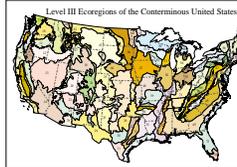
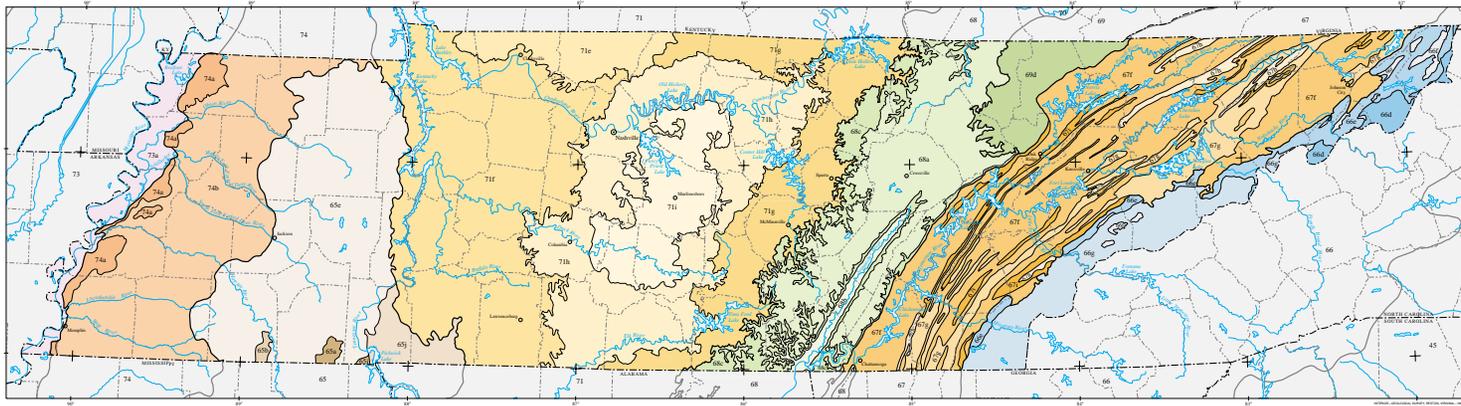


# Ecoregions of Tennessee



- |   |   |                                 |
|---|---|---------------------------------|
| 65 Southeastern Plains                    | 67 Ridge and Valley   | 69 Central Appalachians         |
| 65a Blackland Prairie                     | 67a Southern Limestone Dolomite Valleys and Low Rolling Hills | 69a Cumberland Appalachians     |
| 65b Flatwoods/Alluvial Prairie Margins    | 67b Southern Shale Valleys                                    | 71 Interior Plateau             |
| 65c Southern Shales and Hills             | 67c Southern Sandstone Ridges                                 | 71a Western Pennsylvanian Karst |
| 65d Fall Line Hills                       | 67d Southern Dissected Ridges and Knobs                       | 71b Western Highland Rim        |
| 65e Transition Hills                      |   | 71c Eastern Highland Rim        |
| 66 Blue Ridge Mountains                   |   | 71d Outer Nashville Basin       |
| 66a Southern Igneous Ridges and Mountains |   | 71e Inner Nashville Basin       |
| 66b Southern Sandstone Ridges             |   |                                 |
| 66c Limestone Valleys and Coves           |   |                                 |
| 66d Southern Metasedimentary Mountains    |   |                                 |
|   | 68 Southwestern Appalachians                                  |                                 |
|   | 68a Cumberland Plateau  |                                 |
|   | 68b Sequatchie Valley   |                                 |
|   | 68c Plateau Escarpment  |                                 |

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|---|------------------------------------|
| 73 Mississippi Alluvial Plain           | 74 Mississippi Valley Loess Plains |
| 73a Northern Mississippi Alluvial Plain | 74a Bluff Hills                    |
|   | 74b Loess Plains                   |

Ecoregion designations are general similarity in ecosystem and in the type, quality, and quantity of environmental resources; they are designed to serve as a spatial framework for the research, assessment, monitoring, and management of ecosystems and resources. Ecoregions are directly comparable to the major units of state agencies, such as the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC), for selecting regional stream reference sites and identifying high-quality waters, developing ecoregion-specific chemical and biological water quality criteria and standards, and augmenting TDEC's watershed management program. Ecoregion frameworks are also critical to integrated ecosystem management, an ambitious goal of most federal and state resource management agencies.

