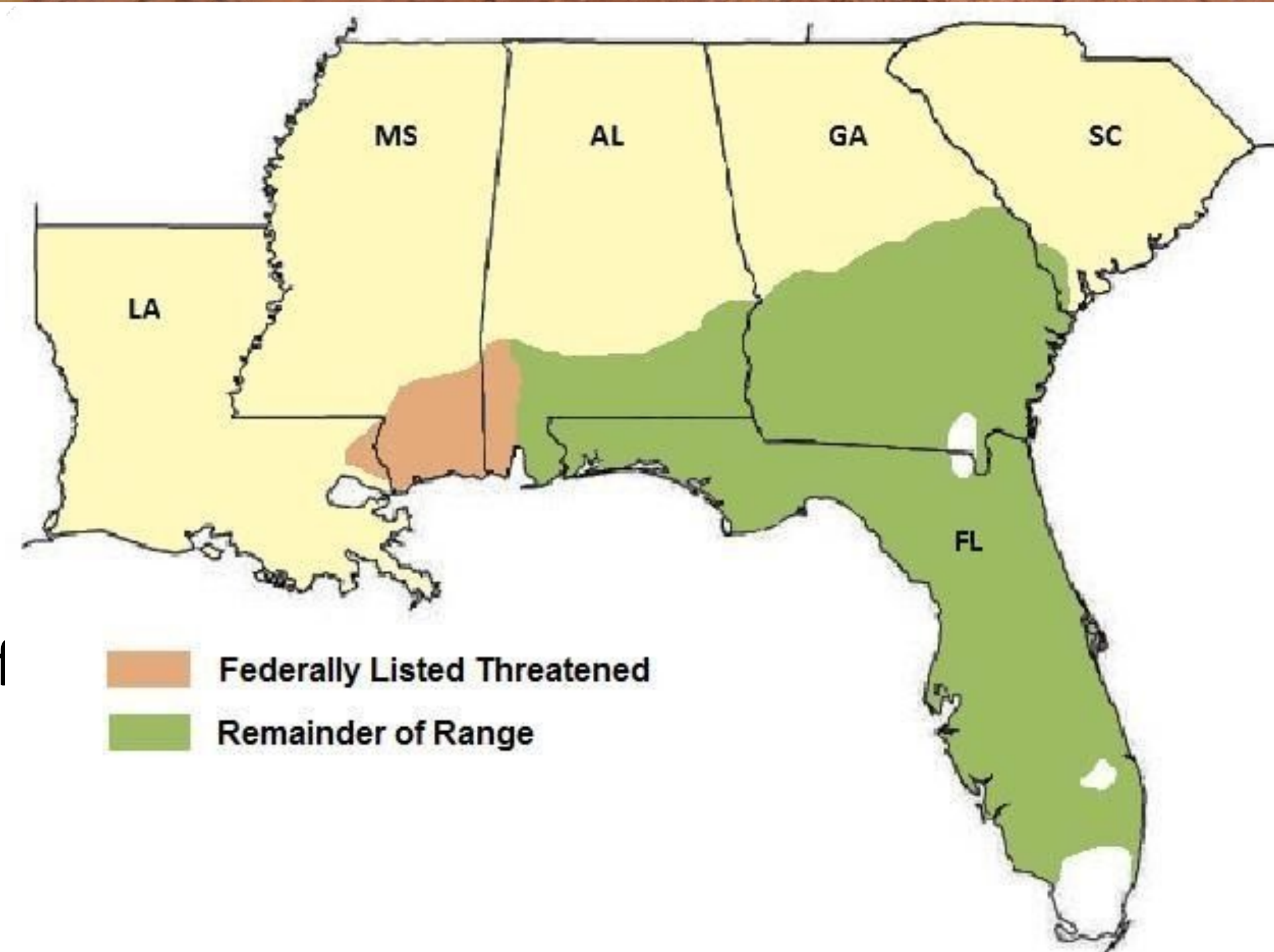


Effects of Natural Area Site Characteristics on Resident Gopher Tortoise Populations

About Me

- South African born with a natural love of wildlife and the environment.
- Work history in equine training, dog/cat veterinary medicine, sea turtle rehabilitation, and zoo keeping of endangered species (parrots, native Florida bird, small monkeys, and antelope).
- Finished B.S. as adult in 2022 at Lynn University. Major in Biology, minor in Environmental Science & Policy.
- Upon finishing M.S. will be looking for a career in conservation research.
- In my spare time I enjoy spending time with my 2 small children and husband.

