

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN OVERVIEW

In 2014, Goodwyn, Mills and Cawood (GMC) was contracted by the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) through its Project Implementation Committee (PIC), to conduct a comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (WMP) for the Fowl River Watershed located in Mobile County, Alabama. The Watershed is identified by the hydrologic unit code (HUC) 031602050206 and encompasses approximately 39,769 acres within southern Mobile County as shown in **Figure 1.1**. The headwaters of Fowl River begin near Theodore, Alabama and flow south to Bellingrath Gardens where the split between East Fowl River and West Fowl River occurs. East Fowl River flows northeast directly into Mobile Bay, and West Fowl River flows south into Mississippi Sound (see **Figure 1.2**).

1.2 WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN PURPOSE

The MBNEP PIC identified three goals in the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) as part of their five-year strategy (2013-2018): Improve trends in water quality in priority watersheds that discharge into priority fishery nursery areas; improve ecosystem function and resilience through protection, restoration, and conservation of habitats, including beaches, bays, backwaters, and rivers; and restore and/or expand human connections to Alabama’s coastal resources.

To achieve these goals, the PIC has identified a need for comprehensive watershed planning within the Mobile Bay estuary. To assist the PIC in achieving this objective, the MBNEP has received funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund to develop a comprehensive management plan for the Fowl River Watershed. The purpose of this plan is to guide watershed resource managers, policy makers, community organizations, and citizens to protect the chemical, biological, and cultural integrity of the Fowl River Watershed, and specifically its waters and habitats supporting healthy populations of fish, shellfish, and wildlife and providing recreation in and on these waters of coastal Alabama.

Although currently only minimally to moderately developed, the Fowl River Watershed is experiencing rapid development as a “bedroom community” for Mobile, Alabama. Increasing population, traffic, and impervious surfaces could have detrimental effects on the health of the ecosystem unless proper planning is performed. Realizing this, the Fowl River Watershed was identified as a high priority for planning to preserve and improve its existing environmental quality.

