

Accelerating Headwater Land Protection in the Mobile Bay Watershed



moffatt & nichol



Kari Servold, Dan Dumont, and Roberta Swann

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Healthy Watersheds Consortium (HWC)

- ▲ **Launched in 2015, 6-year partnership, \$11 million**
- ▲ **Partnership between:**
 - U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities (partnership manager/ program co-funder)
 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (program co-funder)
 - U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) (program co-funder)
- ▲ **Goal of the HWC Grant Program:** “accelerate strategic protection of healthy, freshwater ecosystems and their watersheds”

Area of Interest – Mobile Bay Watershed



Project Goal

To advance strategic protection of **healthy** headwater habitats in the Mobile Bay Watershed

- ❖ **Partners:** MBNEP, M&N, Alabama Forest Resources Center
- ❖ **Key Stakeholders:** Alabama Wildlife Federation

Photo credit: MBNEP

<http://www.mobilebaynep.com/the-landscape/watershed-map/>

HWC Grant Project Goals

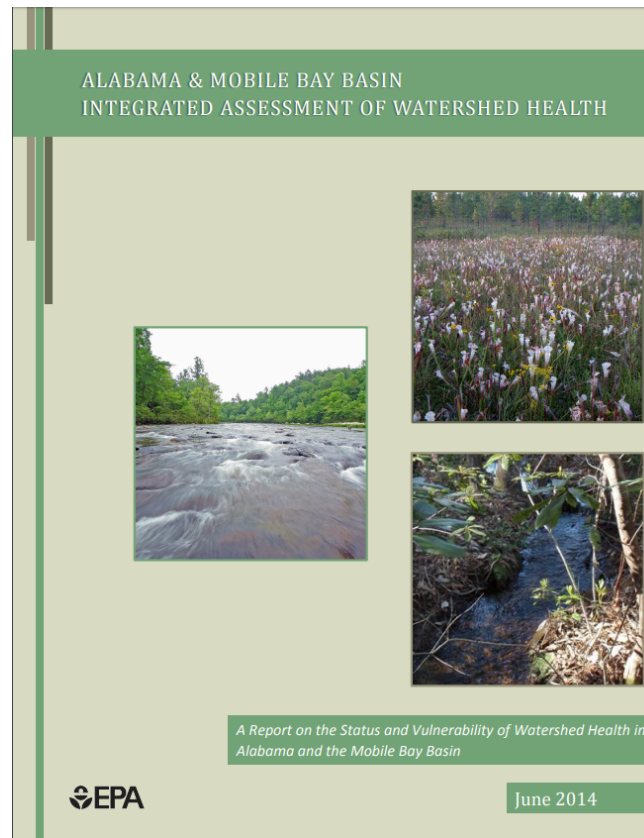
- ▲ Short-term:
 - Develop a *Mobile Basin Habitat Atlas*
 - **Conserve 10,000 acres** over 2-year grant period (acquisition, easement, etc.)
- ▲ Overall:
 - Build upon prior successes, watershed assessments and strategic efforts
 - Be strategic in conservation rather than opportunistic

HWC Grant Project Goals

- ▲ Long-term:
 - **Conserve 100,000 acres** via acquisition or easement over the next 5-10 years
- ▲ Overall:
 - Build upon prior successes, watershed assessments and strategic efforts
 - Be strategic in conservation rather than opportunistic