The approach used to compile this map is based on the premise that ecological regions can be identified through the analysis of the patterns and the composition of biotic and abiotic phenomena that reflect differences in ecosystem quality and integrity (Wilcox 1980; Omernik 1987, 1995). These phenomena include geology, physiography, vegetation, climate, soils, land use, wildlife, and hydrology. The relative importance of each characteristic varies from one ecological region to another regardless of the hierarchical level. A Biome natural historical scheme has been adopted for different levels of ecological region. Level I is the coarsest level, dividing North America into 10 ecological regions, with Level II dividing the regions into 47 ecoregions. At the third level, the continental United States contains 97 ecoregions (United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) 1997). Level IV is a further subdivision of Level III ecoregions, and the number of units increases to 145 ecoregions as given in Omernik (1995), Gillett et al. (1994, 1997), and Gallatin et al. (1999).

This Level III and IV ecoregion map was compiled as a result of a 2,500-hour effort involving an adaptation and subdivision of the Level III ecoregions that were originally compiled as a result of USEPA (1996; Omernik 1997). The project is part of a collaborative project primarily between the USGS National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory, Corvallis, OR, and TDEC, Division of Water Pollution Control. Collaborations and consultations also occurred with the United States Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the United States Department of Agriculture - Forest Service (USFS), USEPA Region IV, and with other state and Tennessee agencies.

This project is associated with an interagency effort to develop a common framework of ecological regions. Reaching this objective requires recognition of the differences in the conceptual approach and nomenclature methodologies that have been used to develop the most commonly used existing ecoregion-type frameworks, including those developed by the USFS (Bridley et al. 1994), the USEPA (Omernik 1987, 1995), and the NRCS (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1981). As each of these frameworks is further developed, it is important to identify the differences between them. Regional collaborative projects such as this one in Tennessee, where some agencies can be reached through multiple resource management operations, is a step in the direction of attaining compatibility and consistency in ecoregion frameworks for the entire nation.

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**65. Southeastern Plains**  
This Blue Ridge Mountain ecoregion is characterized by forested soils, woodland, and oak-hickory-pine forests. The Crickston-Tertiary age sands, silts, and clays of the region contrast geologically with the older limestone, chert, and shale found in the Interior Plateau (71). Elevations are generally less than 1,000 feet. The terrain is an ecoregion of low gradient and steady topography.

**65a Blackland Prairie** extends from Mississippi, in a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**65b Flatwoods/Alluvial Prairie Margins** extend south from Mississippi, but the characteristics of this ecoregion extend farther north into Virginia, Mississippi, and Tennessee. In Mississippi and Alabama, this is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**65c Southern Shales and Hills** contain several north-south trending bands of chert and clay formations. Tertiary-age sand, silt, and lignite are to the west, and

claystone occurs over 450 feet, and more rolling topography and more soil than the Loess Plains (74) to the west, where there is increased productivity, generally well-saturated and distinctive floral characteristics for the region. The natural vegetation type is oak-hickory forest, grading into oak-hickory-pine forest to the east.

**65d Fall Line Hills** ecoregion, comprising the Tennessee or Tombigbee Hills in Tennessee and the Fall Line Hills in Alabama, is composed primarily of Ocala-sandstone central plain sandy alluvium. The sand and chert (gray nodules) materials are covered by thin loam topsoils. It is mostly forested, forest of oak-hickory-pine and oaks with 100-200 feet of relief. Elevations in the small Tennessee portion, roughly from Chambers Creek and Pickens Lake in Hamilton County, are 450-600 feet.

**65e Transition Hills** has the highest elevations in Ecoregion 65, and contains characteristics of both the Southeastern Plains and the Interior Plateau (71) ecoregions. Many streams of this transition area flow out down into the Mississippi, Tennessee, and Savannah rivers and may look similar to those of the Interior Plateau (71). Conspicuous eroded glacial deposits of silt, sand, clay, and gravel, however, like the older limestone, chert, and shale. It is a strongly forested region of oak-hickory-pine, with few pine plantations activities associated with pulp and paper operations.

**69. Central Appalachians**  
This ecoregion is characterized by forested soils, woodland, and oak-hickory-pine forests. The Crickston-Tertiary age sands, silts, and clays of the region contrast geologically with the older limestone, chert, and shale found in the Interior Plateau (71). Elevations are generally less than 1,000 feet. The terrain is an ecoregion of low gradient and steady topography.

