



*A Land  
Conservation  
Vision  
for the*

# **GULF OF MEXICO REGION: AN OVERVIEW**



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Ducks Unlimited

Andrew Kornylak / The Nature Conservancy

## *Executive Summary*

The Gulf of Mexico with its five bordering states—Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas—is a place of rich human culture and great natural beauty. Yet decades of ecological degradation, combined with the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill, have damaged the natural resources this region and its people rely upon.

This report offers suggestions for reviving both the ecosystems and the economies of the Gulf Coast region.

Our approach is one of voluntary land conservation through cooperation with landowners, public agencies, residents and regional stakeholders. More than 86 percent of the agricultural and forested lands in the Gulf Coast region are privately owned. By working with private landowners and residents of local communities, land trusts—nonprofit organizations that actively conserve land through cooperative agreements with landowners, direct land purchases and other methods—can help create a future for the Gulf Coast region built on shared values of hard work, responsible stewardship and a passion for the outdoors.

This report provides a guide to that future.

### *Restoring the Gulf*

Multiple funding sources—made available in the aftermath of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill disaster—present an unprecedented opportunity to rehabilitate the Gulf Coast from environmental damages that have impacted the region for decades. This report provides recommendations for how some of these funds may be used to further land conservation within the region, whether through land purchases, voluntary conservation easements or other methods.

### *Building a Partnership*

The Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation (the Partnership) comprises 30 state, regional and national conservation organizations. Our collective mission is to increase the pace, quality and permanence of voluntary land and water conservation within the Gulf Coast region.

### *Creating a Conservation Vision*

This report summarizes our expertise and the best conservation science within five state maps, each highlighting significant community assets and natural resources. The maps included within this report identify the areas within the Gulf Coast region that are of highest priority for protection and restoration of natural areas and resources, as determined by the consensus of the Partnership. These maps provide assistance to local, regional and national land conservation organizations, stakeholders, elected officials, private landowners and others as they grapple with decisions relating to the future of their communities and natural resources.

Combined, these maps provide a vision for an economically and ecologically restored and resilient Gulf Coast region.



*Gulf Coast commercial fishermen harvest 1.3 billion pounds of fish, shellfish and shrimp annually from these waters, more than the South-Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, Chesapeake and New England regions combined.<sup>1</sup>*



## Introduction

There are treasures to be found within the Gulf Coast region.

Along the 1,631-mile coast that stretches from the Rio Grande in Texas to the Florida Keys lies a diverse region with strong environmental assets and a rich cultural heritage. Here, we find North America's largest river delta, fed by the continent's greatest river, the Mississippi. To the east lies Florida's Everglades—our largest wetland—and to the west we find Texas' Laguna Madre, one of only six lagoons in the world that are saltier than the ocean, or hypersaline. More than 15,000 species of plants and animals live in or around the Gulf of Mexico. This is one of the most environmentally diverse regions in the world.

A string of barrier islands circles the Gulf like pearls on a necklace, providing protection from storms, rest stops for migratory birds and shelter for coastal salt marshes and wetlands. Farther inland, a tangle of bayous, river basins and cypress sloughs invite adventurous paddlers to explore waters home to alligators, manatees and numerous fishes. Bottomlands support swamps and river floodplains while uplands host hardwood and pine forests. It is here that we find some of North America's last great stands of longleaf pine, reduced to just 4 percent of its historic range.

The economy and culture of the Gulf Coast region is built upon this natural wealth. Commercial fishermen harvest 1.3 billion pounds of fish, shellfish and shrimp annually from these waters, more than the South-Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, Chesapeake and New England regions combined.<sup>1</sup> An average of 3.2 million anglers take to the Gulf's waters every year, contributing \$9.8 billion to the region's economy and supporting tens of thousands of jobs from Florida through

Texas.<sup>2</sup> Overall, Gulf Coast tourists spent more than \$34 billion in the region during 2008.<sup>3</sup>

The Gulf Coast region is also the center of the United States' oil industry, producing approximately 54 percent of the nation's crude oil and 52 percent of its natural gas.<sup>4</sup> Ten of America's 15 largest ports dot the coast, and fully half of U.S. international trade tonnage passed through Gulf ports in 2009.<sup>4</sup>

Overall, nearly 21 million Americans live in the cities, towns and rural areas of the Gulf Coast region.<sup>4</sup> Since 1970, the region's population has increased by 109 percent, more than double the national average.<sup>4</sup>

And yet the Gulf Coast region suffers. More than 50 percent of its wetlands have disappeared since 1780, and the region continues to lose wetlands at a faster pace than anywhere else in the United States.<sup>5</sup> Open space is steadily lost to urban expansion and unwise land use policies. The farms of America's heartland send fertilizer, sediment and other pollutants downstream to the Gulf, feeding the

second-largest hypoxic dead zone in the world. The entire Gulf Coast is impacted by sea level rise, which threatens to overrun salt marshes, barrier islands and other coastal habitats.

The explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil drilling rig added to the damage, killing wildlife, damaging coastal habitats and crippling local economies and communities to a degree that we still don't fully understand. Studies suggest the spill could cost the region up to \$22.7 billion in lost tourism revenue<sup>3</sup> and as much as \$8.7 billion in commercial fishing revenue, profits, wages and economic impact over a seven-year period.<sup>6</sup>

The event dealt a severe blow to an ecosystem already weakened by decades of slow decline. Yet it may prove to be the catalyst for the Gulf's salvation.

Although the Deepwater Horizon oil disaster—the worst in United States' history—severely impacted the Gulf Coast's economy and environment, it also captured the nation's attention. Ultimately, the event precipitated the creation of several funding sources, including the RESTORE Act, which will direct potentially billions of dollars toward the conservation and restoration of the Gulf Coast region. The influx of these funds presents an opportunity that few would have dared to hope for—the chance to begin the restoration of the Gulf of Mexico.



*Since 1970, the region's population has increased by 109 percent, more than double the national average.*

### *Restoring the Gulf Coast Region*

In the wake of the Deepwater Horizon disaster, significant funds have been identified for and dedicated to the economic and ecological recovery of the Gulf of Mexico and the larger Gulf Coast region.

