
State of Alabama Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program

Program Implementation Strategy

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and Natural Resources,
State Lands Division



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I. INTRODUCTION

In 2002, Congress directed the Secretary of Commerce to establish a Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation (CELCP) Program *“for the purpose of protecting important coastal and estuarine areas that have significant conservation, recreation, ecological, historical, or aesthetic values, or that are threatened by conversion from their natural or recreational state to other uses.”*

In establishing this program, Congress:

- *directed the Secretary of Commerce to develop guidelines delineating the criteria for grant awards through the program*
- *required that the funds be issued “in consultation with the States' Coastal Zone Managers' or Governors' designated representatives based on demonstrated need and ability to successfully leverage funds, and shall give priority to lands which can be effectively managed and protected and which have significant ecological value” and*
- *required that states provide 1:1 matching funds for any financial assistance awarded under the program.*

In June 2003, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management issued Final Program Guidelines for the states to follow in developing their own CELCP Programs. The NOAA guidelines describe a three-stage process for competitive funding:

- *the development of a state coastal and estuarine land conservation plan;*
- *establishment of a process for identifying and ranking qualified projects within the state and nominating them to a national competitive selection process annually; and*
- *a process for conducting peer review and selection of projects at a national level.*

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, State Lands Division, Coastal Section is the lead agency for the State of Alabama’s Coastal Area Management Program, which was authorized by NOAA in 1979. The State Lands Division is also the manager of all undeveloped state-owned trust lands and state water bottoms, and administers the state’s Forever Wild Land Trust. As such, ADCNR is the logical and appropriate lead agency for development and implementation of the Alabama Coastal & Estuarine Land Conservation Program.

As outlined in the CELCP Program Guidelines issued by NOAA in 2003, ADCNR has developed this program implementation strategy document to fully describe the state’s protocols for implementing the CELCP Program throughout Alabama. Specifically, this document describes:

- *the geographic extent of Alabama’s CELCP Program;*
- *the priority areas for acquisition, including their extent and current threats, within the CELCP Program area; and*
- *a process for reviewing and ranking proposals for land acquisition through the federal CELCP Program*

With this document, the State of Alabama seeks to position itself to take full advantage of the land acquisition funding opportunities provided on a competitive basis through the federal Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program.

II. ALABAMA COASTAL & ESTUARINE LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAM AREA

GEOGRAPHIC EXTENT

The Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program Final Program Guidelines issued by NOAA in 2003 defined “coastal and estuarine areas” as those areas within a coastal state that are within the coastal watershed boundary as described in NOAA’s Coastal Zone Boundary Review of October 1992. The coastal watershed is further defined as those 8-digit USGS hydrologic cataloguing units that contain head of tide. For coastal Alabama this area includes all of Baldwin and Mobile Counties and portions of Choctaw, Clarke, Coffee, Conecuh, Covington, Crenshaw, Escambia, Geneva, Houston, Monroe, Washington, and Wilcox Counties. The Alabama CELCP Program area comprises approximately 7800 square miles of land area that is geographically split into three separate drainage areas. The largest portion of the program area reaches the Gulf of Mexico via Mobile Bay or the Perdido or Escatawpa River watersheds. The other two units, the Yellow River watershed and the Choctawhatchee River watershed, cross into the Florida panhandle before reaching the Gulf. (See *Maps in Appendix 2*).

The Alabama CELCP Program boundary completely contains Alabama’s federally designated Coastal Area, which is defined as the continuous 10-foot contour of Mobile and Baldwin Counties seaward to the extent of state waters. The CELCP Program area contains one federally designated National Estuarine Research Reserve (Weeks Bay NERR) and includes land within the management area of another (Grand Bay NERR, MS). The CELCP Program area also contains two National Wildlife Refuges (Bon Secour and Grand Bay NWR*), portions of a National Forest (Conecuh National Forest), and a host of state and local conservation, recreation, and cultural resource sites. The CELCP Program area also includes the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program and the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta, which is the state’s largest National Natural Landmark, as designated by the National Park Service (See *Maps in Appendix 2*).

**Note: The Alabama CELCP Program area is also adjacent to the Choctaw NWR, though none of the refuge’s current holdings are within the CELCP boundary.*

POPULATION AND ECONOMY

The 14 counties included in the CELCP area had a total population in 2000 of 901,642 residents (See *Table 1 below*). An analysis of census 2000 block data suggests that some 657,400 of those residents were located within the CELCP boundary. These counties experienced a 10% population growth rate on average from 1990 to 2000, which is consistent with the statewide growth rate over that period. Baldwin County, however, accounts for more than half of that growth. In fact, it was one of the fastest growing areas of the state with its population increasing by nearly 43 percent between 1990 and 2000.

The economy of this region has been historically driven by the Mobile, AL and Pensacola, FL urbanized areas, each of which contains very active port developments. The Port of Mobile is the 14th largest port facility in the US in terms of total tonnage, providing a total annual economic impact of \$3 billion (Alabama State Port Authority). Within the Mobile urban area, the dominant employers are retail, manufacturing industries and public service sectors (US Census, 2003). The economy of neighboring Baldwin County is driven largely by retail and tourism. In fact, in 2003 Baldwin County had more than 4 million visitors, representing 21% of the state’s total visitors, 28% of the state’s travel-related employment, 27% of the state’s travel expenditures and \$228 million in lodging rentals (Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel, 2004). The dominant industry in much of the Alabama CELCP Program area is timber, as evidenced by Table 2 below, which shows that forested and agricultural lands account for nearly 75% of the land cover in this region. In the two coastal counties, the seafood industry also has a major presence employing over 4,000 workers and generating some \$450 million in products annually (AUMERC, 1994).

Table 1. Alabama CELCP Program Area Population Trends

Source: US Census Bureau

County	Population (2000)	% Change (1990-2000)	Density (people/mi ²)	Population in CELCP
Baldwin	140,415	42.9	88.0	140,415
Choctaw	15,922	-0.6	17.4	444
Clarke	27,867	2.3	22.5	25,816
Coffee	43,615	8.4	64.2	331
Conecuh	14,089	0.3	16.6	513
Covington	37,631	3.16	36.4	21,977
Crenshaw	13,665	0.3	22.4	321
Escambia	38,440	8.2	40.6	21,072
Geneva	25,764	9.0	44.7	5187
Houston	88,787	9.2	153.1	118
Mobile	399,843	5.6	324.3	399,843
Monroe	24,324	1.5	23.7	23,747
Washington	18,097	8.4	16.7	17,243
Wilcox	13,183	-2.8	14.8	374
TOTALS	901,642	10.1 (avg.)*	68	657,401

*The area outside of Baldwin County grew by 5.6%

Table 2. Land Cover in the Alabama CELCP Program Area, Square Miles

Source: United States Geological Survey, National Land Cover Database, 1992

HYDROLOGIC UNIT CODE (WATERSHED)	Forested Uplands	Agricultural Lands	Wetlands & Open Water	Other ¹	TOTAL
Alabama (03150204)	1004.83 (71.85%)	123.04 (8.80%)	197.82 (14.14%)	72.84 (5.21%)	1398.53 (17.93%)
Blackwater (03140104)	124.55 (85.61%)	13.88 (9.54%)	1.44 (0.99%)	5.61 (3.86%)	145.48 (1.86%)
Escambia (03140305)	209.41 (57.80%)	107.24 (29.60%)	14.69 (4.05%)	30.97 (8.55%)	362.31 (4.64%)
Escatawpa (03170008)	465.17 (66.22%)	150.61 (21.44%)	57.45 (8.18%)	29.28 (4.17%)	702.51 (9.00%)
Lower Choctawhatchee (03140203)	42.40 (31.55%)	70.30 (52.31%)	17.38 (12.93%)	4.32 (3.21%)	134.39 (1.72%)
Lower Tombigbee (03160203)	1265.16 (78.17%)	70.03 (4.33%)	227.56 (14.06%)	55.83 (3.45%)	1618.57 (20.75%)
Mississippi Coastal (03170009)	28.23 (11.68%)	25.10 (10.39%)	181.61 (75.16%)	6.69 (2.77%)	241.64 (3.10%)
Mobile Bay (03160205)	168.95 (19.33%)	191.64 (21.93%)	452.80 (51.81%)	60.62 (6.94%)	874.01 (11.20%)
Mobile-Tensaw (03160204)	545.71 (56.41%)	61.40 (6.35%)	283.11 (29.27%)	77.13 (7.97%)	967.35 (12.40%)
Perdido Bay (03140107)	44.40 (27.33%)	49.70 (30.59%)	53.90 (33.17%)	14.48 (8.91%)	162.47 (2.08%)
Perdido (03140106)	407.80 (59.93%)	170.59 (25.07%)	59.54 (8.75%)	42.55 (6.25%)	680.47 (8.72%)
Yellow River (03140103)	334.95 (66.15%)	128.78 (25.05%)	29.58 (5.75%)	20.82 (4.05%)	514.13 (6.59%)
TOTALS	4641.55 (59.49%)	1162.30 (14.90%)	1576.87 (20.21%)	421.13 (5.40%)	7801.85 (100%)

¹Includes urbanized, transitional, and barren uplands

III. Priorities for Coastal and Estuarine Land Protection

CONSERVATION TARGETS IN THE ALABAMA CELCP PROGRAM AREA

It is no secret that Alabama is a very biologically rich state. There are two major driving forces behind Alabama's diversity. First is the geomorphology of the state, which includes six major physiographic regions, ranging from the southern Appalachian Mountains in the northern portion of the state to the coastal plains province that borders the Gulf of Mexico. The second major biodiversity influence is Alabama's abundant supply of water resources. Our water resources are so important to this state that the major river systems are prominently displayed in the official state seal.

The Alabama CELCP Program area is also defined – literally and figuratively – by its major coastal river systems, and these rivers and associated riparian corridors are the source of much of the species diversity of the coastal area. With such an abundance of potential conservation targets coupled with limited acquisition resources, it is important to establish a system of prioritizing acquisition efforts and evaluating proposed acquisition sites.

In selecting conservation targets for the Alabama CELCP Program area, the state found itself in a position where much previous work has been done toward conservation and there are several strong land acquisition programs in place. The Alabama Forest Legacy Program Assessment of Need document, published in 2002, identified through a very public process many of the forested habitats worth conserving throughout the state. Additionally, the State Lands Division and the Forever Wild Land Trust Program have devoted a great deal of effort and resources in Coastal Alabama, conserving over 50,000 acres in Alabama's coastal counties since 1992 (see www.conservation.alabama.gov/public-lands/ for an updated list of Forever Wild acquisitions).

During development of the CELCP Program strategy, State Lands Division staff also participated in a series of conservation planning workshops sponsored by the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program and The Nature Conservancy of Alabama through its Effroymsen Fellowship program (December 9-11, 2003 and March 16-18, 2004). These workshops focused on the Mobile Bay, Escatawpa, and Perdido watersheds, covering the majority of the CELCP Program area. The workshops were widely attended by TNC staff and representatives from several state, federal and local agencies with conservation interests in Coastal Alabama. By participating in these workshops, State Lands Division staff were able to further identify and refine suitable conservation targets for the CELCP Program while also sharing information about the CELCP opportunity with the various partner agencies.

As part of its Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan, the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) established a Coastal Habitats Coordinating Team (CHCT) in April 2004. The purpose of this stakeholder committee is to assemble all the entities in coastal Alabama who have interest in land acquisition and conservation in an effort to coordinate diverse efforts. The State Lands Division is one of many partners involved in the CHCT and the Alabama CELCP Program will be one of the many tools utilized by this forum to identify and acquire sensitive lands. The CHCT held its first formal meeting in May 2004 and the Alabama CELCP Program expects to work closely with this committee in order to continue identifying specific tracts for acquisition.

The Alabama Coastal Area Management Program (ACAMP) has identified specific conservation and management targets for the coastal area through its Special Management Area and Geographic Area of Particular Concern designations. In addition, the Gulf of Mexico Program, in conjunction with coastal area management programs in all of the Gulf States, has developed the Gulf Ecological Management Sites (GEMS) program, which identifies unique Gulf coast ecosystems worthy of protection. Finally, several watershed-scale comprehensive conservation and management planning efforts have been conducted in the Alabama coastal area, many of which have specific land conservation targets (*listed in references section*).

Table 3 summarizes the priority conservation targets pulled from the above sources. The Alabama CELCP Program considers all of these lands to be suitable for acquisition and has developed a site evaluation tool (*described in Section IV and in Appendix 3*) that will assist the State in prioritizing nominations in any given program year.