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FIGURE 1.1: FOWL RIVER WATERSHED GENERAL LOCATION MAP

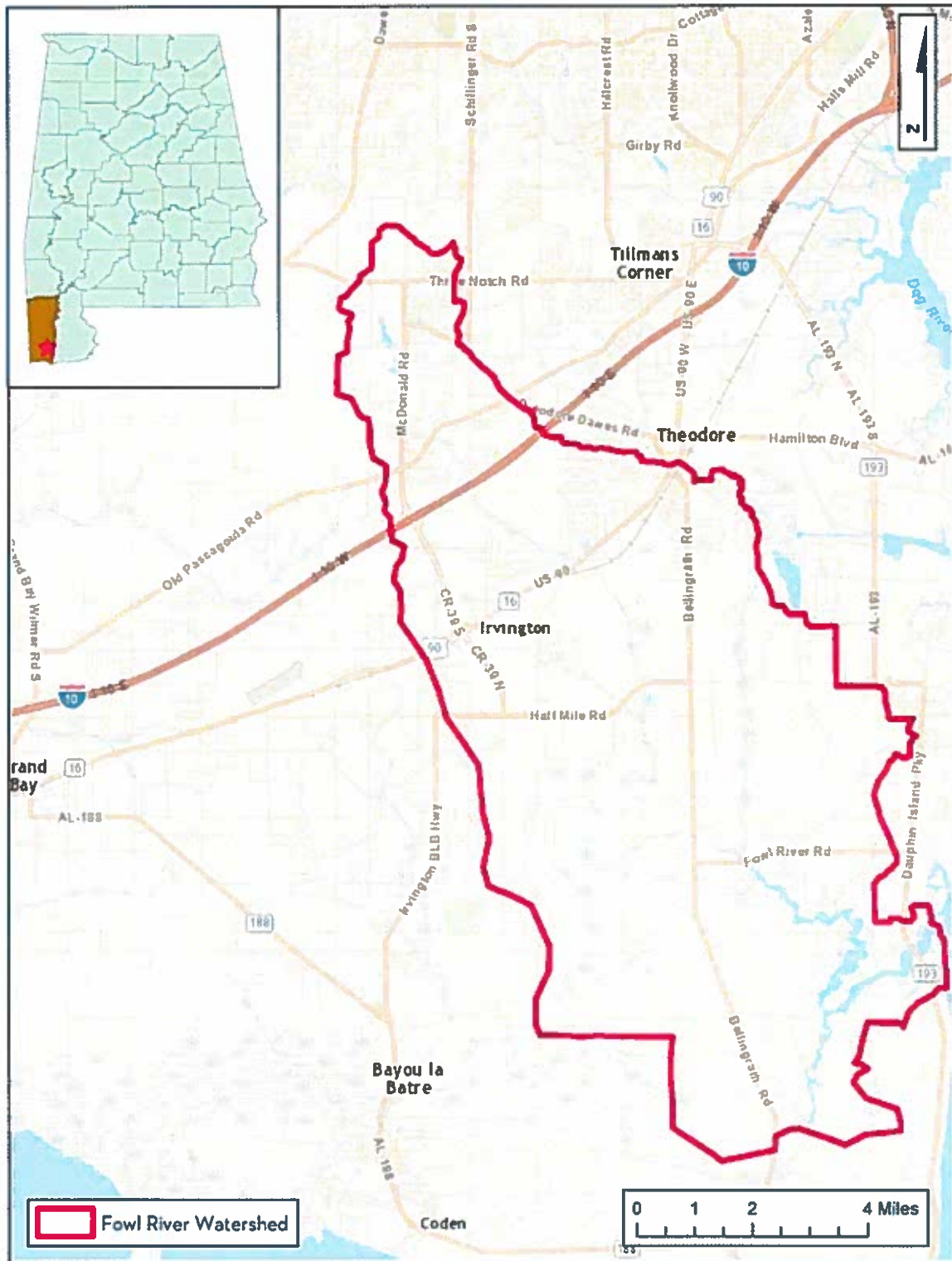
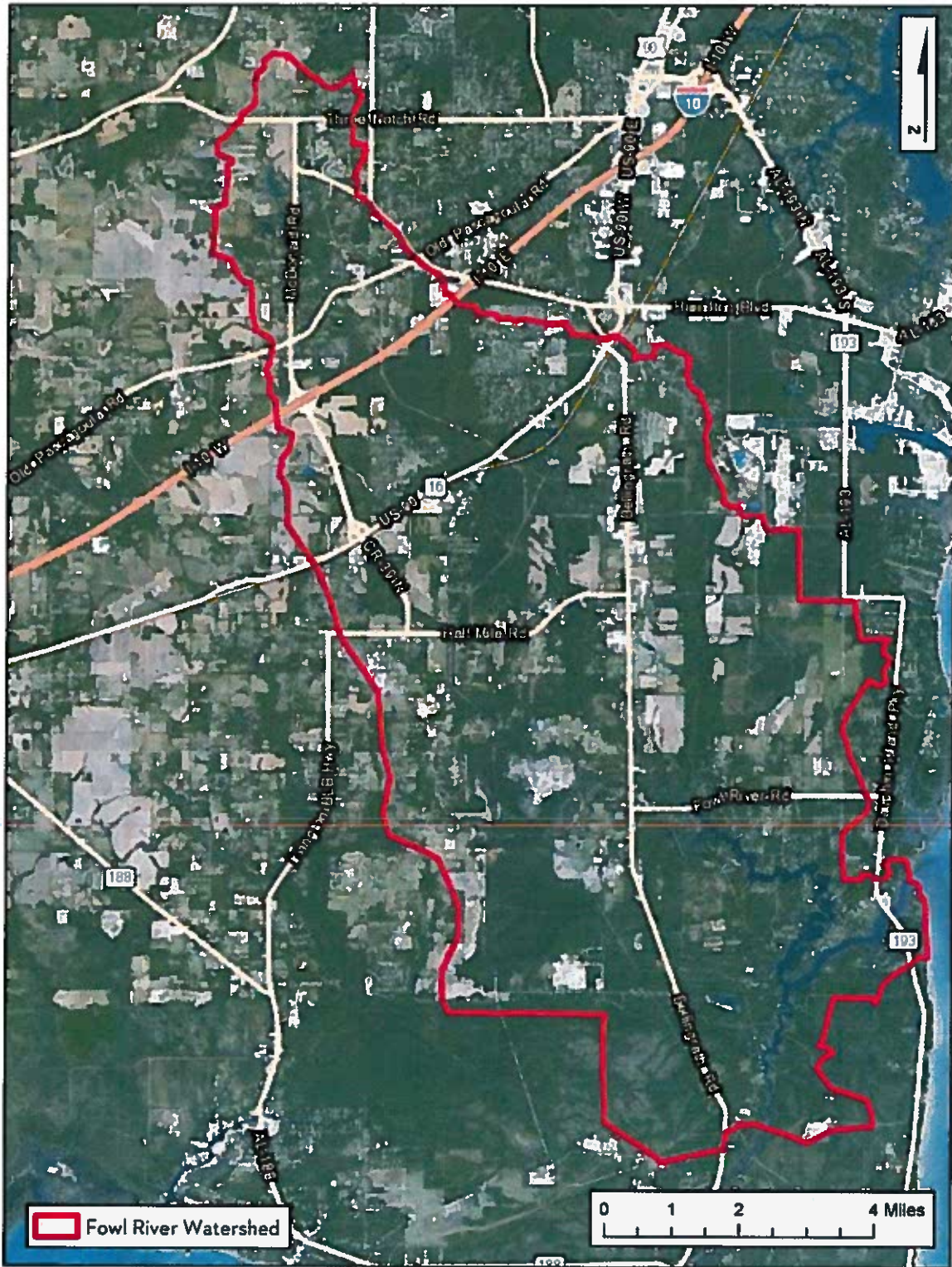


FIGURE 1.2: FOWL RIVER WATERSHED 2013 AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH



EPA's NINE KEY ELEMENTS OF A WATERSHED PLAN

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has identified nine key elements of watershed planning that are critical for achieving improvements in water quality. These nine elements and their relevant sections in this WMP are as follows:

- 1** Identification of causes of impairment and pollutant sources or groups of similar sources that need to be controlled to achieve needed load reductions, and any other goals identified in the watershed plan (Section 4).
- 2** An estimate of the load reductions expected from management measures (Section 8).
- 3** A description of the nonpoint source management measures that will need to be implemented to achieve load reductions in paragraph 2 (Section 6), and a description of the critical areas in which those measures will be needed to implement this plan (Section 5).
- 4** Estimate of the amounts of technical and financial assistance needed, associated costs, and/or the sources and authorities that will be relied upon to implement this plan (Section 8, Section 10).
- 5** An information and education component used to enhance public understanding of the project and encourage the public's early and continued participation in selecting, designing, and implementing the nonpoint source management measures that will be implemented (Section 8).
- 6** Schedule for implementing the nonpoint source management measures identified in this plan that is reasonably expeditious (Section 8).
- 7** A description of interim measurable milestones for determining whether nonpoint source management measures or other control actions are being implemented (Section 10).
- 8** A set of criteria that can be used to determine whether loading reductions are being achieved over time and substantial progress is being made toward attaining water quality standards (Section 4, Section 10).
- 9** A monitoring component to evaluate the effectiveness of implementation efforts over time, measured against criteria established under item 8 immediately above (Section 10).