**69a Cumberland Appalachians** extend south from Mississippi, in a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**69b Southern Shales and Hills** contain several north-south trending bands of chert and clay formations. Tertiary-age sand, silt, and lignite are to the west, and

**66. Blue Ridge Mountains**  
This Blue Ridge Mountain ecoregion is characterized by forested soils, woodland, and oak-hickory-pine forests. The Crickston-Tertiary age sands, silts, and clays of the region contrast geologically with the older limestone, chert, and shale found in the Interior Plateau (71). Elevations are generally less than 1,000 feet. The terrain is an ecoregion of low gradient and steady topography.

**66a Southern Igneous Ridges and Mountains** extend south from Mississippi, in a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**66b Southern Sandstone Ridges** extend south from Mississippi, in a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**66c Limestone Valleys and Coves** extend south from Mississippi, in a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**66d Southern Metasedimentary Mountains** extend south from Mississippi, in a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

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**71. Interior Plateau**  
This ecoregion is characterized by forested soils, woodland, and oak-hickory-pine forests. The Crickston-Tertiary age sands, silts, and clays of the region contrast geologically with the older limestone, chert, and shale found in the Interior Plateau (71). Elevations are generally less than 1,000 feet. The terrain is an ecoregion of low gradient and steady topography.

**71a Western Pennsylvanian Karst** is a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**71b Western Highland Rim** is a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**71c Eastern Highland Rim** is a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**71d Outer Nashville Basin** is a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**71e Inner Nashville Basin** is a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**67. Ridge and Valley**  
This ecoregion is characterized by forested soils, woodland, and oak-hickory-pine forests. The Crickston-Tertiary age sands, silts, and clays of the region contrast geologically with the older limestone, chert, and shale found in the Interior Plateau (71). Elevations are generally less than 1,000 feet. The terrain is an ecoregion of low gradient and steady topography.

**67a Southern Limestone Dolomite Valleys and Low Rolling Hills** extend south from Mississippi, in a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**67b Southern Shale Valleys** extend south from Mississippi, in a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**67c Southern Sandstone Ridges** extend south from Mississippi, in a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**67d Southern Dissected Ridges and Knobs** extend south from Mississippi, in a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

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**67h Southern Dissected Ridges and Knobs** extend south from Mississippi, in a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**73. Mississippi Alluvial Plain**  
This ecoregion is characterized by forested soils, woodland, and oak-hickory-pine forests. The Crickston-Tertiary age sands, silts, and clays of the region contrast geologically with the older limestone, chert, and shale found in the Interior Plateau (71). Elevations are generally less than 1,000 feet. The terrain is an ecoregion of low gradient and steady topography.

**73a Northern Mississippi Alluvial Plain** extend south from Mississippi, in a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**73b Southern Mississippi Alluvial Plain** extend south from Mississippi, in a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**68. Southwestern Appalachians**  
This ecoregion is characterized by forested soils, woodland, and oak-hickory-pine forests. The Crickston-Tertiary age sands, silts, and clays of the region contrast geologically with the older limestone, chert, and shale found in the Interior Plateau (71). Elevations are generally less than 1,000 feet. The terrain is an ecoregion of low gradient and steady topography.

**68a Cumberland Plateau** extend south from Mississippi, in a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**68b Sequatchie Valley** extend south from Mississippi, in a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**68c Plateau Escarpment** extend south from Mississippi, in a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

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**74. Mississippi Valley Loess Plains**  
This ecoregion is characterized by forested soils, woodland, and oak-hickory-pine forests. The Crickston-Tertiary age sands, silts, and clays of the region contrast geologically with the older limestone, chert, and shale found in the Interior Plateau (71). Elevations are generally less than 1,000 feet. The terrain is an ecoregion of low gradient and steady topography.

**74a Bluff Hills** extend south from Mississippi, in a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.

**74b Loess Plains** extend south from Mississippi, in a flat to undulating region, to the western edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The prairie is a transition region between the Blackland Prairie and the more forested plain and hills. Some areas, on the Piedmont, are heavily forested, but the prairie and alluvial areas show significant amounts of eroded and forested. In Tennessee, the small region stands out as forest, but highly agricultural land compared to the forested Southeastern Plains and Hills (65c) that surround it.