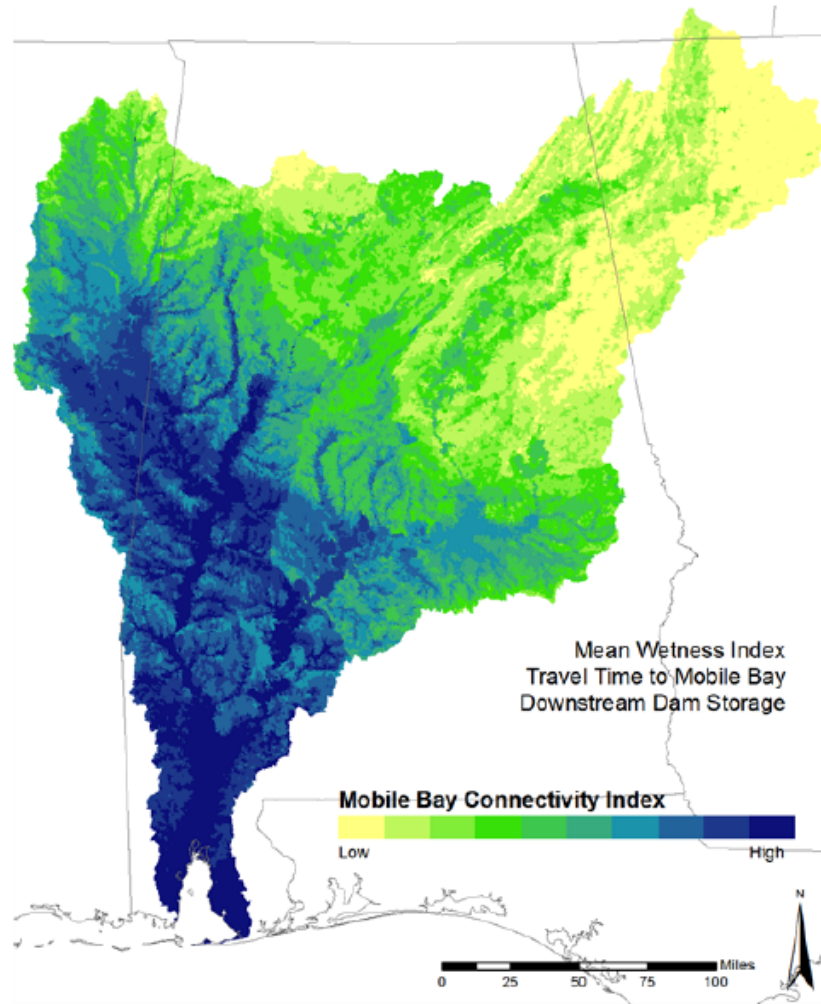
Data Sources:

- ▲ Alabama and Mobile Bay Basin Integrated Assessment of Watershed Health
- ▲ MBNEP's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP): 2013-2018 & draft 2019-2023
- ▲ Conserving Alabama's Coastal Habitats: Acquisition and Restoration Priorities of Mobile and Baldwin Counties
- ▲ Open Source Databases
- ▲ Landscape Conservation Cooperatives
 - Gulf Coastal Plains & Ozarks LCC



Identify:

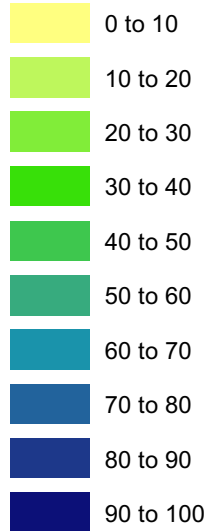
Hydrologically Connected Catchments



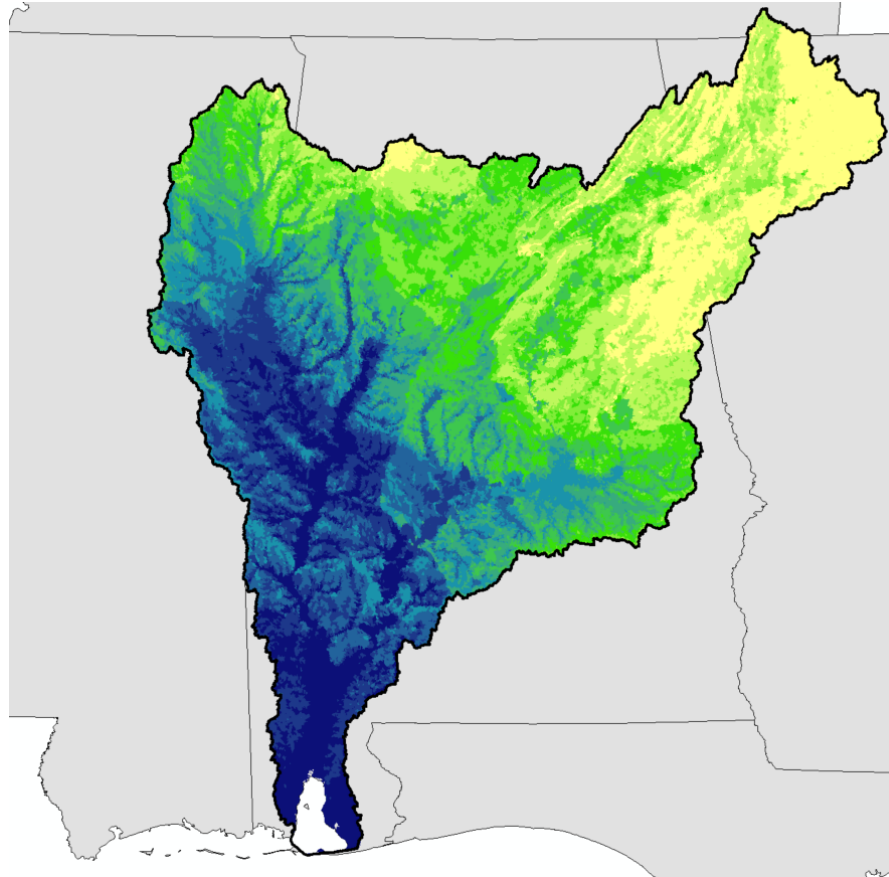
Hydrological Connectivity (HC)