These funds include:

- The RESTORE Act, which passed Congress on July 6, 2012, and allocates 80 percent of all administrative and civil fines levied against the responsible parties under the provisions of the Clean Water Act to the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund. These funds will likely number in the billions of dollars.
- The Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, which is administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. These funds originate from a \$2.4 billion settlement of criminal fines associated with the Deepwater Horizon spill, payable over a four-year period.
- Natural Resources Damage Assessments, which will be estimated by federal and state natural resource trustees and will be made available following additional court action.

Additional restoration activities will be implemented by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund (NAWCF).

### *A Partnership for Conservation*

The Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation (the Partnership), founded in 2010, unites 30 state, regional and national conservation organizations with a single mission: To work together within the five Gulf of Mexico states to increase the pace, quality and permanence of voluntary land and water conservation within the coastal region in support of economic, ecological and cultural restoration.

Our goals for this Conservation Vision are:

1. To identify by consensus important conservation opportunities that can help guide region-wide protection, conservation, restoration and resiliency planning efforts across the Gulf Coast;
2. To assist in developing a long-term, comprehensive strategy for the conservation and restoration efforts of the Gulf conservation community, including support for the ecosystem restoration goals set forth in the *Gulf of Mexico Regional Ecosystem Strategy*, issued by the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force and those set forth by the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council; and,
3. To offer a resource for state and federal decision-makers, enabling them to incorporate the important opportunities identified by our land protection partners in developing landscape-level conservation and restoration plans for an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable Gulf Coast.

Land trusts are nimble organizations with deep roots in their local communities. As such, land trusts are well-equipped to work directly with private landowners and local stakeholders toward developing and implementing voluntary land conservation measures that will conserve and protect habitats, natural resources and economic development opportunities.



Hunter Nicols/The Nature Conservancy



Weeks Bay Foundation

Our member organizations have long-established relationships with private landowners and public agencies throughout the Gulf Coast region, and combine decades of experience working to permanently conserve public and private lands and waters for habitat, scenic and cultural resources, nature-based recreation, resilience, water quality, farming, forestry and numerous other ecological, natural and human services. By coming together as a working coalition, we increase the capacity of our individual partners to identify conservation opportunities throughout the region in support of economic and ecological recovery.

In 2013, the Land Trust Alliance (the Alliance), The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and The Conservation Fund (TCF) pooled their resources to assist the Partnership with the implementation of a science-based, replicable planning process to identify priority areas for conservation within the five Gulf Coast states. Our approach included several steps:

1. Identify species, habitats, ecosystem services, natural resources and other priorities for conservation and restoration. This includes four primary focus areas: large contiguous wetlands, migratory birds, scenic rivers and longleaf pine habitat.
2. Combine these factors with local knowledge to identify priority areas for land protection within the RESTORE-defined region of each Gulf Coast state.
3. Implement land protection activities in cooperation with local communities, willing landowners, state governments and/or federal

agencies, placing emphasis upon the lands identified in Step 2.

This report consolidates our experience and priorities with science-based mapping methodologies to identify and map areas that we believe should be considered for land conservation and provides recommendations for implementing land conservation activities within the RESTORE-defined Gulf Coast region. Science-based consensus maps included on each state's summary page identify geographic regions of high conservation value within each state's coastal region.

## How to Use this Report

The maps and recommendations included within this report are meant to be used by our partners and local, state and regional land conservation agencies and private landowners to assist with the selection of significant lands for protection through land purchases, conservation easements or long-term voluntary agreements with landowners. It is the first in a series of web- and print-based resources to be developed by the Partnership. Forthcoming resources will provide more detailed accounts of the restoration opportunities and challenges throughout the region and within each state. Visit [gulfpartnership.org](http://gulfpartnership.org) for more resources and information.

Please note that all maps and recommendations contained within this report and future resources are purely advisory in nature, and have no official, governmental or legal status.

We believe the science-based consensus maps included within this report will be of use for all conservation organizations and individuals invested in the future of the Gulf Coast environment. These maps are meant to be referenced and shared with organizations and individuals within and beyond the conservation community, including stakeholders, residents, landowners, elected officials, community leaders, business leaders, funders and other decision-makers.

These are the treasure maps to the Gulf Coast region.

## Vision

In describing the Gulf of Mexico and its surrounding coastal habitats, a 2014 USDA report<sup>1</sup> stated: “the health of this ecosystem will be decided on private lands.” We agree. Of the more than 290 million acres contained within the five Gulf states—Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas—more than 86 percent are privately owned as agricultural or forested land.<sup>1</sup> The management choices implemented on these private lands will have a profound impact on the region’s economy and environment.

*Of the more than 290 million acres contained within the five Gulf states—Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas—more than 86 percent are privately owned as agricultural or forested land.<sup>1</sup>*

A voluntary land conservation approach to restoration would focus on placing some portion of these private lands and other lands into perpetual protection through land purchases, conservation easements and voluntary landowner agreements. Such an approach proved effective in the wake of the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill and numerous other environmental disasters, both acute and chronic. In order to aid the recovery of fish and wildlife populations, plant communities and ecosystem services such as clean water, we first must protect the lands upon which they rely.

Land conservation and restoration measures start first with the land itself. Proposals for protection are made based on

the presence of one or more priority species, habitats, ecosystem services, recreational opportunities, soil productivity or other parameters on a parcel of land. For example, forested land on either side of an imperiled river may be protected through acquisition or conservation easement in order to create a buffer zone that will reduce runoff and improve water quality. This would then provide native species with the conditions required to recover from population declines, environmental degradation or other challenges.

Land conservation is often a highly cost-effective method for restoring natural systems and managing their long-term benefits. For example, one study places the annual value of ecosystem services provided by healthy wetlands in Louisiana at \$8,437 to \$15,763 per acre.<sup>7</sup>

Within the pages of this report, we share our land conservation vision for the Gulf Coast region. This vision—informed by science, local knowledge and community preference—is of a rich mosaic of well-managed private lands, restored habitats, replenished wildlife populations and thriving communities and economies. We see a future that includes protected and well-managed natural habitats and resources, supporting improved fishing, increasing tourism and more opportunities for outdoor recreation.

We see a future Gulf landscape built on a balance of economic development and conservation.



Carlton Ward/The Nature Conservancy



## Mapping a Way Forward

In order to provide recommendations for conserving the Gulf Coast's most important lands, we first must identify them. To accomplish this task, we pooled our resources and expertise to create a series of science-based consensus maps. These maps identify high-value geographic areas for land conservation, and may serve as a foundation for local, regional or federal organizations working together to protect land, habitat and species within the Gulf Coast region.