Table 3. Priority Conservation Targets in the Alabama CELCP Program Area

Note: Some material taken from Alabama Forest Legacy Program Assessment of Need September 2002

Priority Conservation Targets	Intrinsic Qualities	Threats	Geographic Extent	Examples
Gulf Beach and Dune Systems, including Primary and Secondary Dunes, barrier island complexes	Alabama Beach Mouse (endangered, endemic) Migratory Bird Stopover Habitat Sea Turtle Nesting Habitat Wading Bird Rookeries Natural Hazard Mitigation	Development Beach Erosion	Alabama Gulf Front	Bon Secour NWR Fort Morgan Peninsula Gulf State Park Cat Island Dauphin Island
Maritime Live Oak-Pine Forest	Migratory Bird Stopover Habitat	Development	Alabama Barrier Islands	Orange Beach Maritime Forest Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuary
Bottomland Hardwood Forests and Swamps	Black Bear Habitat Migratory Bird Stopover Habitat Alabama Red Bellied Turtle (<i>endangered, endemic</i>)	Development	Throughout CELCP Area	Mobile-Tensaw River Delta Hell's Swamp
Wet Longleaf Pine Forests, Flatwoods, and Savannas	Pitcher plant seeps Herbaceous plant diversity	Development Fire Suppression	Southern Coastal Plains Areas	Grand Bay Savanna Splinter Hill Bog Wolf Bay Lillian Swamp
Upland Longleaf Pine and Wiregrass Sandhill Community	Gopher Tortoise (<i>federally listed as threatened in the portion of its range west of Mobile River</i>) Indigo Snake Red Cockaded Woodpecker (<i>historical range</i>)	Development Conversion Fire suppression	Throughout CELCP Area	Perdido River Corridor Conecuh National Forest
Atlantic Whitecedar Swamps and associated Blackwater River Systems	Migrational corridors for many species	Development Shoreline Armoring	Throughout CELCP Area	Includes Blackwater, Perdido, Pea, Choctawhatchee, Conecuh, Escatawpa, and Styx Rivers and associated tributaries
Riparian Corridors, particularly along ecoregional priority streams and their tributaries	Migrational corridors for many species	Development Shoreline Armoring	Throughout CELCP Area	Includes Blackwater, Perdido, Pea, Choctawhatchee, Conecuh, Escatawpa, and Styx Rivers and associated tributaries
Red Hills and Lime Hills (beech-magnolia bluff and ravine forests)	Red Hills Salamander (<i>threatened endemic</i>)	Development Conversion	Red Hills Eco-region (<i>see Map 2</i>)	No public land currently supports this target
Designated Gulf Ecological Management Sites (GEMS), Special Management Areas, and Geographic Areas of Particular Concern	Various; All are designated due to federal, state and local criteria.	Development	Designated Alabama Coastal Area	Mobile Tensaw River Delta Mon Louis Island Weeks Bay NERR Grand Bay Savanna Lillian Swamp
Estuarine Zones and adjacent, undeveloped wetlands and uplands	Water quality protection Shellfish nursery habitat Finfish Nursery Habitat	Development Nonpoint Pollution	Tidal, estuarine waters	Weeks Bay Wolf Bay Bon Secour Bay Perdido Bay

IV. State Process for Implementing the CELCP Program

The State of Alabama is modeling its Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program after its own very successful Forever Wild Land Trust Program. It is likely that many lands acquired through the Alabama CELCP Program will be matched using the Forever Wild Land Trust funds. However, regardless of the source of matching funds for acquisition, all nominations for land acquisition under the Alabama CELCP Program will be held to the same proven procedures and review standards as Forever Wild. The following summary of the Forever Wild Program is provided as background.

THE ALABAMA FOREVER WILD LAND TRUST. *A complementary state land acquisition program*

In 1992, the Alabama Legislature passed the Forever Wild Land Trust Act, which authorized a statewide referendum that, when passed by the citizens, diverted a portion of offshore oil and gas royalties to establish a trust fund to be utilized for acquisition and permanent preservation of unique lands throughout Alabama. The Forever Wild Amendment was passed by an unprecedented 83% of Alabama voters. A summary of the key highlights, particularly with respect to implementation of the CELCP Program, is included in the paragraphs that follow.

The Forever Wild Program is built on three basic policies as stated in the amendment:

1. *To protect, manage, and enhance certain lands and waters of Alabama with full recognition that this generation is a trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;*
2. *To protect, to the fullest extent practicable, recreational lands and areas of unique ecological, biological and geological importance; and*
3. *To promote a proper balance among population growth, economic development, environmental protection, and ecological diversity.*

To implement the program the amendment established:

a revenue source and fund for land acquisition. Specifically, the Amendment established the Forever Wild Land Trust and specified that certain annual percentages of trust income earned by the Alabama Trust Fund would be allocated to the Forever Wild Land Trust.

an appointed Board to oversee activities of the program. Specifically, the Amendment established the 15-member Board of Trustees of the Forever Wild Land Trust and empowered said Board to implement the program by reviewing acquisition proposals, maintaining a list of targeted acquisition sites, and making recommendations for acquisition.

a state lead agency for the program. The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is vested with implementing the Forever Wild Program. The Amendment also specifically established the Natural Heritage Section of the ADCNR State Lands Division and charged that agency with maintaining a natural heritage databank, producing an inventory of Alabama's natural heritage, developing a natural heritage plan, and managing properties acquired under the Forever Wild Program.

a final review committee. Composed of the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Speaker of the state House of Representatives. Before any Forever Wild purchase can be implemented, a written proposal of said purchase must be reviewed by this committee and approved by a simple majority.

The Forever Wild Amendment also established minimum standards and requirements for implementing the program. These same standards will be applied to all acquisitions under the CELCP Program, including:

- All purchases must be made from willing sellers (*e.g., eminent domain may not be utilized*)
- Two independent appraisals must be obtained and their differences reconciled in order for any purchase to be authorized. Under Forever Wild, appraisals must meet Member Appraisal Institute (MAI) standards at a minimum.
- Fee-simple title to land is typically the preferred approach to land conservation. However, conservation easements may be utilized as needed in order to maximize the ability to achieve the objectives of the Forever Wild Program.
- Any time a property is purchased using Forever Wild funds, an additional 15% of the appraised value of that purchase must be placed into a separate Forever Wild Land Trust Stewardship Account. These funds are set aside at the time of purchase in an effort to endow the future management and stewardship of the acquired land.
- Within one year of acquisition, the Forever Wild Board, working closely with Heritage Section staff, is required to develop a tract-specific management plan which spells out allowable uses of the property and identifies how the property will be maintained. To this end, the Amendment requires that all lands be managed under the multiple-use management principle.

The Forever Wild Board meets quarterly to conduct its business. Any citizen may nominate a tract for consideration by the Forever Wild Board of Trustees, provided that the owner of the property is a willing seller. Since its inception, the Board, working closely with ADCNR staff, has established protocols for evaluating tracts nominated for acquisition. Prior to the CELCP Program, the Board had established separate Site Assessment Sheets designed to concurrently gauge a site's best suitability for acquisition under either of four future uses: Recreation Area, Wildlife Management Area, Nature Preserve, or State Park. In implementing the CELCP Program, the State Lands Division has developed a fifth Site Assessment Sheet that is specific to the goals of the federal and state CELCP Programs (*See description below, or Appendix 3 for a complete worksheet*).

Once acquired, all lands are managed under a multiple use management principal, to ensure that all resources including recreation, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking, aesthetics, soil, water, forests and minerals are protected or enhanced. The State Lands Division writes the management plan that is presented to the Board for approval within one year of purchase.

ALABAMA CELCP PROGRAM TRACT NOMINATION AND REVIEW PROCEDURES

Lead Agency Roles & Responsibilities

The State Lands Division (SLD) of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is the lead agency for the Alabama Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program. Such a role is a natural fit for the Division, which is also the lead agency for the NOAA-sponsored Alabama Coastal Area Management Program and Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. The Division is also the designated steward of all undeveloped state-owned lands, including state water bottoms. SLD is the single designated title holder for all lands acquired through the Forest Legacy Program. Finally, The State Lands Division, through its Natural Heritage Section, administers the Forever Wild Program for the State of Alabama.

The State Lands Division will be responsible for accepting and managing nominations for acquisition on an ongoing basis. Staff will also determine the willingness of the owner to sell and will conduct site assessments in accordance with the CELCP Program worksheet and will prepare nomination packages to NOAA for the highest ranking acquisition proposals, in accordance with the nomination and review procedures described below.

Nomination and Review Procedures

The State of Alabama will implement its Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program as follows:

1. The State Lands Division will continuously accept nominations for acquisition through the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program. Nominations may be accepted from anyone at any time, so long as they are made in writing.
2. Land may only be acquired from willing sellers. While any tract may be nominated, it will be the responsibility of State Lands Division staff to determine the willingness of the owner to sell the property at or below fair market value.
3. State Lands Division staff, which includes the managers of the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program and the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, will perform all site evaluations in accordance with the CELCP Program Site Assessment guidelines located in Appendix 3.
4. Prior to acquisition of any land under the Alabama CELCP Program, State Lands Division will secure an appraisal, an independent review appraisal and a Phase I Environmental Assessment of the nominated property. The appraisal will be conducted in accordance with the current Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions (UASFLA; "Yellow Book") and the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP).
5. State Lands Division will ensure that the required nonfederal matching funds are available for any acquisition nominated to the federal CELCP Program. Nonfederal match may come from state and/or local government funds, sponsoring or partner non-governmental organizations, and/or the Forever Wild Land Trust. Where the Forever Wild Program is utilized for matching funds for the CELCP Program, State Lands Division staff will present nominations to the Forever Wild Board of Trustees for consideration in accordance with Forever Wild Program procedures.
6. State Lands Division staff will make final determination of projects to be submitted for consideration in the competitive, federal CELCP Program and will be responsible for developing all nomination packages for submission to NOAA, in accordance with the timeframes and procedures established for the federal program.
7. State Lands Division will hold title to all properties acquired through the CELCP Program and will be responsible for maintaining all documentation as required by the Federal CELCP guidance. Lands purchased using CELCP funds will carry deed restrictions as required by NOAA.
8. Within one year of purchase, State Lands Division staff will develop a tract-specific management plan, modeled after plans developed in conjunction with the Forever Wild Program. All properties acquired under this program will be managed in accordance with applicable state laws, which could include lease arrangements to local governments to utilize the land (i.e., for public water access). Any revenues generated through responsible management of acquired tracts will be utilized by the State Lands Division toward the continued, long-term stewardship of the properties in accordance with the established management plan.

ALABAMA CELCP PROGRAM SITE ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

The State Lands Division has developed an intricate site assessment worksheet that allows the State to objectively and independently rank proposed acquisition sites based on their intrinsic qualities relative to the goals of the CELCP Program. The CELCP Program Site Assessment is modeled after the existing Forever Wild Program. The entire assessment worksheet is included in Appendix 3, but the basic outline is presented below in order to give a general overview of the types of attributes that strengthen a property's score under the Alabama CELCP Program.

There are three evaluation categories considered in the Alabama CELCP Program, as follows:

1. *Site Characteristics Related to Intended Use*. This category reviews the site for a number of physical characteristics, including size, accessibility (or inaccessibility, if desirable), population served, scenic quality, habitat values, rare/threatened species presence, geological/archaeological features, level of site disturbance, and viability of natural communities and rare species populations.
2. *Acquisition Considerations*. This category assesses whether any restrictions would exist on the purchase, whether surrounding land use impacts the purchase, whether purchase of said tract supports federal, state, or local planning programs, whether alternative sites exist, and what the surrounding development threat is to the targeted habitat.
3. *Management Considerations*: This category ranks a proposed acquisition on its suitability for multiple uses, manageability, and stewardship cost considerations.

Each site will be independently evaluated based on its own merits. The Alabama CELCP Program Site Assessment protocols have been designed to fully support the goals of the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program and to tie the program to other state and federal management activities within the Alabama coastal watersheds. As evidenced by the site assessment protocols, there are numerous links to the federally designated Alabama Coastal Area Management Program (ACAMP).

V. Coordination of Public Involvement

As mentioned earlier in the Conservation Targets section, public involvement and interagency coordination with regard to land acquisition in coastal Alabama was underway well before the establishment of the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation program. The CELCP Program is very similar to the Forest Legacy Program, which recently (September, 2002) conducted a statewide assessment of need for acquisition of forest land in Alabama. The Alabama Forest Legacy Program conducted a statewide opinion survey and held 6 public meetings to gauge public opinion on the types of lands that should be preserved through acquisition. As authorized by the CELCP guidance issued by NOAA, Alabama is utilizing the Forest Legacy needs assessment findings as a substantial baseline for its CELCP Program.

Since the CELCP Program is administered through NOAA and is directly linked to the state Coastal Zone Management Program, Alabama also utilized existing committees established for the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program (ACAMP) in order to secure input for the development of the state CELCP Program. State Lands Division staff presented an early draft of this Program Implementation Strategy to the ACAMP Technical Interagency Committee (TIC) and Coastal Resource Advisory Committee (CRAC) at regularly scheduled meetings on April 8 and 12, 2004 (respectively). The TIC contains representatives from all of the federal and state resource management and research oriented agencies operating in coastal Alabama. The CRAC is a stakeholder-based committee appointed by the Governor to advise the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program. Members of the TIC and CRAC provided additional feedback on the program procedures as well as the priority conservation targets, which were incorporated into this final draft document. The State also received input, particularly with regard to identification of conservation targets from The Nature Conservancy of Alabama and the Coastal Habitat Coordination Committee of the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program. Finally, State Lands Division staff has also presented the program implementation strategy to various civic organizations in the coastal area, as well as to the steering committees of the Coastal Alabama and Conecuh-Sepulga basins of the Alabama Clean Water Partnership.

The State Lands Division formally released a public comment draft of this Program Implementation Strategy on May 15, 2005. Notice of the program and a request for comments was mailed to all local governments identified in the CELCP program area and to various stakeholders of the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program. The draft document and front page announcement of availability was also placed on the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources website. A public information meeting was held in Mobile on June 9, 2005 and written comment was accepted through June 15, 2005. Very few formal comments were received. However, verbal comment at all public meetings was very positive and supportive of the program.

One written comment letter was received from the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP, see appendix 1). The letter noted that the MBNEP “fully supports” Alabama’s CELCP implementation strategy. The MBNEP letter asked that the Department of Conservation consider the challenge of purchasing imperiled, isolated properties in highly developed portions of the coastal area that have inflated real estate markets. The MBNEP further requested that the program include a mechanism for giving adequate consideration to such parcels. A specific example provided was Dauphin Island, a barrier island that serves as an extremely important habitat for migratory birds but has faced intense development pressure and high real estate prices. This comment echoed sentiments that were brought up during other public discussions of the CELCP program, and it certainly warrants consideration.