Legend

Hydrologic Connectivity Index Scores



High

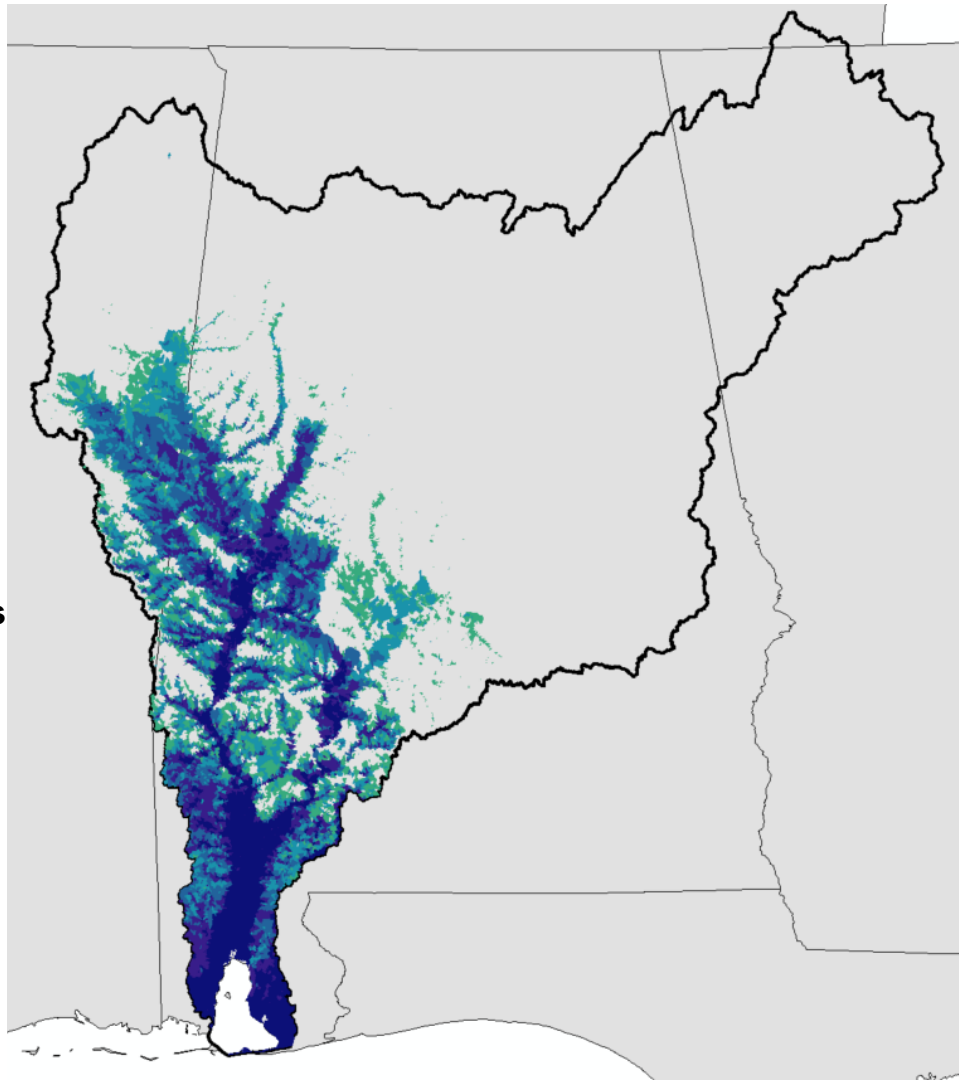
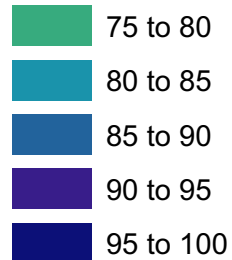