The maps included within this report were created through a collaborative process that united state, regional and national conservation organizations with expertise contributed by TNC and TCF. With guidance from TNC and TCF, the Partnership identified landscapes or geographic areas of importance within the Gulf Coast region. These geographic areas were then overlaid onto a map of the region, and areas of overlap were highlighted as they represented consensus and capacity for action.

To those initial recommendations we added four additional map layers, each linked with community values as articulated by local land trusts working within the Gulf Coast region. These include contiguous wetlands larger than 247,000 acres (100 hectares), important stopover habitats for migratory birds, all federal- and state-designated scenic rivers and priority areas for longleaf pine restoration.

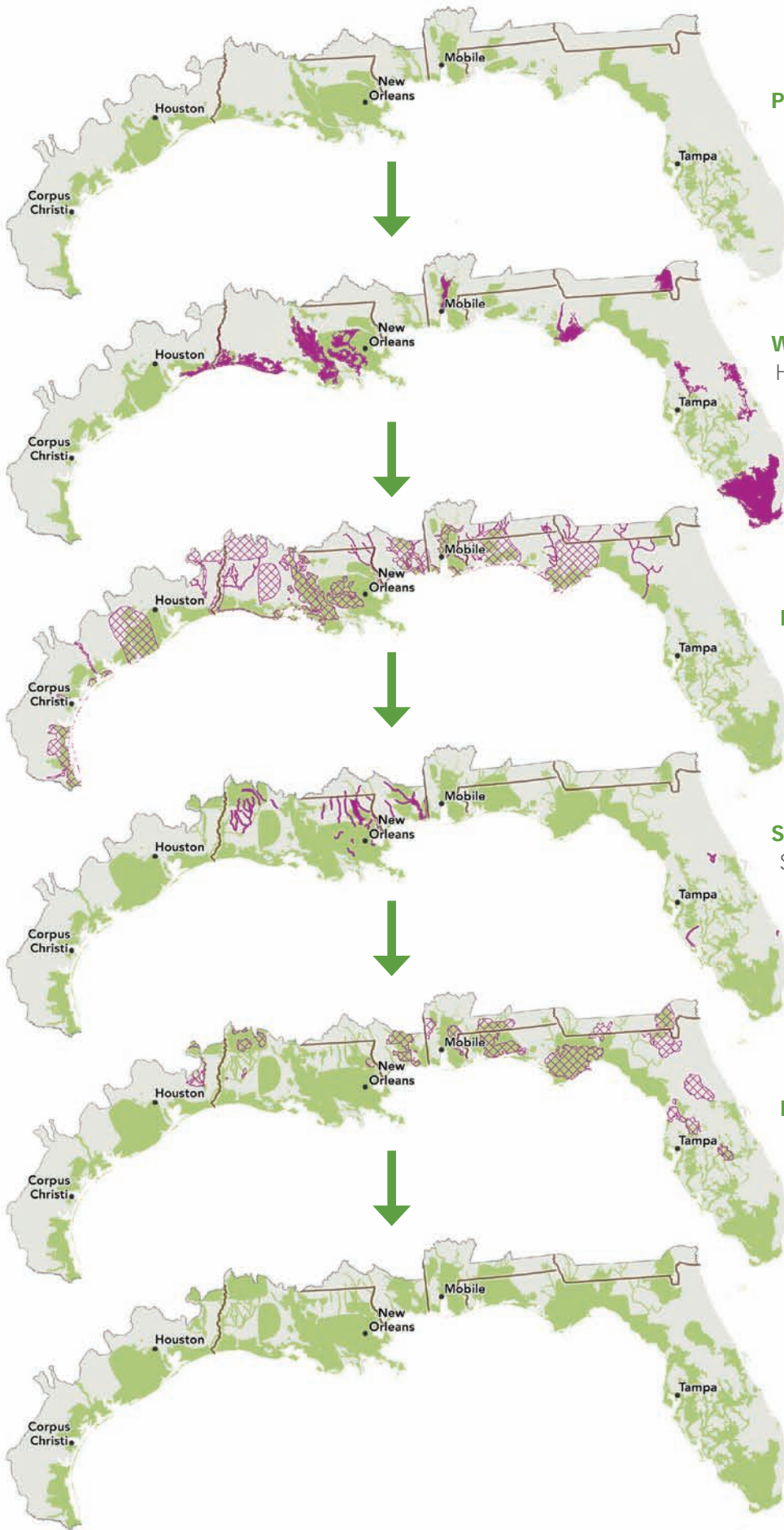
These five parameters—recommended focus areas, wetlands, migratory bird habitat, scenic rivers and longleaf pine habitat—were combined to create our final maps of the region and for each state. These maps are offered as a resource for planning conservation action and land protection priorities, and may be used by regional partners, stakeholders, private landowners and other interested parties to identify especially important zones for the investment of RESTORE Act and additional Deepwater Horizon-related funds and other conservation actions.

For the purposes of this report and our recommendations, we have adopted the RESTORE Act's three parameters to define the Gulf Coast region:

1. In the Gulf Coast states, the coastal zones (including federal lands within the coastal zones) that border the Gulf of Mexico;
2. Any adjacent land, water and watersheds within 25 miles of the coastal zones; and,
3. All federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico.

In total, this region includes more than 122 million acres of land.





**Preliminary Priorities—**

An overlap analysis was conducted to identify places delineated as priorities by either 1) a local land trust and at least one additional local or national land trust or 2) three or more national land trusts.

**Wetlands—**

Healthy wetlands perform critical ecosystem services for the entire Gulf, including water storage and purification, wildlife habitat and recreation. Contiguous wetlands over 247,000 acres (100 hectares) were added.

**Migratory Birds—**

The Gulf provides habitat for hundreds of species and billions of individual migratory birds each year. Important migratory bird stopover habitat was added.

**Scenic Rivers—**

Scenic values provide important recreation and tourism benefits, in addition to the habitat and connectivity benefits of riparian corridors. Designated scenic rivers were added.

**Longleaf Pine—**

Fewer than 4 million acres of the 90-million-acre historic range remains. Priority areas for protection and restoration of longleaf pine were included.