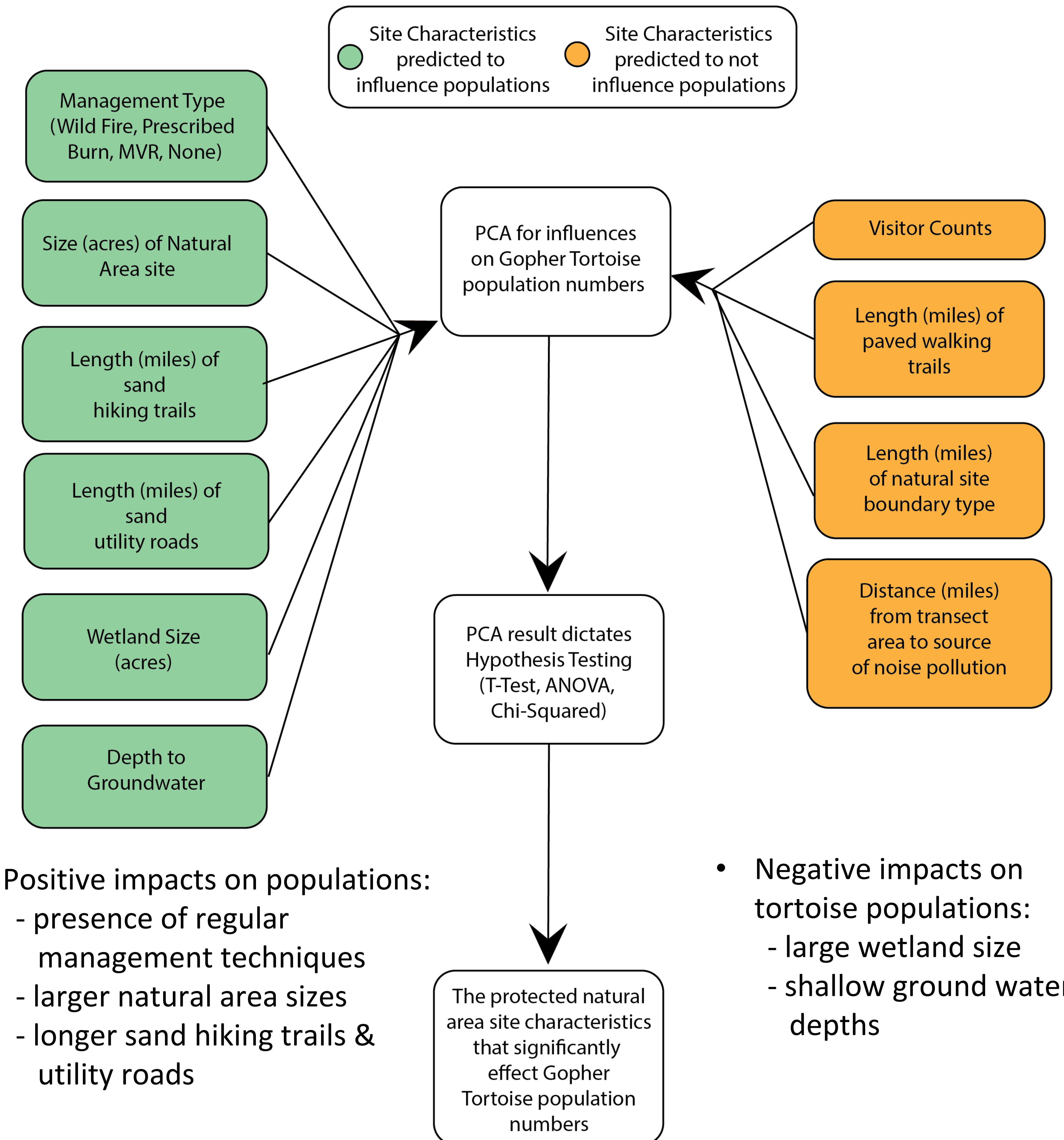
Introduction



- The gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) is a threatened species native to the Southeast region of the United States.^{1,2,4}
- It is a keystone species, meaning it supports the survival and wellbeing of over 350 other species.⁴
- Dramatic loss of habitat has restricted many gopher tortoise populations to living in protected natural area sites.^{1, 2, 3, 5}
- Protected natural area sites have varying characteristics and are heavily managed by site managers using different management techniques.
- How are these different site characteristics and management techniques effecting the gopher tortoise populations that live within them?

Methods & Predicted Results

Figure 1 (below): Conceptual model shows the research plan along with predicted results.



- Positive impacts on populations:
 - presence of regular management techniques
 - larger natural area sizes
 - longer sand hiking trails & utility roads
- Negative impacts on tortoise populations:
 - large wetland size
 - shallow ground water depths
- The results of this study will aid in Gopher Tortoise conservation by informing on characteristics for future acquisition of protected natural area sites and best practices for natural area management.

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