HC Results (≥ 75 index score):

16,714 Catchments
6,492,440.08 Acres
10,144.44 Miles²

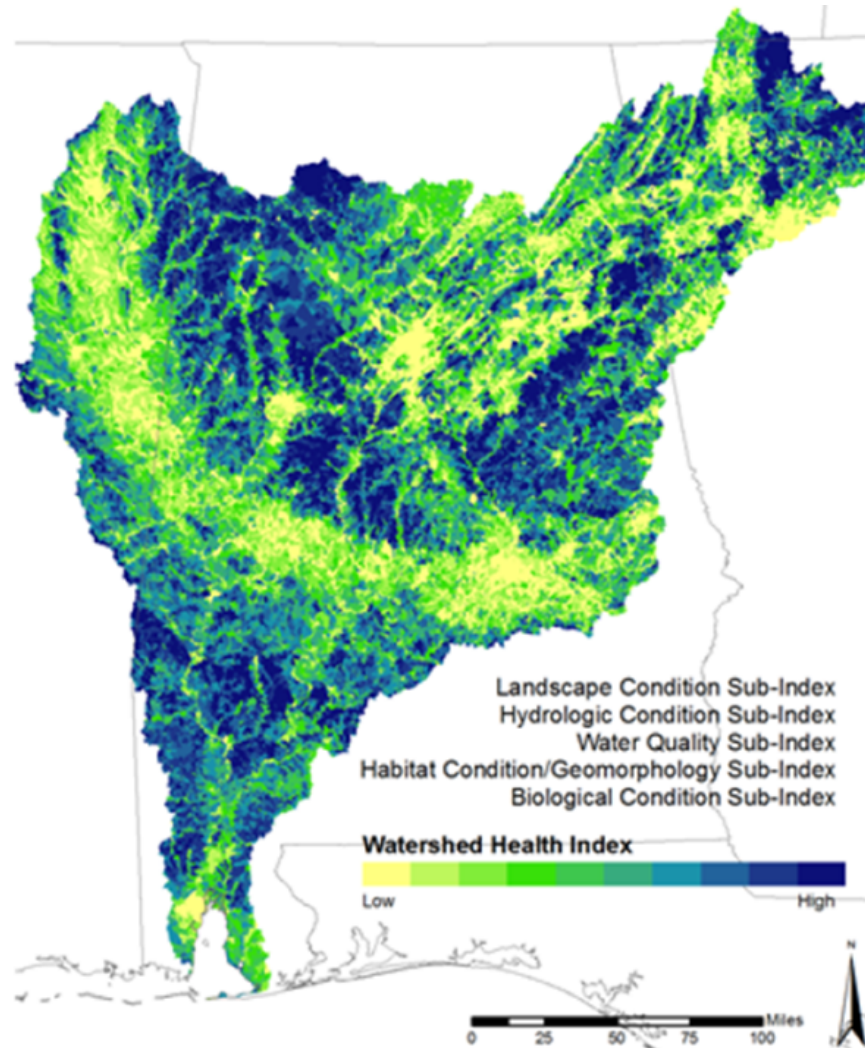
Legend

Watershed Connectivity Index Scores



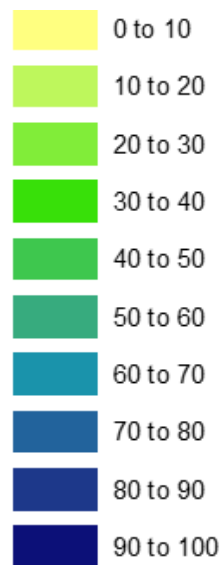
Identify:

Healthy
Habitat
Catchments

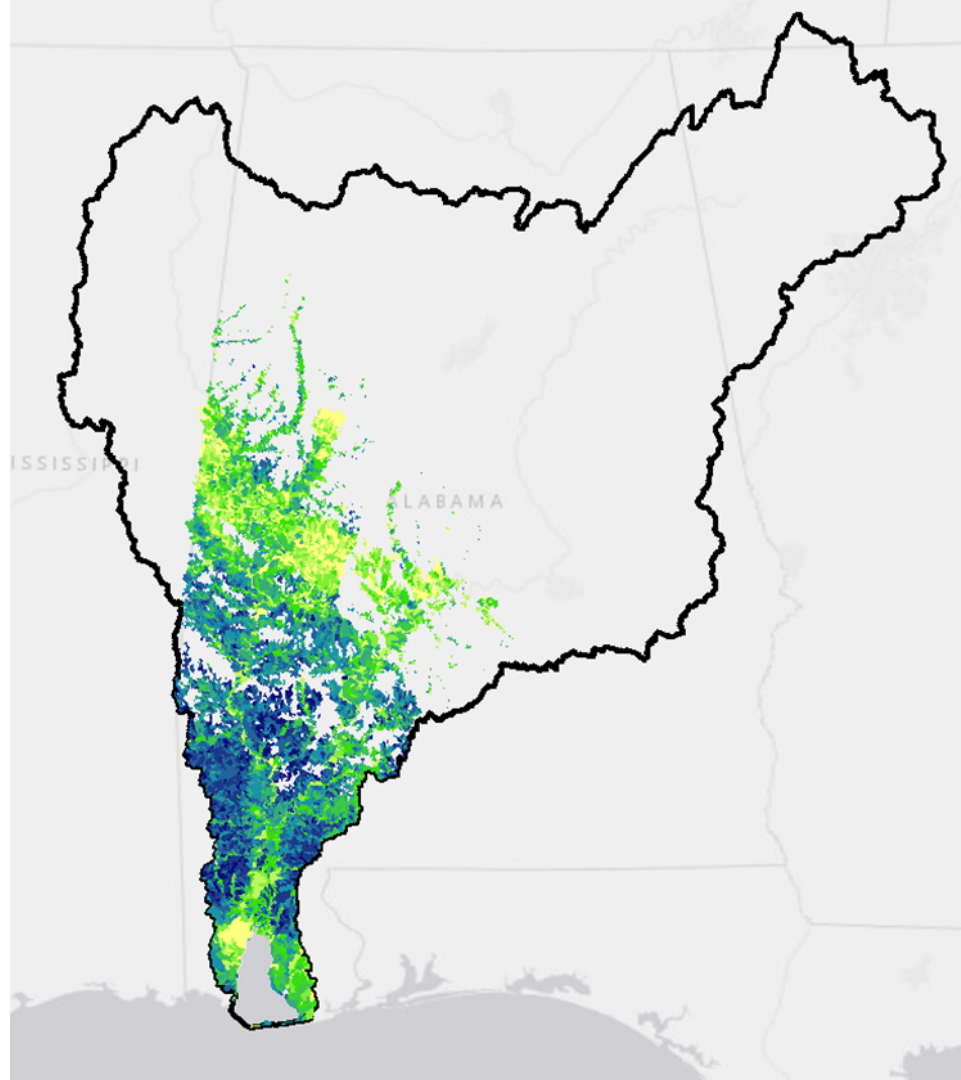


Habitat Health & Location in AL

Watershed Health Index Score