**Final Conservation Vision—**

The combination of these five layers produces a comprehensive, science-based map of focal areas for land conservation in the Gulf.



Andrew Kornyak / The Nature Conservancy



Eric Blackmore/The Nature Conservancy

### *A note on the long-term management of conservation lands*

The acquisition of conservation land—whether for public or private use—requires that all entities consider carefully the responsibility for ongoing management and stewardship of the land. This is particularly true along the Gulf Coast, where the use of prescribed fire and the control of invasive plants can add to management costs. In response to these legitimate concerns, we recommend:

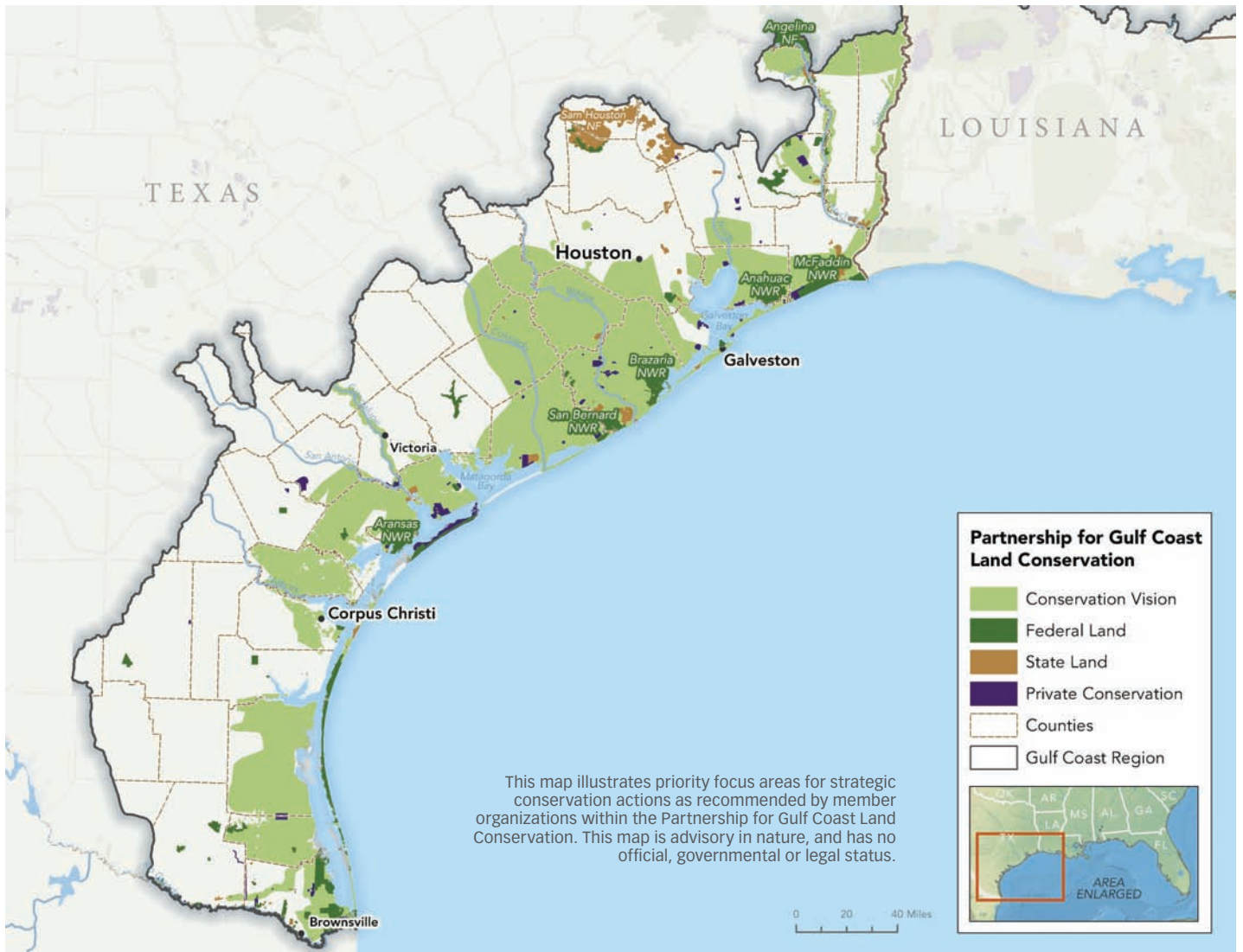
1. The creation of conservation easements—whether on purchased, donated or privately owned lands—must be accompanied by a dedicated reserve fund for long-term monitoring of the easement. This is common practice among land trusts.
2. Conservation easements are an important tool that should be included in any land conservation or restoration initiatives being considered through the RESTORE Act and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation processes, since the basic management responsibilities for lands under easements remain with the private landowner.
3. Where land is actually purchased by nonprofit organizations for long-term ownership, dedicated funds should be established and adequately funded to cover the stewardship, maintenance and defense of the easements.
4. Where land is to be purchased by or for public agencies to enable public recreational access and use, those lands should be strategically located near existing public lands to facilitate cost-effective management. Furthermore, there should be close cooperation between federal and state agencies to share in management responsibilities. Dedicated funds for stewardship and management of permanently protected lands should be allowed as part of the land-purchase costs.

*Land conservation is often a highly cost-effective method for restoring natural systems and managing their long-term benefits.*

# Texas



*Texas is defined by its vast ranchlands, rich floodplains, wetlands, prairielands and much more. The state provides breeding habitat for the endangered golden-cheeked warbler and wintering habitat for whooping cranes, one of the rarest bird species in North America. Texas is also one of the only states where endangered ocelots can be found.*



## Texas

### AGRICULTURE AND LAND CONSERVATION

Snug up against the Texas border with Mexico lies the Rio Grande Valley, an extensive floodplain with numerous oxbow lakes and rich, fertile soil. This four-county region includes some of the United States' only subtropical lands, and is among the most imperiled places in the world.

Fewer than 5 percent of the Rio Grande's original wildlife habitat remains intact. The rest has been consumed by farming, ranching and the outward march of urban development. This is one of the most rapidly fragmenting parts of Texas. This expansion comes at a cost for the Rio Grande Valley's human and wildlife inhabitants. Water is of great concern—both quality and quantity—

and important wildlife habitats are highly threatened. The area is home to the Laguna Madre, one of only six hypersaline lagoons in the world, and provides essential habitat for endangered species such as the ocelot and the Aplomado falcon.