Increasing land values and conversion to urban uses is a challenge that coastal areas will face throughout the United States. Alabama’s CELCP strategy does not preclude the purchase of small, isolated properties. In fact, any parcel that is nominated will be independently evaluated for its intrinsic qualities, in accordance with the CELCP site assessment in Appendix 3. While an isolated parcel may not score as well on such factors as size or manageability, it may collect critical points in areas such as

rarity, population served, and scenic quality. The likely reality is that isolated parcels will have a difficult time competing at both the state and federal levels. For this reason, the Alabama CELCP program recommends that communities facing this dilemma institute comprehensive land conservation planning for their geographic area of interest. One possible outcome of such a process would be the identification of a suite of purchases that collectively address the conservation needs of the local community. Such a grand nomination may have a better chance of competing at both the state and federal levels than piecemeal acquisition and the conservation benefits would be greater. The CELCP assessment worksheet factors in such localized planning efforts and nominated tracts that support local planning efforts receive additional points. State Lands Division staff look forward to working closely with coastal Alabama communities on this type of land conservation planning.

Changes made to the program implementation strategy since the public comment period include: minor typographical edits; minor graphic changes to maps in the document to improve visual quality; inclusion of the Perdido River Corridor as a Gulf Ecological Management Site as established in November 2005; and updated language regarding the public comment process.

This final draft program implementation strategy, having been reviewed by stakeholders in Coastal Alabama is being submitted to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for federal approval. As required by the CELCP Program guidance issued by NOAA, Alabama's Implementation Strategy document has also been reviewed by the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program and is determined to be consistent with coastal zone management policies and regulations. A letter acknowledging consistency is included in Appendix 1 along with a formal letter of submission from the Governor of Alabama.

VI. For More Information

For more information on the Alabama Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program, to nominate a tract for consideration, or for information about management of state-owned lands in general, please contact the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, State Lands Division:

State Lands Division
64 North Union Street
Montgomery, AL 36130
(334) 242-3484
Toll Free: (800) Land-ALA

Coastal Section
23210 US Hwy 98, Suite B-1
Fairhope, AL 36532
(251) 929-0900

Weeks Bay NERR
11300 U.S. Highway 98
Fairhope, AL 36532
(251) 928-9792

www.conservation.alabama.gov



VII. Selected References

The following documents were utilized for statistical data and to identify conservation target areas and priorities.

Alabama Coastal Foundation. 2004. *Wolf Bay Plan: A Stakeholder's Guide to Protecting the Watershed*.

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Boyce, Timothy C., Dan DuMont, and Mark Bailey. 2002. *Alabama Forest Legacy Program Assessment of Need Document*. 79pp
(www.forestry.state.al.us/forestlegacyprog.htm)\

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APPENDIX 1
ALABAMA COASTAL & ESTUARINE LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAM
SUBMISSION LETTERS

- 1) State Authorization Letter**
- 2) Coastal Consistency**
- 3) Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Comment Letter**

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

BOB RILEY
GOVERNOR



STATE CAPITOL
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130

(334) 242-7100
FAX: (334) 242-0937

STATE OF ALABAMA

January 5, 2006

Mr. Charles Challstrom
Acting Assistant Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Ocean Service
1305 East West Highway
SSMC4, Room 13632
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3278

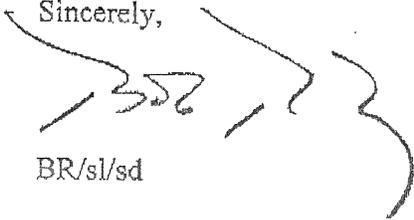
Dear Mr. Challstrom:

As Governor of the State of Alabama, I am pleased to provide your agency with Alabama's Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) Implementation Strategy. I am excited about the opportunities this program provides for conserving significant habitats within Alabama's important coastal watersheds.

I am designating the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources State Lands Division as the lead state agency for the CELCP program in Alabama. This is a natural fit, as the State Lands Division currently administers Alabama's Forever Wild Land Trust, holds title to and manages all land acquired under the Alabama Forest Legacy Program, manages the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, and serves as the lead agency for the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program. We have a proven record of success in our land conservation efforts, and the CELCP program will be no exception.

I am delighted to announce Alabama's participation in this program and look forward to working with your agency to enhance our ongoing conservation efforts in coastal Alabama.

Sincerely,



BR/sl/sd

ADEM



ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

POST OFFICE BOX 301463 36130-1463 ♦ 1400 COLISEUM BLVD. 36110-2059

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

WWW.ADEM.STATE.AL.US

(334) 271-7700

ONIS "TREY" GLENN, III, P.E.

DIRECTOR

BOB RILEY

GOVERNOR

December 7, 2005

Hank Burch
Natural Resource Planner
Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources
State Lands Division
23210 U.S. HWY 98, Suite B-1
Fairhope, AL 36532

Facsimiles: (334)
Administration: 271-7950
General Counsel: 394-4332
Communication: 394-4383
Air: 279-3044
Land: 279-3050
Water: 279-3051
Groundwater: 270-5631
Field Operations: 272-8131
Laboratory: 277-6718
Mining: 394-4326

Re: Alabama Coastal Area Management Program (ACAMP) Consistency Request
State of Alabama Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program, November 2005 (CELCP)

Dear Mr. Burch:

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management (Department) has reviewed the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources December 5, 2005, request for concurrence with the ACAMP on the proposal to implement the CELCP. It is understood that the purpose of the CELCP is to protect important coastal and estuarine areas that have significant conservation, recreation, ecological, historical, or aesthetic values, or that are threatened by conversion from their natural or recreational state to other uses.

The Department's Coastal Program rules were promulgated for the purpose of establishing rules and procedures to administer the permitting, regulatory and enforcement functions of the ACAMP. One of the roles of the Department's program is to lessen the impacts to the State's coastal resources, in this case through the conservation and protection of those resources. In determining a use ability to comply with Coastal Program rules, the Department must consider the extent to which the use adversely impacts the following coastal resources:

- A. Historical, architectural or archaeological sites designated pursuant to 16 U.S.C. §§ 470-470W;
- B. Wildlife and fishery habitat especially the designated Critical Habitats of endangered species listed pursuant to 16 U.S.C. §§ 1531-1543;
- C. Public access to tidal and submerged lands, navigable waters and beaches or other public recreational resources.

It is the opinion of the Department that implementation of the CELCP will not have a significant negative impact on coastal resources and is therefore consistent with the requirements of the ACAMP.

If you have any questions relative to this matter, please call J. Scott Brown in the ADEM's Coastal-Facility Section office at 251/432-6533.

Sincerely,



Steven O. Jenkins, Chief
Field Operations Division

Birmingham Branch
110 Vulcan Road
Birmingham, Alabama 35209-4702
(205) 942-6168
(205) 941-1603 [Fax]

Decatur Branch
2715 Sandlin Road, S.W.
Decatur, Alabama 35603-1333
(256) 353-1713
(256) 340-9359 [Fax]

Mobile Branch
2204 Perimeter Road
Mobile, Alabama 36615-1131
(251) 450-3400
(251) 479-2593 [Fax]

Mobile - Coastal
4171 Commanders Drive
Mobile, Alabama 36615-1421
(251) 432-6533
(251) 432-6598 [Fax]


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MOBILE BAY NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

June 9, 2005

Mr. Phillip Hinesley
Chief, Coastal Section
Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
23210 US Hwy 98, Suite B-1
Fairhope, AL 36532



Dear Mr. Hinesley:

The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) fully supports the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resource's *Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELP)* submission for federal approval. The document is well written and presents a comprehensive strategy that succinctly captures the great need to expand resources for habitat conservation in Alabama.

We are particularly pleased that this strategy incorporates the work accomplished by the Coastal Habitats Coordinating Team (CHCT) established by the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program in 2004. The consideration and inclusion of priority acquisition and restoration sites identified through CHCT's work as conservation targets for the CELP program helps streamline community efforts for protecting these habitats.

Prior to publication of the final draft of the CELP Program Implementation Strategy, MBNEP would like to request that ADCNR consider the following challenge. Many of the most imperiled coastal habitats are intermingled with developed property and are located in inflated real estate markets. The challenge among the habitat conservation community is to ensure that opportunities for acquisition and conservation of smaller and sometimes fragmented high priority habitat types can be supported. MBNEP respectfully requests that ADCNR include a mechanism in its evaluation strategy for giving adequate consideration to these critical habitats. Specifically, MBNEP would like ADCNR to ensure that projects made up of parcels perhaps not physically adjacent but that as a whole serve an aggregated conservation purpose will be given consideration under the established criteria.

Again, MBNEP wholeheartedly applauds the fine work accomplished by ADCNR's Coastal Section in preparing a well-researched and well-thought-out strategy. We look forward to a favorable outcome for this submission and as always to working along side ADCNR's Coastal Section to conserve Alabama's estuaries and coast.

Sincerely,

David Yeager
Director

cc: Mr. Jim Griggs, ADCNR State Lands Division

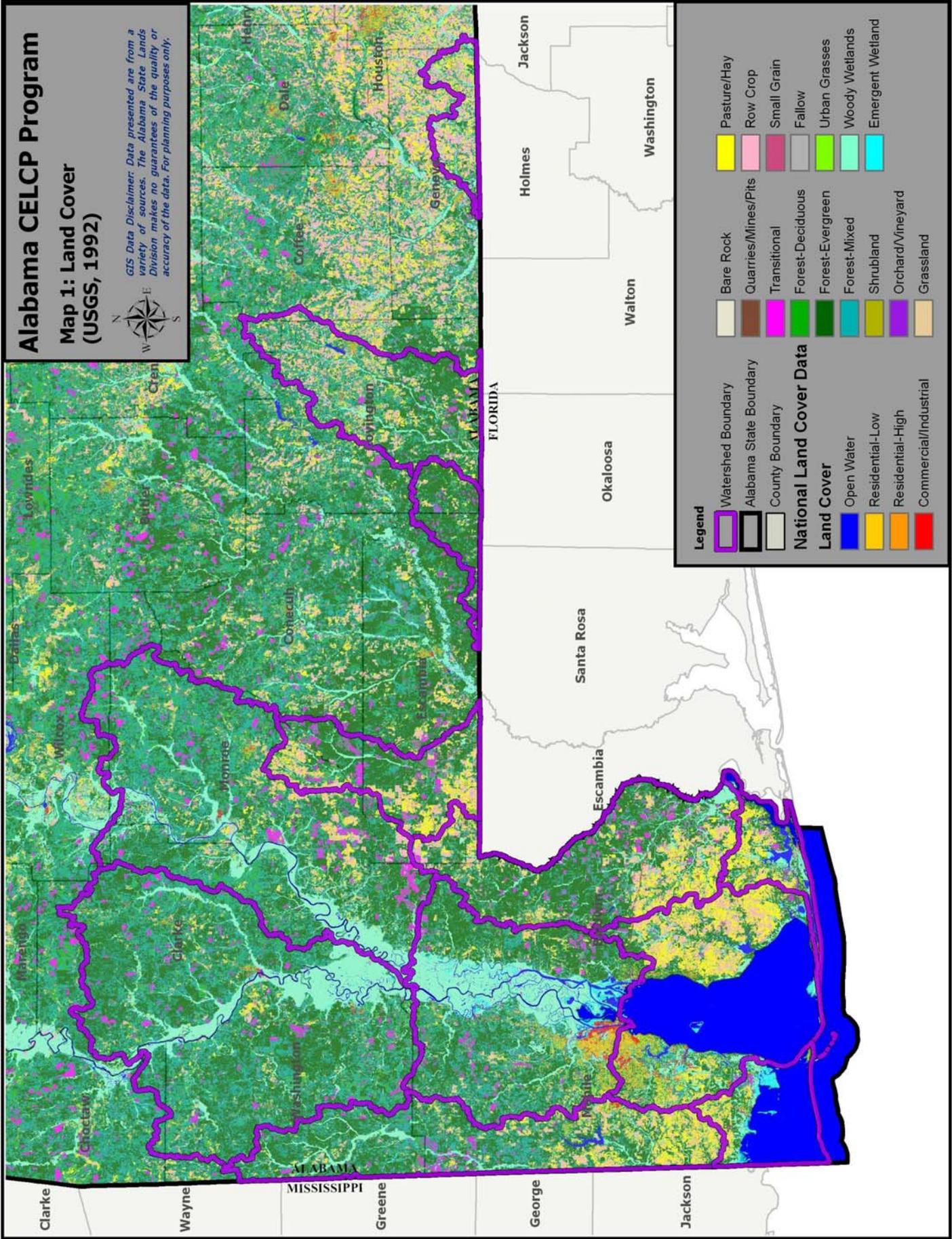
APPENDIX 2
ALABAMA COASTAL & ESTUARINE LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAM
RESOURCE INVENTORY MAP PRODUCTS

- Map 1: Alabama CELCP Program area Land Cover**
- Map 2: Resource Inventory Key to Individual Watershed Maps**
- Map 3: Yellow River Watershed**
- Map 4: Blackwater River Watershed**
- Map 5: Perdido River Watershed**
- Map 6: Perdido Bay Watershed**
- Map 7: Lower Choctawhatchee River Watershed**
- Map 8: Escambia River Watershed**
- Map 9: Lower Alabama River Watershed**
- Map 10: Lower Tombigbee River Watershed**
- Map 11: Mobile-Tensaw River Delta Watershed**
- Map 12: Mobile Bay Watershed**
- Map 13: Escatawpa River Watershed**
- Map 14: Mississippi Coastal Watershed**

Alabama CELCP Program

Map 1: Land Cover
(USGS, 1992)

GIS Data Disclaimer: Data presented are from a variety of sources. The Alabama State Lands Division makes no guarantees of the quality or accuracy of the data. For planning purposes only.