high

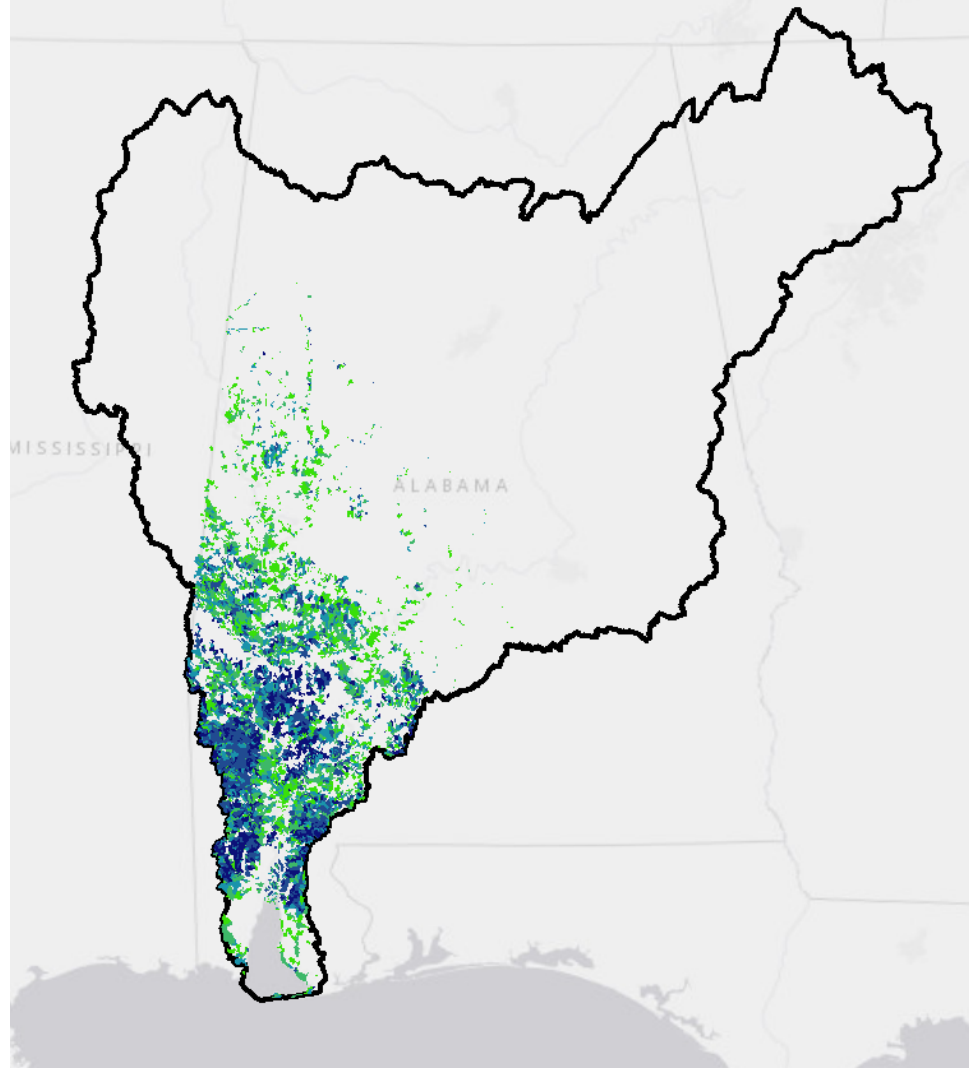


Habitat Health ≥ 50 & in Alabama (HC ≥ 75 index score):