Land protection—both within the Rio Grande Valley and in other agricultural areas along the Texas coast—is an essential part of the answer to the region's water issues and declining wildlife habitat. Small pockets of protected areas already exist within Texas' Gulf Coast region. By protecting land surrounding and connecting these existing protected areas, our partners will conserve and ultimately restore essential coastal

habitat. North of the Rio Grande Valley, for example, a coalition of partners is working to protect the 17,000-acre Powderhorn Ranch—a top priority for land conservation. The Powderhorn Ranch lies just inland from the Matagorda Island Wildlife Management Area and close to the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. The ranch offers an opportunity to more closely link these existing protected areas.

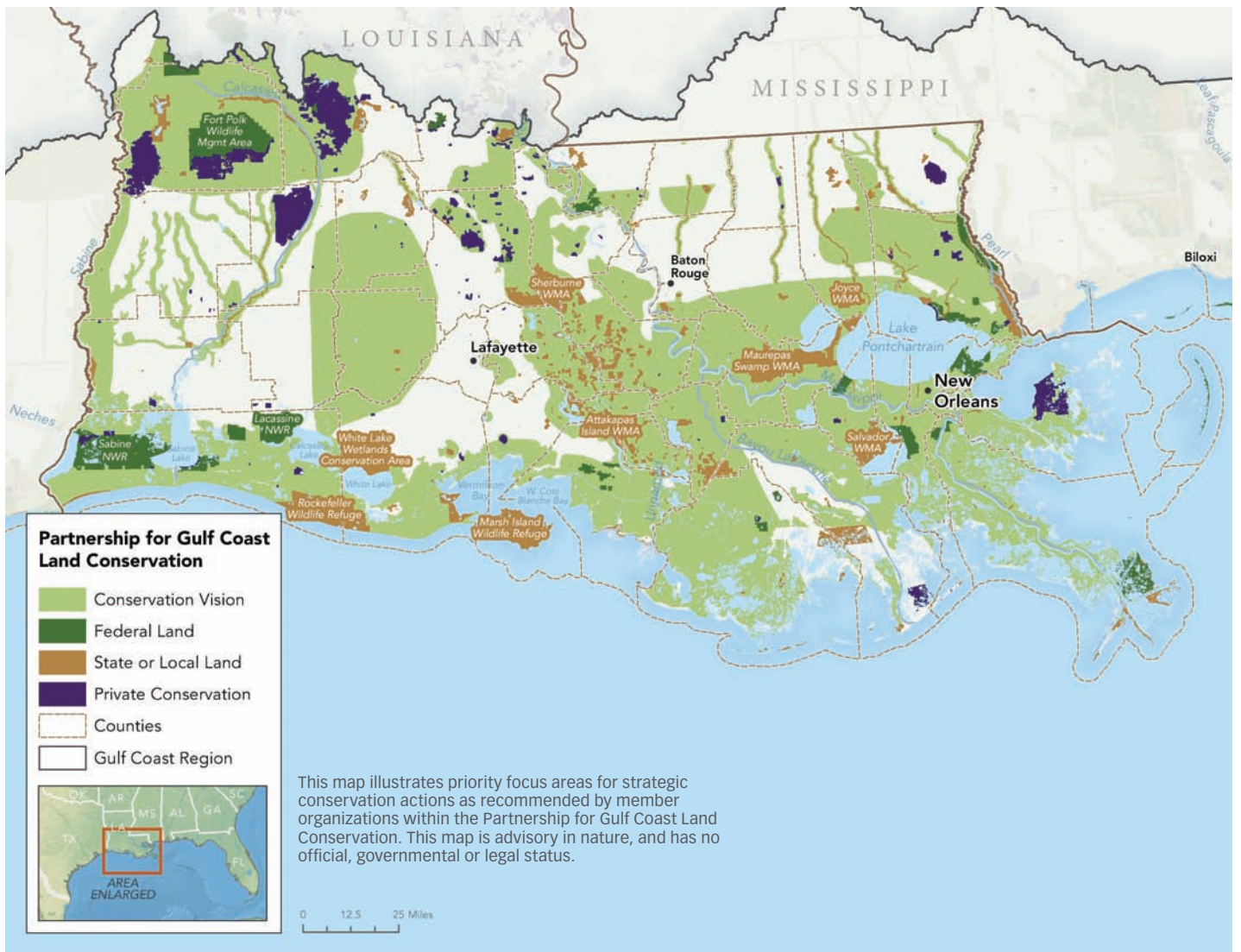
# Louisiana



Sean Gardner/The Conservation Fund



*Louisiana's coastline is shaped by the continent's largest river. Coastal wetlands and barrier islands protect against storm damage and support multitudes of birds and other species. Hardwood bottomlands, forested uplands and agricultural lands dot the state, providing a wealth of habitats for wildlife and recreational or cultural opportunities for people.*



## Louisiana

### UPSTREAM POLLUTION. DOWNSTREAM CONSEQUENCES.

The mighty Mississippi River contributes approximately 90 percent of the freshwater input to the Gulf of Mexico, averaging more than 3.3 million gallons of water per second.<sup>8</sup> The river drains from an immense swath of North America, reaching from Virginia and Pennsylvania in the east to Montana and Canada in the west and north. It is the fourth largest watershed in the world.

In addition to water, the Mississippi River carries millions of tons of sediment and large volumes of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and other runoff into the Gulf of Mexico every year. This entire load is discharged into the Gulf of Mexico at the mouths of the Mississippi and its distributary branch,

the Atchafalaya River, just southeast and southwest of New Orleans.

As it approaches the Gulf of Mexico, the Mississippi River defines the western edge of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin and the eastern edge of the Barataria Basin. Numerous smaller rivers also feed these basins, which directly support the port facilities of New Orleans and Port Fourchon, together responsible for more than \$100 billion in annual economic benefits for the country.<sup>9,10</sup> This is the place where runoff from the Mississippi and other rivers blends with the Gulf's waters, feeding algae blooms and perpetuating a dead zone that covers approximately 5,000 square

miles of the Gulf—an area about the size of Connecticut.<sup>11</sup>

By emphasizing the protection and restoration of shoreline habitat, emergent wetlands and forested wetlands within and around these basins, our partners will be assisting with the reconnection of the Mississippi River to its adjacent wetland systems. These restoration efforts will help reduce nutrient loads entering the Gulf of Mexico, increase the storm resiliency of the region, support recreation- and tourism-based economies and contribute to productive commercial fisheries.