Legend

- Watershed Boundary
- Alabama State Boundary
- County Boundary

National Land Cover Data

Land Cover

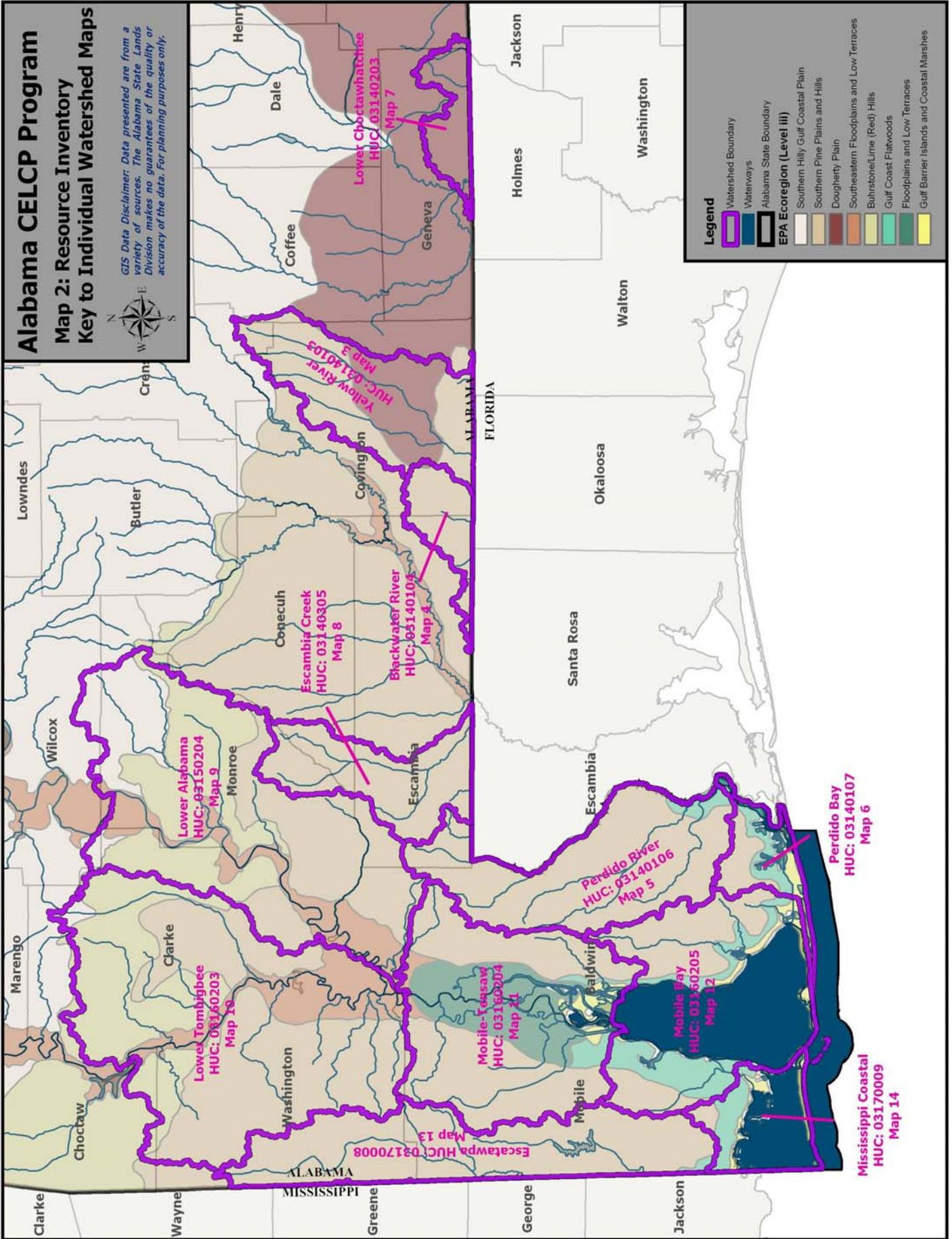
 Open Water	 Pasture/Hay	 Forest-Deciduous	 Row Crop
 Residential-Low	 Quarries/Mines/Pits	 Forest-Evergreen	 Small Grain
 Residential-High	 Transitional	 Forest-Mixed	 Fallow
 Commercial/Industrial	 Bare Rock	 Shrubland	 Urban Grasses
	 Grassland	 Orchard/Vineyard	 Woody Wetlands
		 Grassland	 Emergent Wetland

Alabama CELCP Program

Map 2: Resource Inventory

Key to Individual Watershed Maps

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Legend

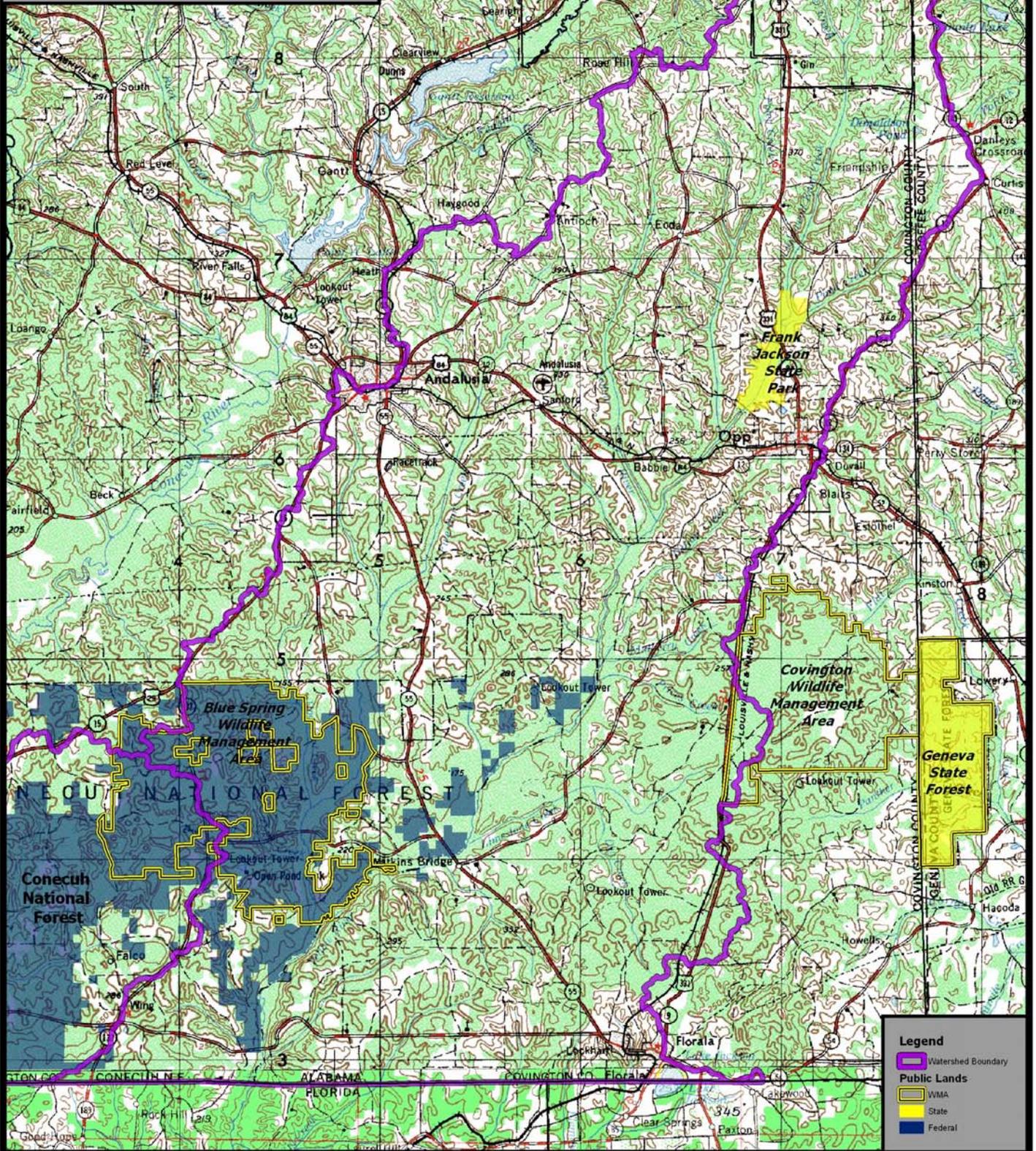
- Watershed Boundary
- Waterways
- Alabama State Boundary
- EPA Ecoregion (Level III)
- Southern Hilly/Gulf Coastal Plain
- Southern Pine Plains and Hills
- Dougherty Plain
- Southeastern Floodplains and Low Terraces
- Burkstone/Lime (Red) Hills
- Gulf Coast Flatwoods
- Floodplains and Low Terraces
- Gulf Barrier Islands and Coastal Marshes

Alabama CELCP Program Resource Inventory

Map 3: Yellow River Watershed
(HUC: 03140103)



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Alabama CELCP Program Resource Inventory

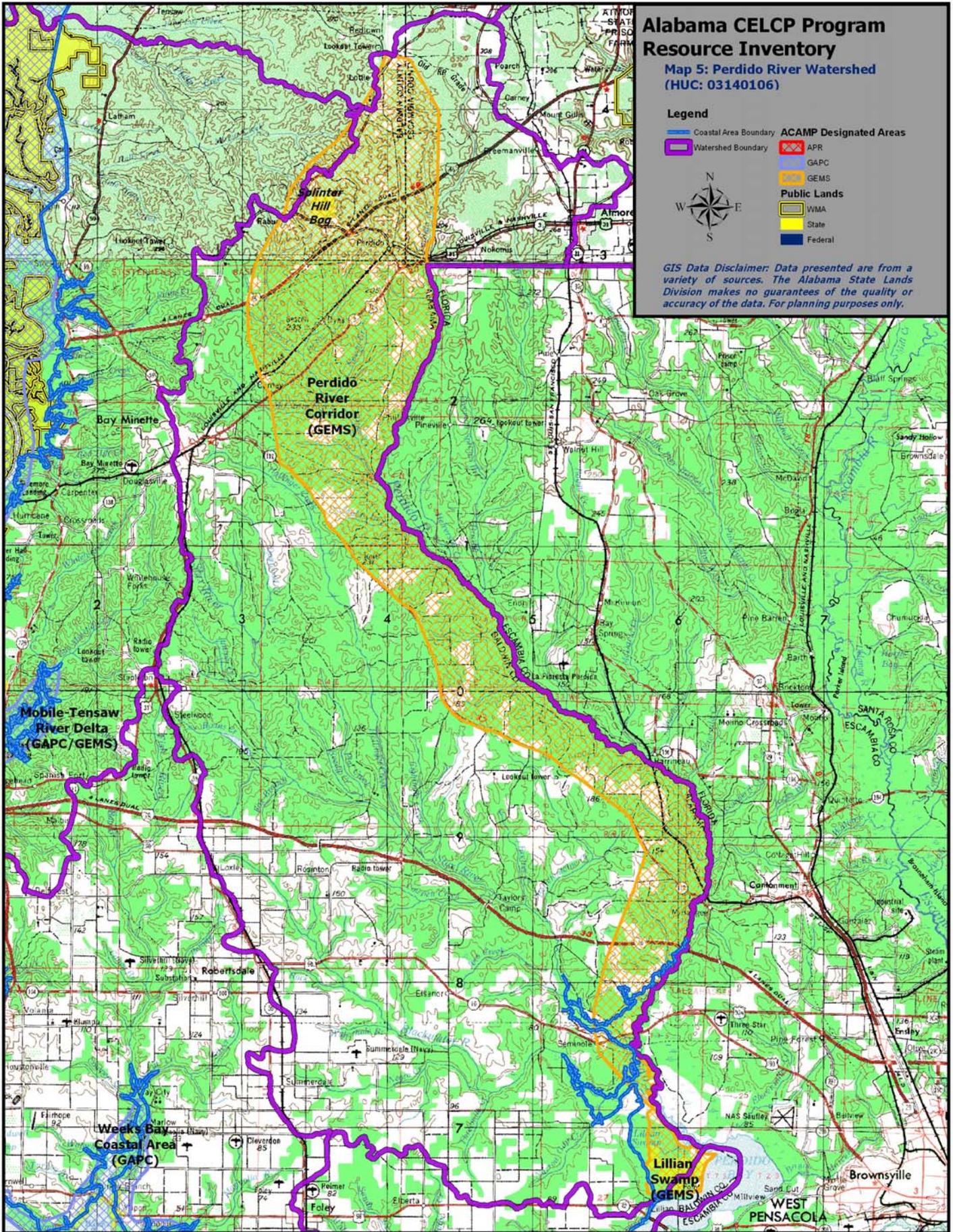
Map 5: Perdido River Watershed
(HUC: 03140106)

Legend

- | | |
|---|--|
|  Coastal Area Boundary |  ACAMP Designated Areas |
|  Watershed Boundary |  APR |
| |  GPC |
| |  GEMS |
| | Public Lands |
| |  WMA |
| |  State |
| |  Federal |