# Mississippi



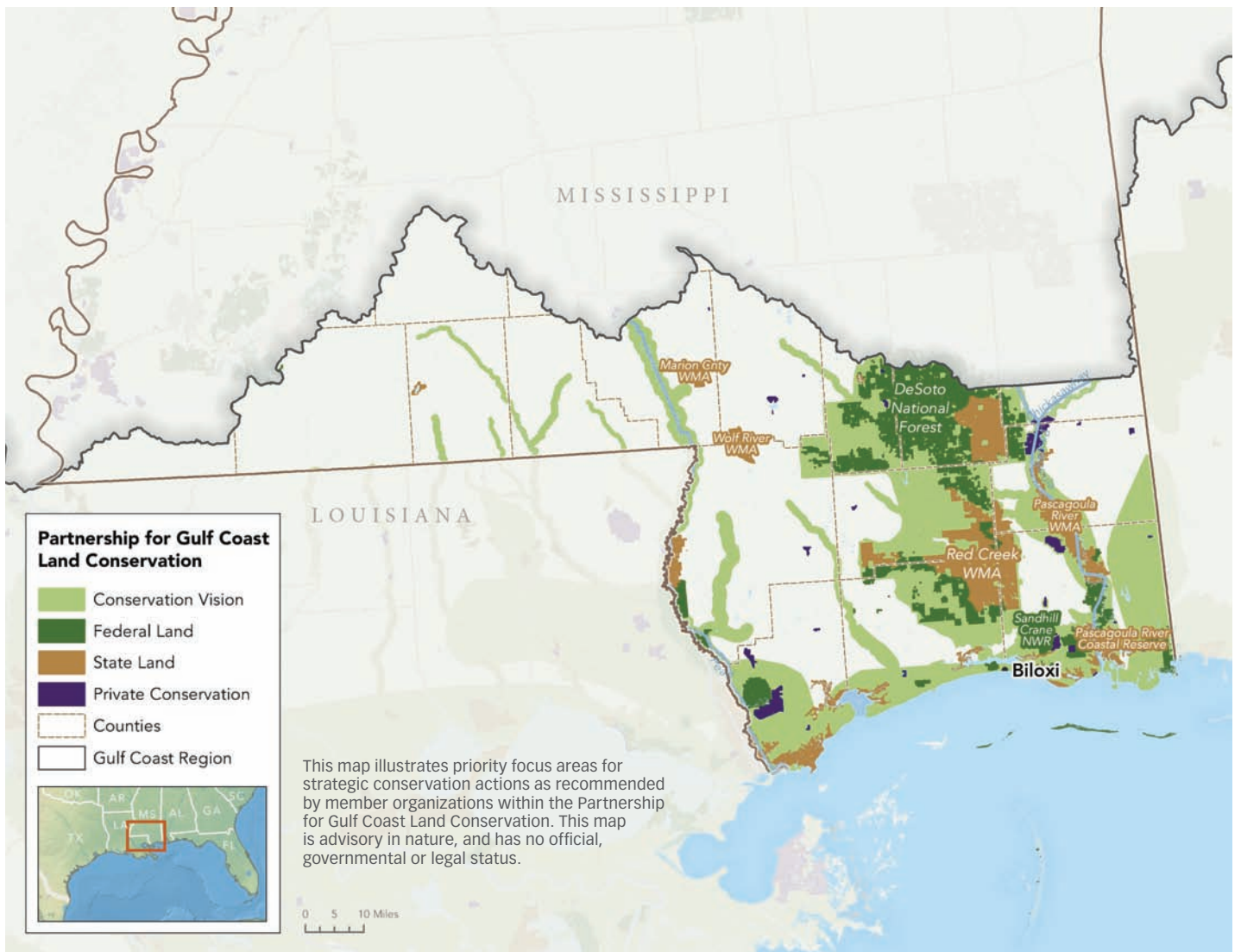
Erika Nortmann/The Nature Conservancy



*Mississippi has it all. Wetlands, scenic rivers, longleaf pine forests and important migratory bird habitats can be found*

*throughout the RESTORE-defined coastal region. Sandhill cranes, alligators, bald eagles, pelicans and other species of conservation concern find temporary or permanent homes within the state's borders, where they coexist with agriculture and urban expansion.*





## Mississippi

### DIMINISHING WETLANDS

Nearly the entire breadth of Mississippi’s coastline falls within our focus area for land conservation. This line where land meets sea is home to coastal marshes, bays, estuaries and wetlands that buffer the ferocity of storms, shelter nesting and migratory birds, slow the advance of erosion and much more. A thin band of barrier islands lies offshore, providing additional protections from hurricanes and other fierce storm systems. The health of Mississippi’s coastal habitats—and those of neighboring Gulf Coast states—relies significantly upon the health of these border areas where water meets land.

Two hundred years ago, Mississippi boasted nearly 10 million acres of wetlands,

much of which lie within its coastal region. Today, that number has declined by approximately 60 percent.<sup>12</sup> This loss mirrors similar declines throughout the Gulf Coast region, and points toward an essential land conservation priority. In order to restore vital ecosystem services—storm protection, erosion control, natural water filtration and more—we must first improve these imperiled habitats, both along the coast and further inland.

Wetland restoration begins with land protection. In order to restore these habitats, we must first protect the lands upon which they exist. Among our focus areas for land conservation are numerous wetlands and

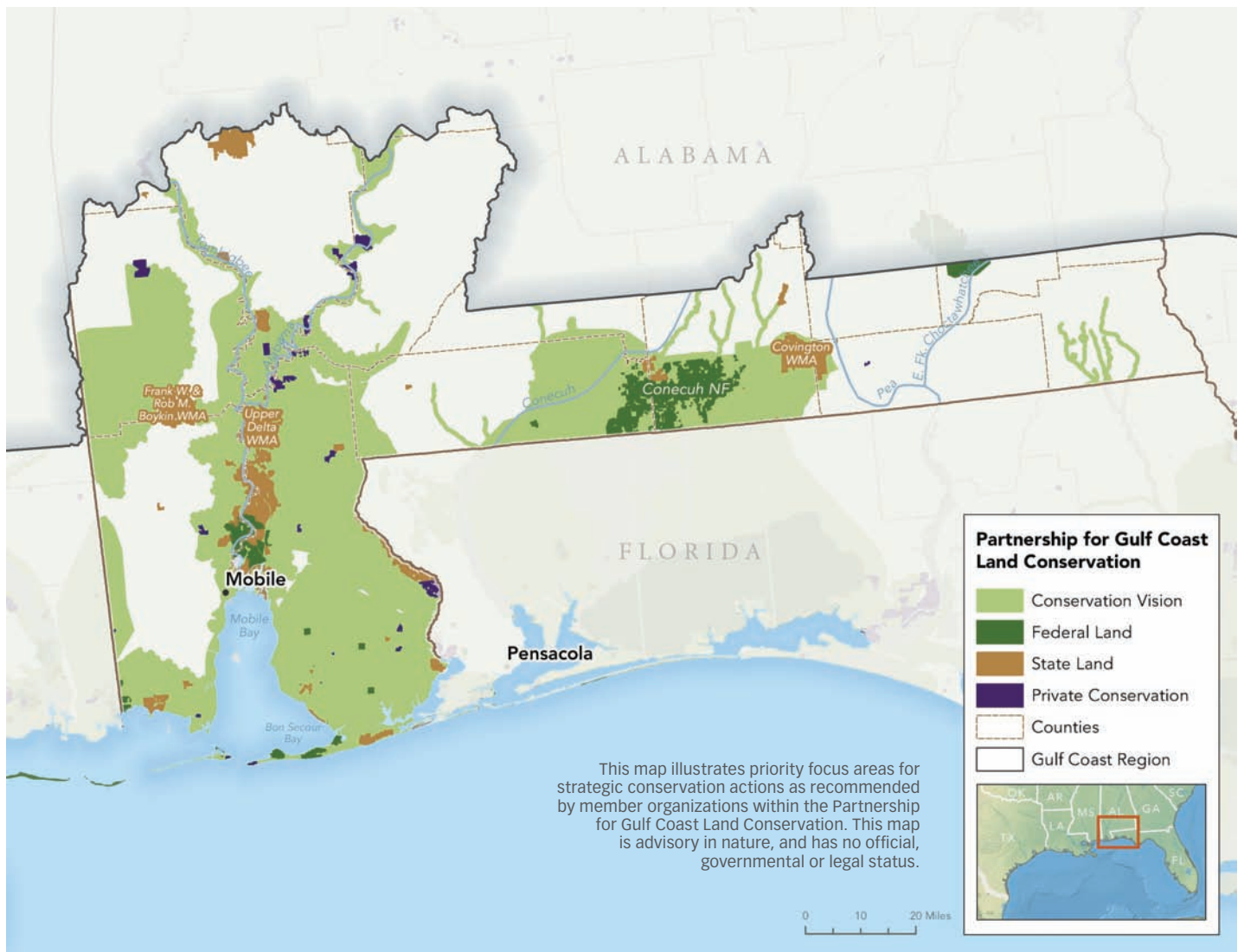
waterways, including the Escatawpa River, Pascagoula River and Pearl River watersheds, vast expanses within the Grand Bay area and the state’s network of coastal preserves.

# *Alabama*



*Alabama's priority habitats include islands in the Gulf of Mexico, wetlands within the Mobile River Basin and some of the most extensive longleaf pine forests outside of Florida. Migratory birds*

*share their habitats with manatees, sturgeon, red-bellied turtles and other species of conservation concern.*



## Alabama

### MIGRATORY REST STOPS

Dauphin Island is a narrow spit of sand and dunes near the mouth of Mobile Bay and Bon Secour Bay. It is a popular destination for vacationers. It is also essential habitat for many migratory bird species, some of which fly about 600 miles nonstop from the Yucatan Peninsula to reach this island.

This island and the Fort Morgan peninsula to its east are critically important migratory rest stops within the Mississippi Flyway, a migratory corridor that spans three Gulf Coast states—Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. It is part of the longest migratory route in the Western Hemisphere, extending from within the Arctic Circle to Argentina, Chile and Patagonia. Nearly

half of all North American bird species—including 40 percent of all waterfowl—spend at least part of their lives within the Mississippi Flyway.

Alabama is wealthy with bays, estuaries, floodplains and other habitats that provide essential food and security for migratory birds. Like rest stops along a highway, these habitats provide migratory birds with much-needed opportunities to recover and refuel before continuing along their journey. Without healthy habitats within the coastal region of the Mississippi Flyway, many of these birds would not make it to their final destinations. For these reasons, we include the entirety of Dauphin

Island and the Fort Morgan peninsula within our conservation vision for the state of Alabama. By protecting these key coastal habitats along this migratory corridor, we will support the survival of birds that nest throughout North America.