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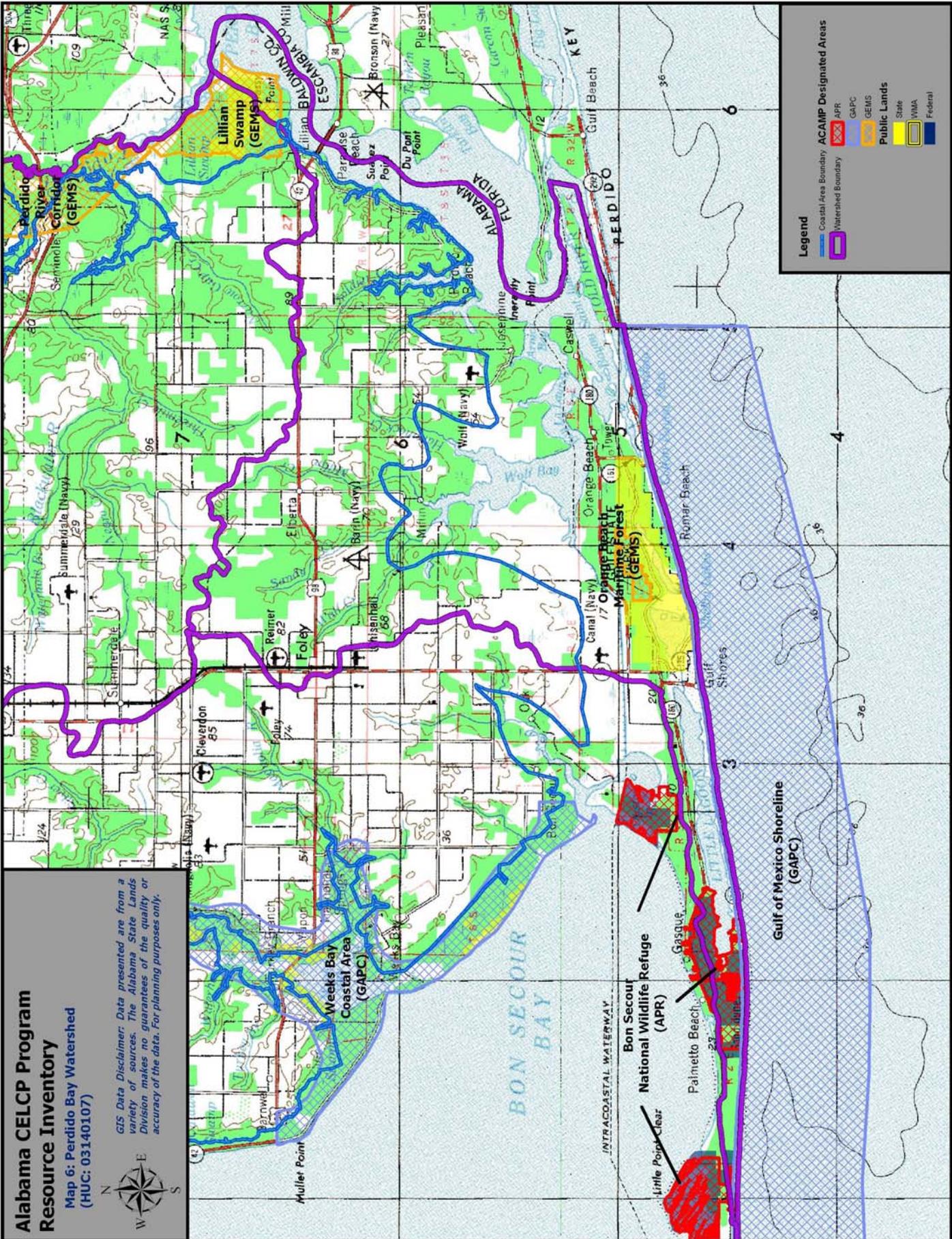


Alabama CELCP Program Resource Inventory

Map 6: Perdido Bay Watershed
(HUC: 03140107)



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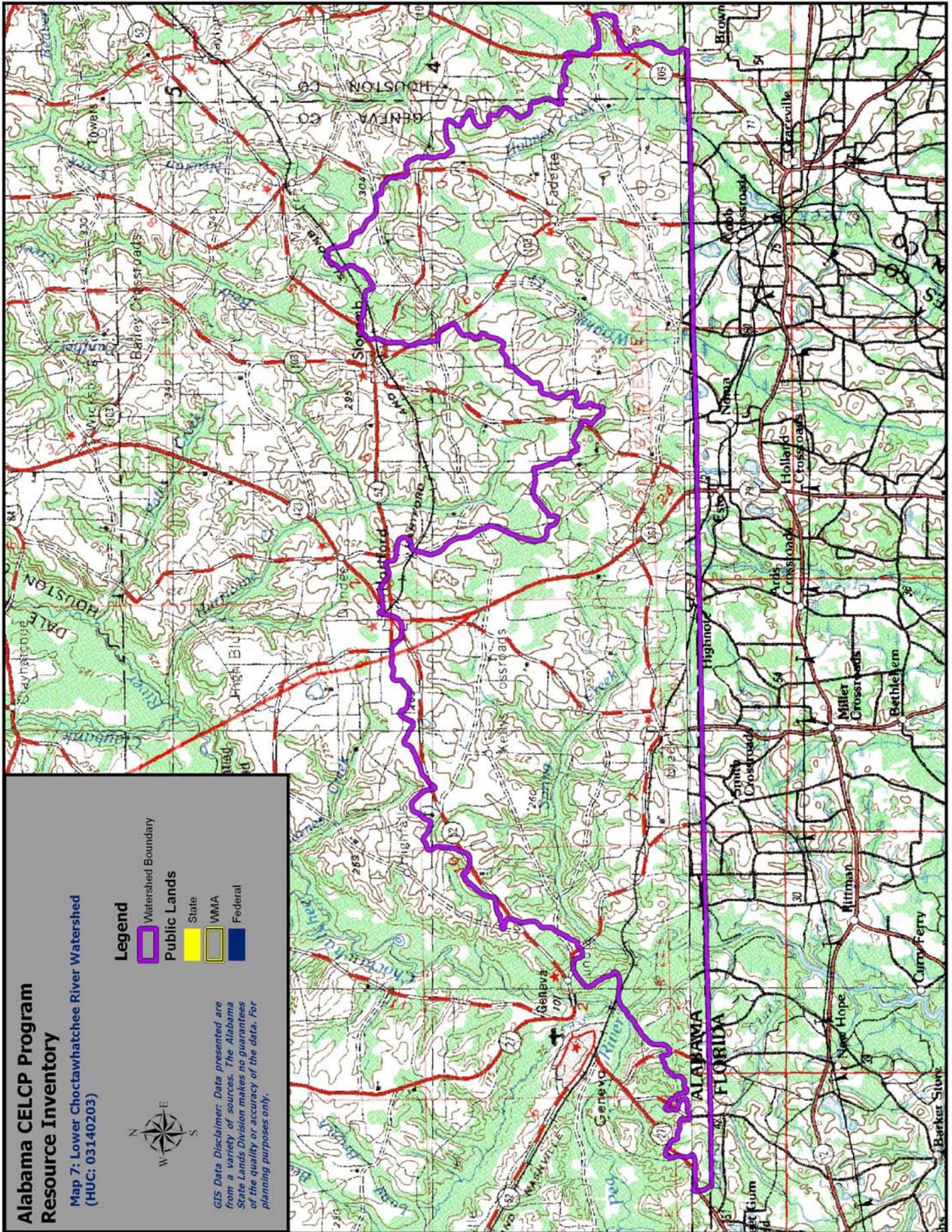
Alabama CELCP Program Resource Inventory

Map 7: Lower Choctawhatchee River Watershed
(HUC: 03140203)

- Legend**
-  Watershed Boundary
 - Public Lands**
 -  State
 -  WMA
 -  Federal



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Alabama CELCP Program Resource Inventory

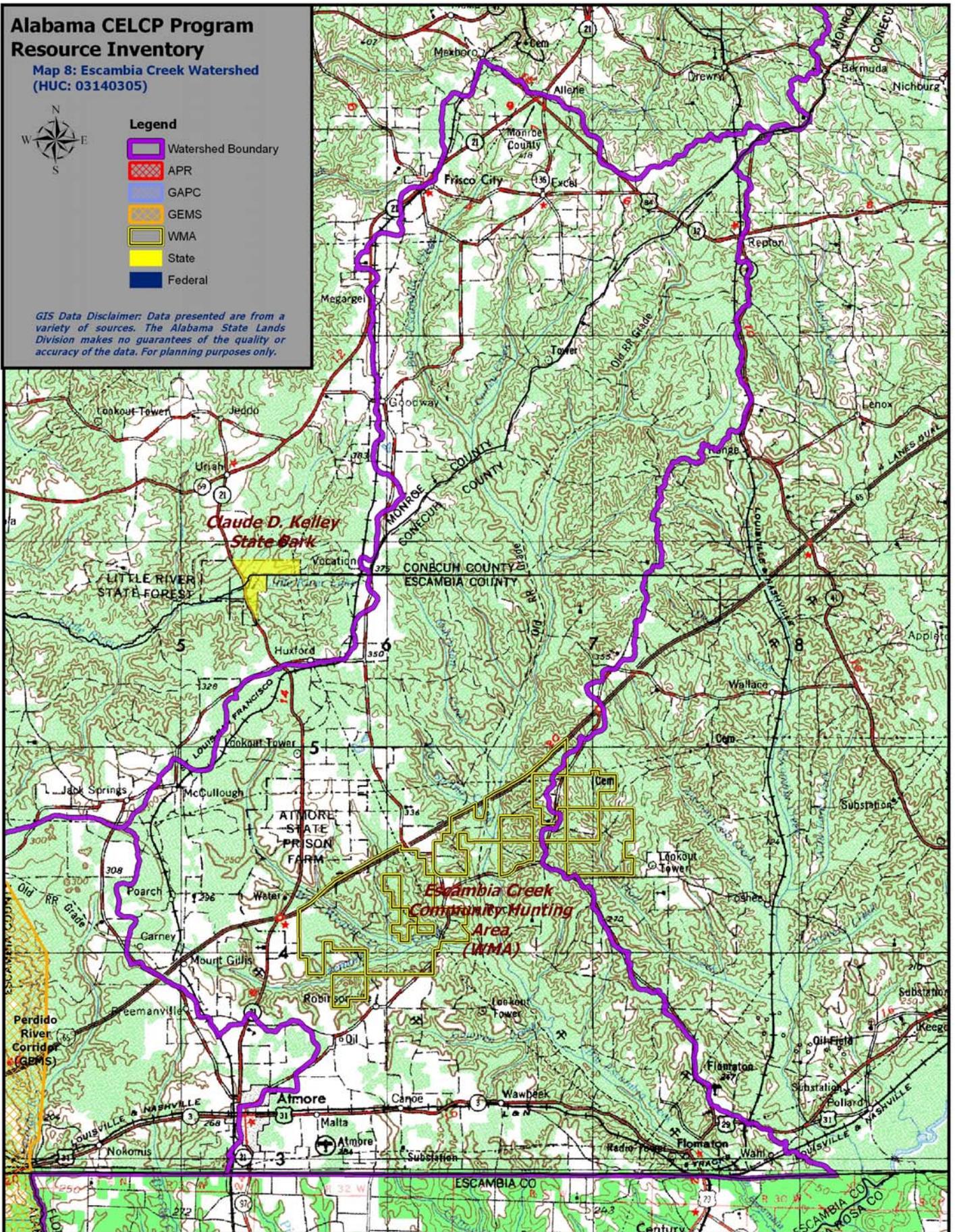
Map 8: Escambia Creek Watershed
(HUC: 03140305)



Legend

-  Watershed Boundary
-  APR
-  GAPC
-  GEMS
-  WMA
-  State
-  Federal

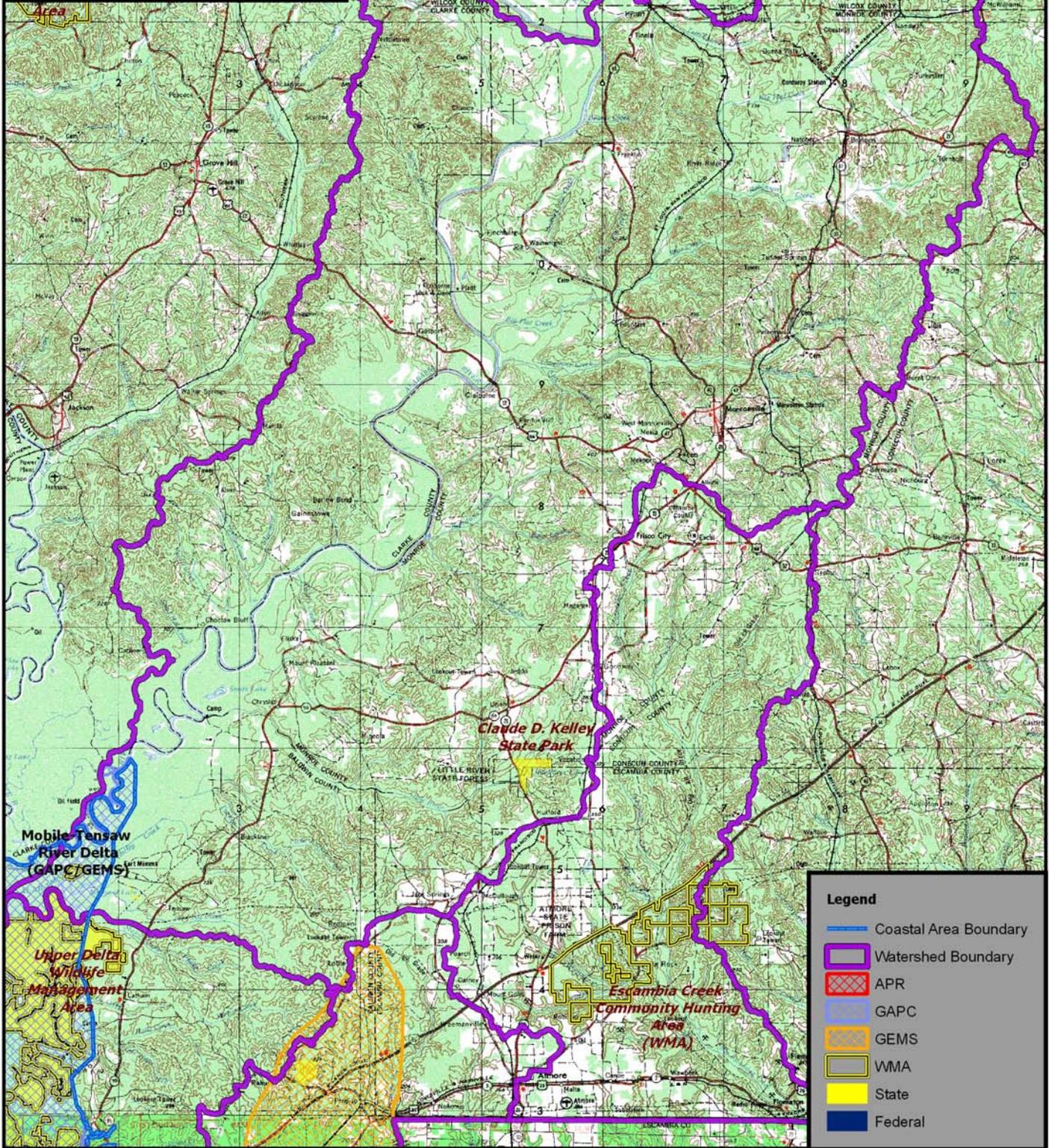
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Alabama CELCP Program Resource Inventory

Map 9: Lower Alabama Watershed
(HUC: 03150204)

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Legend

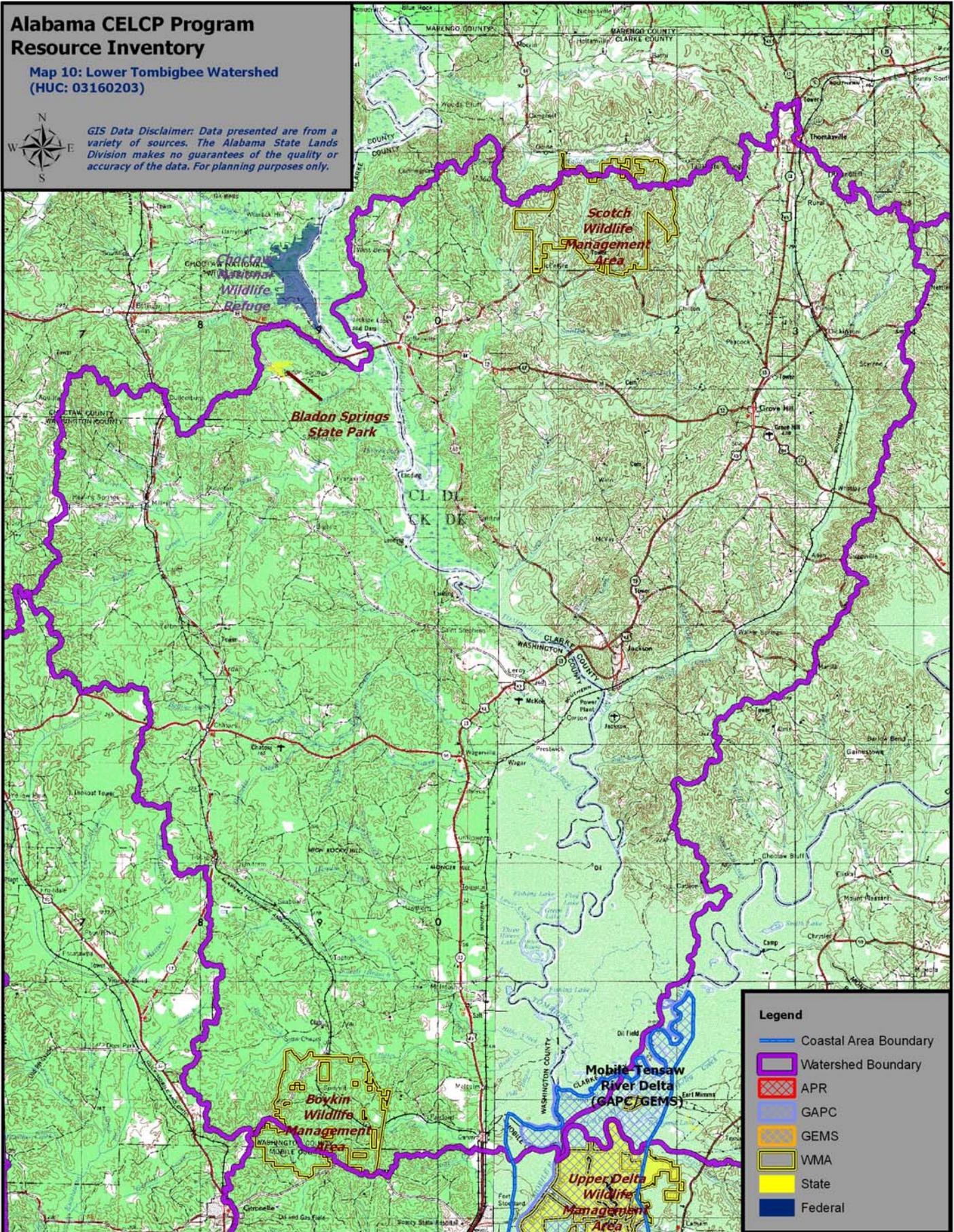
- Coastal Area Boundary
- Watershed Boundary
- APR
- GAPC
- GEMS
- WMA
- State
- Federal

Alabama CELCP Program Resource Inventory

Map 10: Lower Tombigbee Watershed
(HUC: 03160203)



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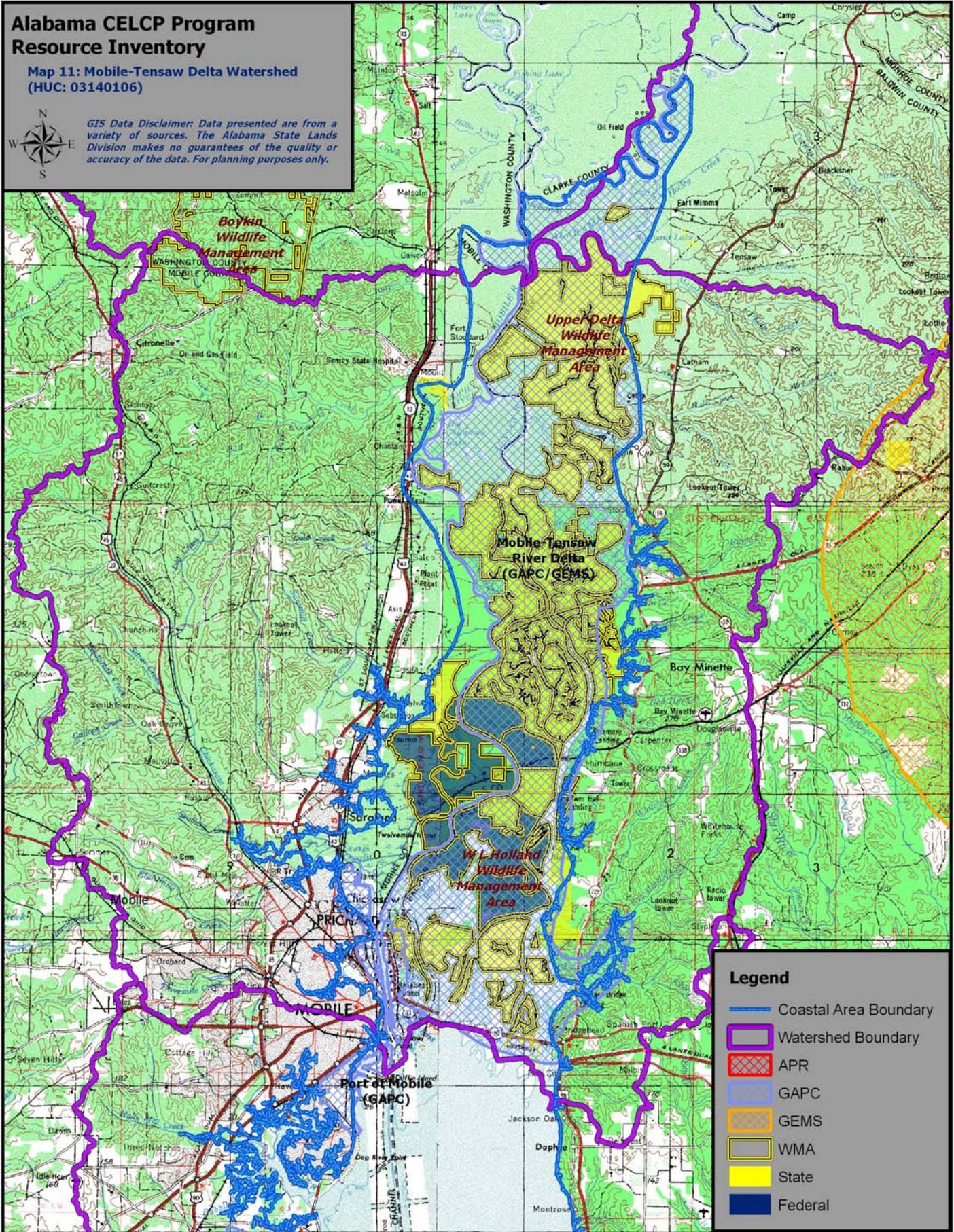
- Coastal Area Boundary
- Watershed Boundary
- APR
- GAPC
- GEMS
- WMA
- State
- Federal

Alabama CELCP Program Resource Inventory

Map 11: Mobile-Tensaw Delta Watershed
(HUC: 03140106)



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Alabama CELCP Program Resource Inventory

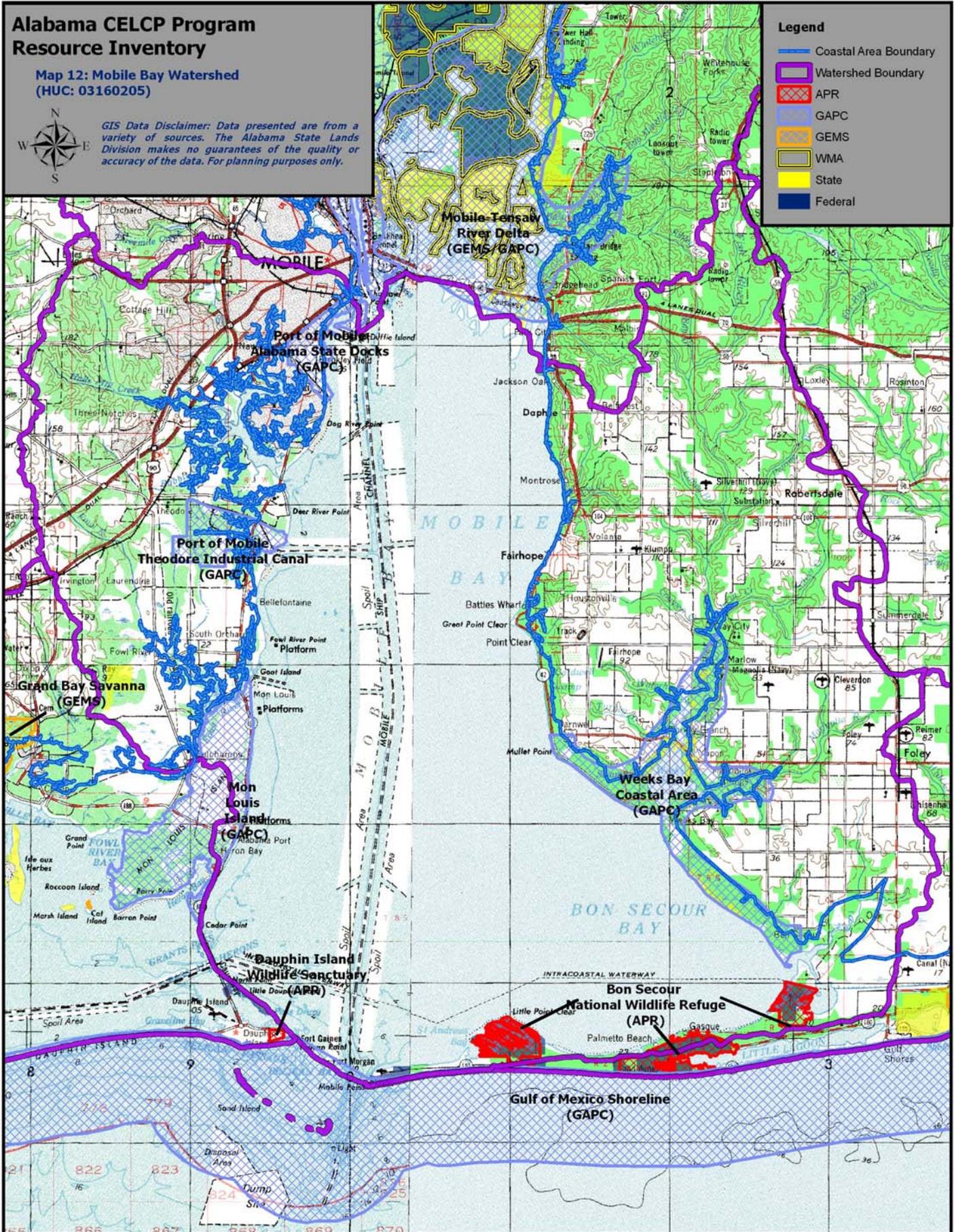
Map 12: Mobile Bay Watershed
(HUC: 03160205)



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Legend

- Coastal Area Boundary
- Watershed Boundary
- APR
- GAPC
- GEMS
- WMA
- State
- Federal