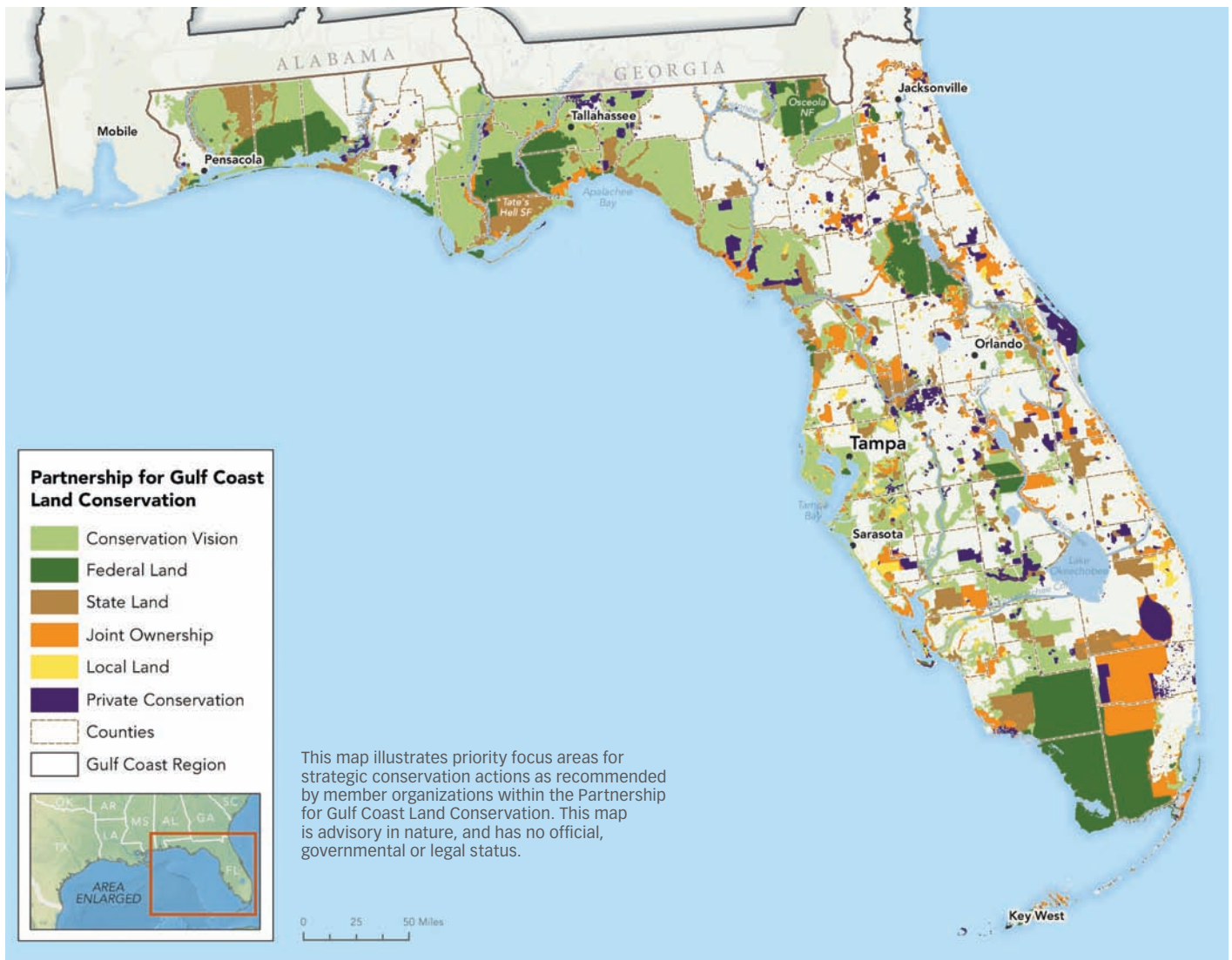
# Florida



Cheryl Mall/The Nature Conservancy



*Within its borders, Florida contains the greatest expanses of imperiled longleaf pine forests in the region, the largest sub-tropical wetlands—the Everglades—in the country and the most important loggerhead sea turtle nesting beaches in the world. The state’s highly productive estuaries and expansive seagrass beds are critical to both Florida’s and the entire Gulf Coast region’s environment and economies.*



## Florida

### BEACHES FOR TURTLES

The coastline of Florida’s Sarasota County provides vital nesting habitat for sea turtles. More loggerhead sea turtles nest here than anywhere else along the Gulf of Mexico’s sandy shores. Here, sea turtle nest density can be greater than one nest every 10 feet—one 80-foot stretch of beach hosted 10 sea turtle nests in 2014.

During the months immediately following the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and partners rescued more than 450 oiled sea turtles. Many others were likely never found, and the total number of turtles that died at sea due to complications relating to the oil spill will never be known.<sup>13</sup>

The recovery of these Gulf of Mexico populations relies on the continued successes of nesting sea turtles in Florida, where the vast majority of these individuals begin their lives. To protect sea turtles within the Gulf of Mexico, we must protect the beaches upon which they hatch.

To maintain Florida’s strong sea turtle populations, multiple beaches along Florida’s coast have already been protected. But more must be done. For these reasons, additional coastal conservation within this region remains a high priority for our Florida partners.



# Resources and References

## Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation Partner Organizations

### ALABAMA

**Alabama Coastal Heritage Trust**  
(alabamacoastalheritagetrust.org)

**Alabama Forest Resources Center**  
(alfrc.org)

**Alabama Land Trust** (allandtrust.org)

**Coastal Land Trust** (985-674-3332)

**Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries**  
(coastalbirding.org)

**Weeks Bay Foundation** (weeksbay.org)

### FLORIDA

**Alachua Conservation Trust**  
(alachuaconservationtrust.org)

**Apalachee Land Conservancy**  
(apalacheelandconservancy.org)

**Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast** (conservationfoundation.com)

**Florida Wildlife Federation** (fwfonline.org)

**Lemon Bay Conservancy**  
(lemonbayconservancy.org)

**Tall Timbers Research Station & Land Conservancy** (talltimbers.org)

**Tampa Bay Conservancy, Inc.**  
(tampabayconservancy.org)

**Wildlands Conservation**  
(wildlandsconservation.org)

### LOUISIANA

**Land Trust for Louisiana**  
(landtrustforlouisiana.org)

**Trust for Coastal Stewardship, Inc.**

### MISSISSIPPI

**Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain** (ltmcp.org)

**Mississippi Land Trust**  
(mississippilandtrust.org)

**Wolf River Conservation Society, Inc.**  
(wolfriverconservationsociety.org)

### TEXAS

**Bayou Land Conservancy**  
(bayoulandconservancy.org)

**Galveston Bay Foundation** (galvbay.org)

**Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust**  
(gbrtrust.org)

**Texas Agricultural Land Trust**  
(txaglandtrust.org)

### REGIONAL / NATIONAL

**Ducks Unlimited** (ducks.org)

**Land Trust Alliance** (landtrustalliance.org)

**Mississippi River Trust**  
(mississippirivertrust.org)

**National Audubon Society** (audubon.org)

**Pelican Coast Conservancy**  
(pelicancoastconservancy.org)

**The Conservation Fund**  
(conservationfund.org)

**The Nature Conservancy** (nature.org)

**Trust for Public Land** (tpl.org)

## References

<sup>1</sup> Natural Resources Conservation Service. (2014) Gulf of Mexico Restoration: A Private Lands Vision for Success. U.S. Department of Agriculture.

<sup>2</sup> National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA. (2012) Fisheries Economics of the United States, 2011. U.S. Department of Commerce.

<sup>3</sup> Oxford Economics. (2009) Potential Impact of the Gulf Oil Spill on Tourism. Oxford, UK.

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