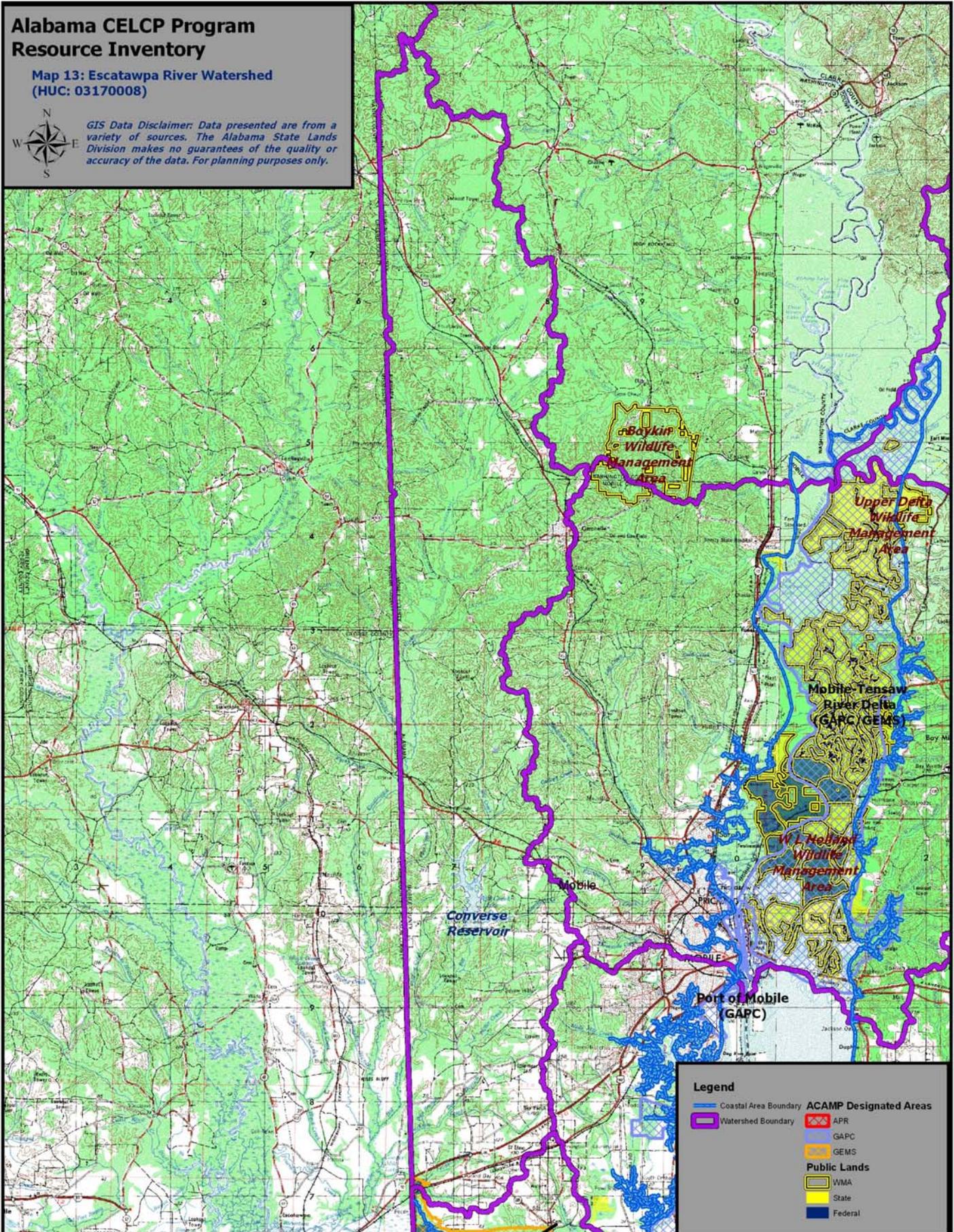


Alabama CELCP Program Resource Inventory

Map 13: Escatawpa River Watershed
(HUC: 03170008)



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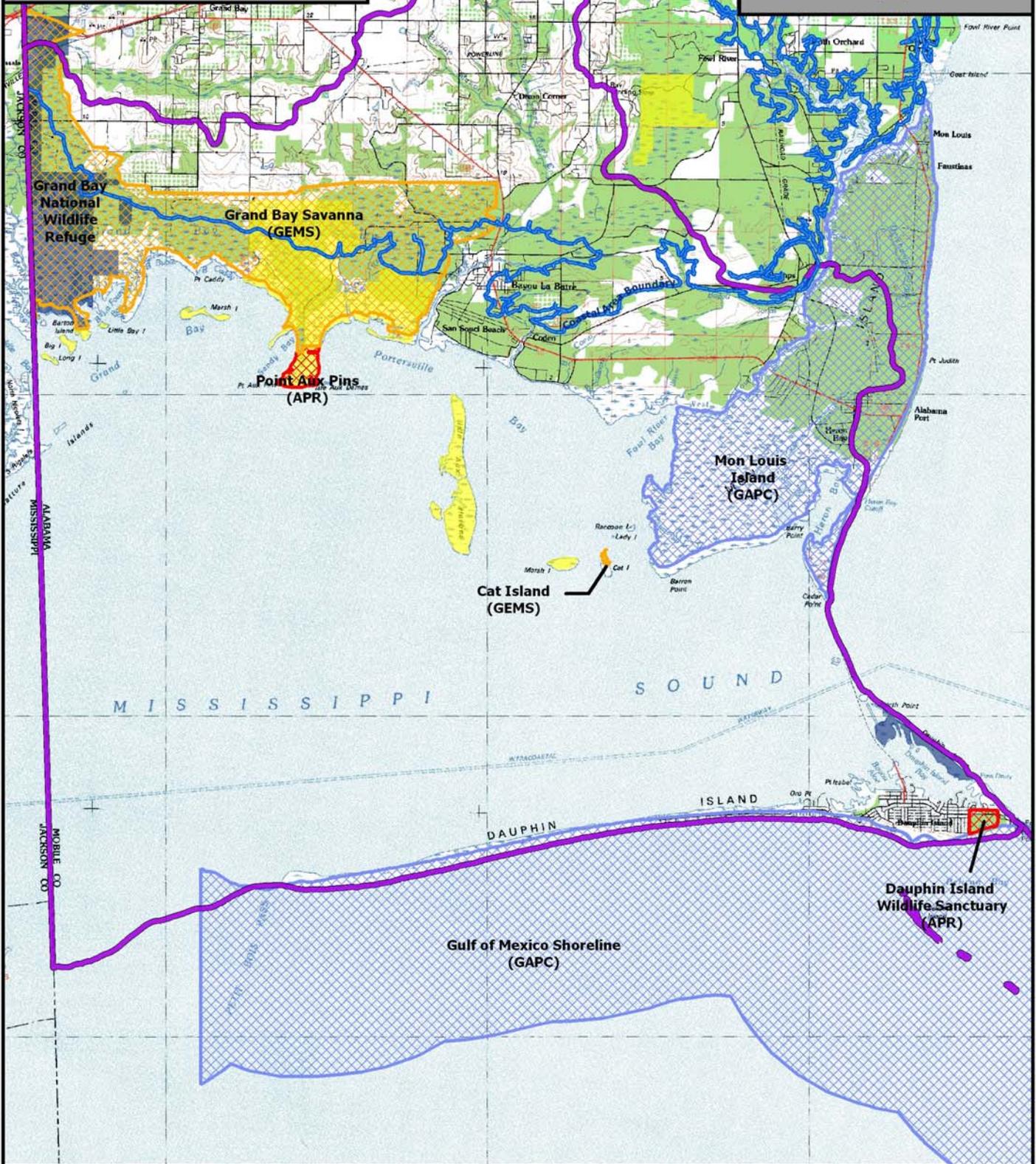
Alabama CELCP Program Resource Inventory

Map 14: Mississippi Coastal Watershed
(HUC: 03170009)

GIS Data Disclaimer: Data presented are from a variety of sources. The Alabama State Lands Division makes no guarantees of the quality or accuracy of the data. For planning purposes only.

Legend

-  Coastal Area Boundary
-  Watershed Boundary
-  ACAMP Designated Areas
 -  APR
 -  GAPC
 -  GEMS
-  Public Lands
 -  WMA
 -  State
 -  Federal



APPENDIX 3
ALABAMA COASTAL AND ESTUARINE LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAM
SITE ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET AND EVALUATION INSTRUCTIONS

**Alabama Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program
SITE RATING CRITERIA AND INSTRUCTIONS**

Proposed CELCP Tract: _____

CELCP Sites are considered to be tracts of land acquired and permanently protected or managed for the purpose of forwarding the stewardship and conservation of native plant or animal communities, or rare or valuable individual members of such communities or any other natural features or significant scientific, recreational, educational, geological, ecological, or scenic value. This definition embraces areas of many sizes, shapes, and characteristics which have bearing on Coastal Alabama's watersheds and their respective estuary systems. The most important of these characteristics for evaluating potential natural areas are listed below.

*Instructions: Rank each of the following characteristics according to its degree of significance at the site. If the quantity or quality of the characteristic is very high, rank it as 3; if lower, 2 or 1. Rank it as 0 if there is no such characteristic on the site, or if it is of very poor quality. **MARK ONE RANKING FOR EACH CHARACTERISTIC.***

I. SITE CHARACTERISTICS RELATED TO INTENDED USE

A. Adequacy of acreage for long term maintenance of the site. (Subtotal: _____ of 3 points)
An adequate land base is of utmost importance to preserve, protect and interpret a natural resource.

- The site has sufficient acreage to support expansion of the significant natural features for which the site is to be purchased. 3
- The site has enough acreage to support in its current status the significant natural features for which the site is to be purchased. 2
- The site does not have sufficient acreage to support the existing significant natural features in their current status, but adjacent acreage might be available. 1
- The site has insufficient acreage to support the existing significant natural features in their current status and no adjacent acreage is realistically available to expand the site 0

Note to Evaluator: Calculate the weighted Site Characteristics subtotal on the cover sheet to this evaluation. If the subtotal is 8 points or greater, continue with the valuation. If the subtotal is less than 8 points, discontinue the rating as the site is not suitable as presented for Forever Wild acquisition.

B. Accessibility. (Subtotal: _____ of 3 points)

Where site accessibility is desirable, a good transportation system which provides good access to the proposed nature preserve is important. Population density in the vicinity of the site is also important. For critical protection sites, inaccessibility is desirable.

If accessibility is a positive factor,

- Site is served by a primary paved road..... 3
- Site is served by a secondary paved road..... 2
- Site is served by an unpaved road..... 1
- Site is not served by a road, is remote and difficult to reach 0

If inaccessibility is a positive factor,

- Site is remote and difficult to reach. 3
- Site is not adjacent to, but less than 1/4 mile from a paved roadway..... 2
- Site is adjacent to an improved road (either dirt or paved)..... 1
- Site is adjacent to roadway and located near an inhabited area 0

C. Contribution of timber, improvements to purchase goal. (Subtotal: ____ of 3 points)

The timber type, quality and quantity and existing improvements on a site may enhance the desirability of a site for a particular purpose. Likewise such features may contribute no positive enhancement or they may even detract from the purchase objective.

- Timber type, quality and quantity or improvements are significant and greatly enhance the purchase goal. 3
- Timber type, etc. or improvements somewhat enhance the purchase goal..... 2
- Timber type, etc. or improvements are insignificant. 1
- Timber type, etc. or improvements are substantial and greatly detract from the purchase goal 0

D. Population served. (Subtotal: ____ of 3 points)

If the purchase goal includes encouraging site use, the proximity of the site to population centers is an important factor. Where site protection is the primary concern, remoteness from population centers contributes to the purchase goal.

- Site accessibility is a goal and site is located within 50 miles of a population center of 250,000 or inaccessibility is the goal and the site is in a sparsely populated area. 3
- Site accessibility is a goal and site is located within 50 miles of population center of 100,000 - if inaccessibility is the goal, site is in somewhat densely populated area. 2
- Site accessibility is a goal and site is located within 50 miles of a population center of 50,000 - if inaccessibility is the goal, site is in densely populated area..... 1
- Site accessibility is a goal and site is located within 50 miles of a population center of less than 50,000 - if inaccessibility is the goal, site is in urban area..... 0

E. Scenic quality. (Subtotal: ____ of 7 points)

Some features of a CELCP area are important primarily to the people who use the site, for they enrich the user's experience with scenic and other values.

The overall scenic quality of the site is:

- Excellent. 3
- Good..... 2
- Fair 1
- Poor..... 0

Identify each of the following features that accurately describe the site.

(Mark 1 if the following statement is true; 0 otherwise):

- Site has scenic water features such as ocean beach, coastal marsh or lagoon 1 0
- Lakes located in a picturesque setting..... 1 0
- Rivers or streams which please the senses..... 1 0
- Site has significant coastal vegetative or geological features with aesthetic appeal 1 0

F. Significant natural communities. (Subtotal: _____ of 4 points)

A natural community is an association of plants and animals which appear together in a repeating pattern. Such communities can be significant because of their rarity (compared to what previously was there) or because they are of high quality (relatively undisturbed).

Identify each of the following features that accurately describe the site.
(Mark 1 if the following statement is true; 0 otherwise):

- The site has one or more significant natural communities
(NOTE: if rating for this item is 0, the subtotal should be 0) 1 0
- The site's natural communities are rare in Alabama..... 1 0
- The site's natural communities are in good condition, or offer substantial restoration potential. 1 0
- The site's natural communities are threatened throughout the CELCP program area..... 1 0

G. Rare Species. (Subtotal: _____ of 4 points)

Identify each of the following features that accurately describe the site.
(Mark 1 if the following statement is true; 0 otherwise):

- Rare species are found on the site
(NOTE: if rating for this item is 0, the subtotal should be 0) 1 0
- These species are relatively rare in Alabama 1 0
- The site's rare species populations are in good condition. 1 0
- The site's rare species are threatened throughout the CELCP program area..... 1 0

H. Geological/Archaeological features. (Subtotal: _____ of 3 points)

Identify each of the following features that accurately describe the site.
(Mark 1 if the following statement is true; 0 otherwise):

- The site has geologic formations or mineral deposits which are unusual or which are useful in understanding Alabama's geologic history..... 1 0
- The site has fossil strata which are unusual or which are useful in understanding Alabama's biological history..... 1 0
- Site contains evidence of unevaluated archaeological or historic elements, or site has potential to contain archaeological elements. 1 0

I. Other significant physical and biological features. (Subtotal: _____ of 20 points)

Identify each of the following features that accurately describe the site.
(Mark 1 if the following statement is true; 0 otherwise):

1. The site has an unusual or outstanding landform..... 1 0
2. The site has wetlands or unusual or outstanding water features. 1 0
3. Site has frontage on gulf, bay or a major river 1 0
4. Site has streams 1 0
5. Site has oxbow lakes, beaver ponds, or other water-related enhancements..... 1 0
6. Site has climax forest, consisting of native trees and other plants 1 0

7. Site has waterfowl habitat as follows:
- Good existing habitat..... 3
 - Fair existing habitat 2
 - Some habitat which can be improved 1
 - None 0
8. Outstanding/Unique Features (steep slopes, ridges, dunes, overlooks, wetlands, natural communities)
- Rate the significance of the outstanding or unique natural features that the tract will protect.*
- Natural feature or habitat designated as a Gulf Ecological Management Site; Geographic Area of Particular Concern; Areas of Preservation and Restoration; or National Estuarine Research Reserve..... 3
 - Natural feature or habitat designated as a Natural Landmark; or a natural feature or habitat on any state register of Natural Areas 2
 - Significant wetland or rare natural community of the State as identified in the Natural Heritage Database, Site supports extremely high quality example of a natural community of the State. 1
 - Sites which have limited or no special natural significance 0
9. Endangered Species Habitat - (*Defined as wildlife and plant species included on endangered or threatened species lists maintained by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.*)
- The ability of the habitat that will be preserved to support state or federally recognized endangered wildlife or plant species*
- Confirmed habitat for a federally listed endangered species 1 0
 - Confirmed habitat for a federally listed threatened species. 1 0
 - Confirmed habitat for U.S.F.W.S. proposed endangered species. 1 0
 - Confirmed habitat for U.S.F.W.S. proposed threatened species 1 0
 - Confirmed habitat for U.S.F.W.S. listed candidate species for listing as a federally endangered or threatened species..... 1 0
10. Habitat for Native Wildlife and Plant Species. The importance of a tract as habitat for native wildlife and plant species.
- The assemblage of ecological communities is characterized by:*
- High diversity, high or low productivity 3
 - Low diversity, high productivity..... 2
 - Low diversity, low productivity. 1
 - Not applicable..... 0

J. Site disturbance.

(Subtotal: _____ of 6 points)

Human activities and non-native plant and animal species can interfere with the normal functions of natural communities and populations of rare species. Such interference has a negative effect on natural areas. (Degree of disturbance - 3, no disturbance, 0, extensive disturbance).

- Lack of man-made disturbance.....3 2 1 0
- Lack of disturbance by non-native plant or animal species.3 2 1 0

K. Rarity of this tract as a natural area. (Subtotal: ____ of 4 points)

Rarity refers to the frequency of occurrence of the type of natural areas within a geographic area. In general, the rarer a type of natural area, the more important will be the need to protect it. (MARK THE HIGHEST SCORE THAT APPLIES:).

- It is nationally rare. 4
- It is rare in adjoining states. 3
- It is rare in Alabama. 2
- It is common throughout the CELCP program area..... 1
- The type is common throughout Alabama 0

L. Fragility of the site. (Subtotal: ____ of 3 points)

Fragility refers to the site's vulnerability to change. For example, limited human use will not harm a river swamp, but will seriously upset the balance of a granite outcrop community. In general, the more fragile the site, the more important will be the need to protect it. Mark 3 if the site is very fragile, and 2 or 1 if it is less so. Mark 0 if the site is not fragile.

- The site is vulnerable to impacts from human use, non-native plants or animals, or off-site land uses.3 2 1 0

M. Natural site designations. (Subtotal: ____ of 3 points)

Many organizations evaluate natural sites and recognize those which have special value. The U. S. Department of Commerce, the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and the U. S. Department of the Interior designate suitable lands for a variety of conservation purposes. The State Lands Division's Natural Heritage Section also has listed qualified sites as significant areas. Sites which have survived these kinds of scrutiny, and have context to coastal systems, are the best of the sites considered for designation. (MARK ONE RANKING).

- Site contains all or a portion of a designated Gulf Ecological Management Site, Areas of Preservation and Restoration, National Forests National Natural Landmark, registered Natural Area, National Wild & Scenic River, Outstanding National Resource Water or Outstanding Alabama Water..... 3
- Site contains all or a portion of a proposed Gulf Ecological Management Site, Areas of Preservation and Restoration, National Forests National Natural Landmark, Natural Area, National Wild & Scenic River, Outstanding National Resource Water or Outstanding Alabama Water 2
- Site contains all or a portion of a Natural Heritage Inventory "Significant Area" or Outstanding Alabama Water". 1
- Site contains no areas with designations of special significance for natural resources 0

N. Cultural site designations. (Subtotal: ____ of 3 points)

The cultural features of a natural area are of significant importance, since management of the natural area may protect and interpret archaeological or historical elements that would otherwise be lost. To what extent are valuable cultural features present on the site?

- Site has a designated or potential National Historic Landmark 3
- Site has known historical or archaeological sites listed or eligible for listing on the National or the Alabama Register of Historic Places..... 2
- Site contains evidence of unevaluated archaeological or historic elements, or site has the potential to contain archaeological elements..... 1
- Site contains no evidence of archaeological or historic elements 0

O. Viability of natural communities. (Subtotal: _____ of 3 points)

The extent to which the natural communities on the site are viable over the long term is:

- Communities will likely be enhanced with good management of this tract 3
- Communities will maintain current status..... 2
- Communities will likely decline in viability 1
- Communities are not viable over the long term 0

P. Viability of rare species population. (Subtotal: _____ of 3 points)

- Species will likely be enhanced with good management of this tract 3
- Species will maintain current status..... 2
- Species will likely decline in viability 1
- Species are not viable over the long term..... 0

Note to Evaluator: Calculate the weighted Site Characteristics subtotal on the cover sheet to this evaluation. If the subtotal is 100 points or greater, continue with the evaluation. If the subtotal is less than 100 points, discontinue the rating as the site is not suitable as presented for acquisition.

II. ACQUISITION CONSIDERATIONS

A. Encumbrances or Restrictions on use. (Subtotal: _____ of 3 points)

- Tract is not subject to encumbrances or restrictions which would prevent immediate use as a CELCP Site..... 3
- Tract is subject to some temporary use restrictions but is immediately accessible for use as a CELCP Site..... 2
- Tract is subject to some temporary use restrictions and is temporarily in-accessible for use as a CELCP Site (i.e., a retained life estate) 1
- Use of the tract for the intended purpose is substantially impaired on a permanent basis..... 0

B. Cost. (Subtotal: _____ of 10 points)

The extent to which a portion of the total value of the property is a gift:

- 100% 10
- 90% 9
- 80% 8
- 70% 7
- 60% 6
- 50% 5
- 40% 4
- 30% 3
- 20% 2
- 10% 1
- None..... 0

C. Adjacent land use influence. (Subtotal: ____ of 3 points)

Land use adjacent to a CELCP Site has a significant impact on potential users. To what extent does the land contiguous to the site enhance the conservation objectives? (Mark only one)

- The site is completely or nearly surrounded by extensive holdings of public land which complement the site 3
- Most of the land contiguous to the site is in private ownership, but its use is compatible with the site and is unlikely to change in the next ten years 2
- Most of the adjacent land is in private ownership, some has been developed and more is likely to be converted within the next ten years to uses which will be incompatible with the proposed purpose 1
- Most of the adjacent land has already been developed, and more than half of this development detracts from the proposed purpose..... 0

D. Cost of improvements. (Subtotal: ____ of 3 points)

The suitability of a site for intended use

- Site is suitable for proposed use and will require very little site work to provide for public use 3
- Site will require some minor site work to provide for public use (e.g., firelanes and boundary posting)..... 2
- Site will require significant development site work (e.g., development of primary access-road and parking) 1
- Site will require major site work 0

E. Enhancement of accessibility to existing public land. (Subtotal: ____ of 3 points)

The extent to which a project reinforces local, regional, state and special planning efforts (e.g. longleaf, coastal zone management, wild and scenic rivers) in addition to being identified for state preservation concerns.

- Reinforces a major ACAMP planning effort 3
- Reinforces a watershed planning effort 2
- Reinforces a county planning effort 1
- Does not reinforce an active planning program 0

F. Investment Security. (Subtotal: ____ of 3 points)

The importance of a project in protecting or increasing the value of existing state open space and recreation resource investments.

- Eliminates or prevents encroachment of incompatible development which would detract from public use and enjoyment of an existing state/federal area or provides the space required to complete recreation development of a state area 3
- Protects against possible encroachment of incompatible development which would detract from an existing state/federal area 2
- Eliminates or prevents encroachment of incompatible development which would severely detract from a state, county or municipal park..... 1
- Project site is not important in preserving integrity of an existing area..... 0

G. Defensibility. (Subtotal: _____ of 3 points)

The vulnerability of a project to disruptive or damaging activities originating outside of the site, once acquired.

- Sites where the surrounding land is effectively protected from incompatible development or site is of sufficient size to include adequate buffers to protect critical resource values 3
- Site where incompatible development of adjacent land is unlikely, or such development would not significantly detract from site's qualities 2
- Site where incompatible development of adjacent land is likely 1
- Site which is highly vulnerable to adverse impact from activities outside of state lands 0

H. Alternative Sites. (Subtotal: _____ of 3 points)

The potential of existing sites to meet the protection or recreation needs which would be served by the tract, and the availability of alternative sites which could serve the same needs.

- Existing public sites in the vicinity of the tract either lack the potential to serve the same needs to provide the same type protection and/or quality of recreational opportunities as the proposed tract or would be more expensive to develop to serve the same recreation needs 3
- Existing public sites could be developed or alternative sites in the vicinity of the tract could be acquired and developed to meet the majority but not all of the needs which would be satisfied by a tract at a comparable cost..... 2
- Existing public sites could be developed or alternative sites in the vicinity of the tract could be acquired and developed to meet all of the needs which would be satisfied by a tract at a comparable cost..... 1
- Existing public sites meet the needs or can be developed to meet the needs or alternative sites with the same protection or recreation potential are available at a lower cost..... 0

I. Development Threat. (Subtotal: _____ of 3 points)

The probability of loss of the site for open space or recreation purposes.

- Incompatible development of the site is highly likely in the near future..... 3
- Incompatible development of a significant portion of the site is expected to occur in the near future 2
- Incompatible development of a significant portion of the site is expected to occur at some future date..... 1
- Not developable 0

J. Immediate Service Area Needs. (Subtotal: _____ of 3 points)

An analysis of the protection needs of the site or recreation needs of the area that will be served by the tract and the opportunities that will be made available indicates:

- High requirement; existing opportunities are extremely limited 3
- Moderate requirement; existing opportunities are inadequate..... 2
- Limited requirement; existing opportunities appear adequate 1
- No requirement 0

K. Public Use. (Subtotal: _____ of 3 points)

The potential increase in public use and enjoyment of the cultural and natural features may either be a positive or negative factor for a nature preserve. Critical habitat and imperiled status of rare species may suggest that a tract be restricted to general public use.

Public use of the site will be:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| If <i>Accessibility</i> is the goal: | If <i>Inaccessibility</i> is the goal: |
| – Substantial | None 3 |
| – Moderate | Minimal 2 |
| – Minimal | Moderate..... 1 |
| – None | Substantial..... 0 |

L. Public Support. (Subtotal: _____ of 6 points)

The amount of public support of the project.

1. General Public Support
 - Projects which have attracted a statewide public interest with little or no opposition 3
 - Projects which have attracted significant regional or local public interest with little or no opposition 2
 - Projects which have not attracted significant public opposition 1
 - Projects which lack widespread public interest and have generated considerable public opposition 0

2. Expressed Public Support
 - Public offers of financial and management assistance 3
 - Public offers of financial assistance 2
 - Public offers of management assistance 1
 - No offers of public support 0

III. MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

A. Extent of multiple use. (Subtotal: _____ of 11 points)

A given natural area may be viable, but the State may be unable to protect it effectively. State resources are limited. Natural areas which the State can easily protect have a higher priority for action than those whose protection will be expensive, difficult, or uncertain to achieve.

1. Suitability for *scientific* research.
 - The site contains resources of scientific interest 1 0
 - Careful scientific research on the site is compatible with resource protection. 1 0
 - The site is within 50 miles of an academic institution which has biological research capability and an interest in using the site for research 1 0

2. Suitability for educational use.

- The site contains resources of educational interest..... 1 0
- Educational programs on the site are compatible with resource protection. 1 0
- The site is within 50 miles of schools or institutions of higher learning which have the desire and ability to use the site for educational purposes 1 0

3. Suitability for recreational use.

The site is suitable for:

- Hunting, 1 0
- fishing, 1 0
- wildlife observation, 1 0
- camping..... 1 0

B. Manageability.

(Subtotal: _____ of 6 points)

The location and design of existing facilities within a proposed Nature Preserve and other man-made or natural features, affect management efficiency. Identify each of the following features which accurately describes the site. (Mark 1 if the following statement is true, 0 otherwise:).

- The site is composed of one main parcel with a continuous boundary 1 0
- The shape of the boundary poses no special management problems 1 0
- There are no inholdings which would significantly affect management. 1 0
- Existing conditions, including natural and man-made features, provide for controlled entry and exit..... 1 0
- There are no easements (access, utility, etc.) which would significantly affect tract management..... 1 0
- The tract is adequately buffered or vacant land is available at reasonable cost..... 1 0

C. Management Costs/Alternative Management Options.

(Subtotal: _____ of 3 points)

The anticipated expense of operating and maintaining the tract..

- Management costs will be less than the amount provided by the Forever Wild stewardship account or the tract will be managed for public use or recreation purposes by a non-state agency 3
- Management costs will be equal to the amount provided by the Forever Wild stewardship account..... 2
- Management costs will be more than the amount provided by the Forever Wild stewardship account..... 1
- Management costs will far exceed the amount provided by the Forever Wild program, or the Forever Wild Program is not involved..... 0