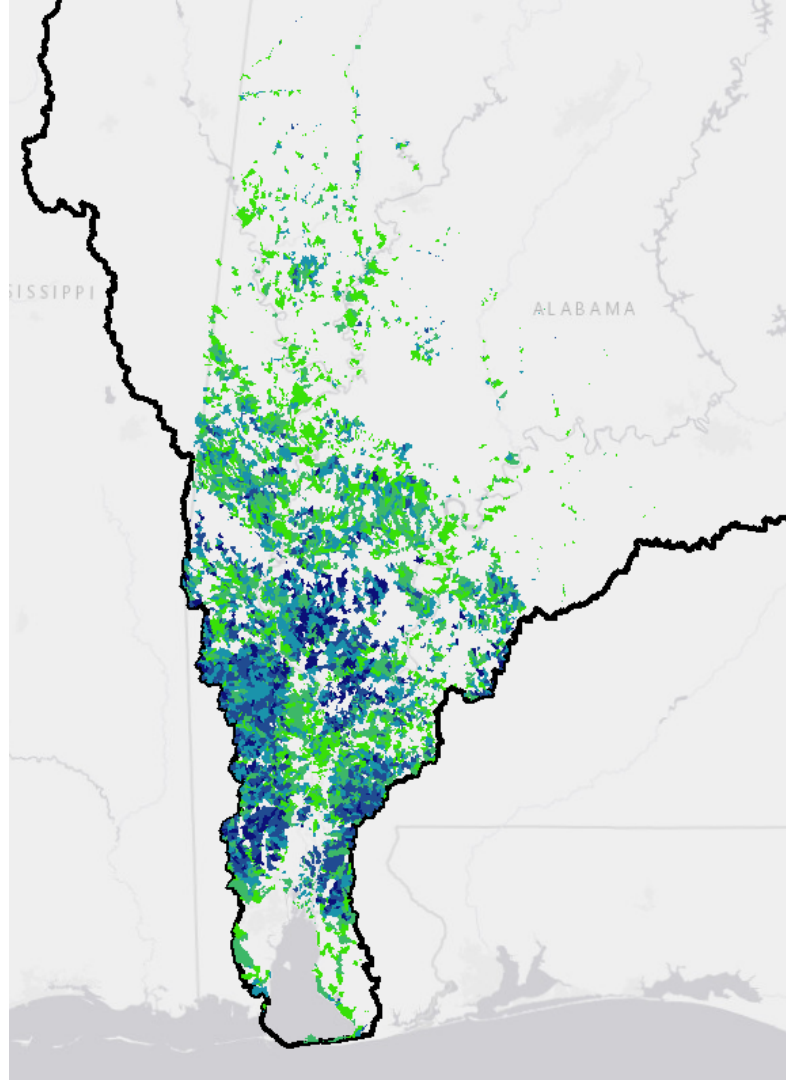
7,755 Catchments
3,062,408 Acres
4,785 Miles²

Watershed Health Index Score

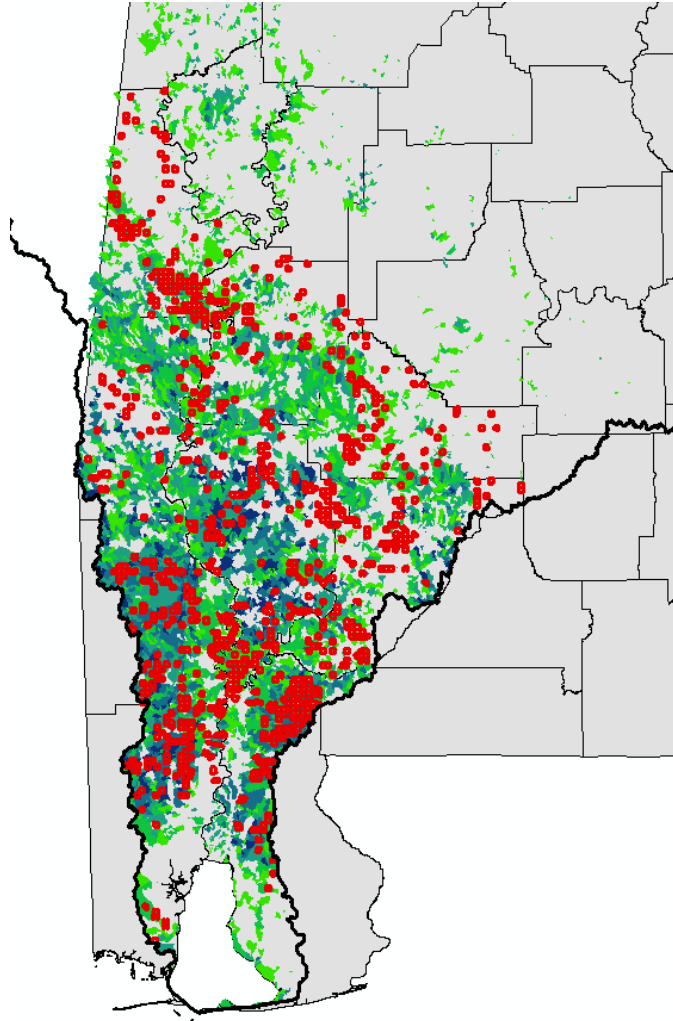
- 50 - 60
- 61 - 70
- 71 - 80
- 81 - 90
- 91 - 100



Priority Headwater Habitats: Catchments

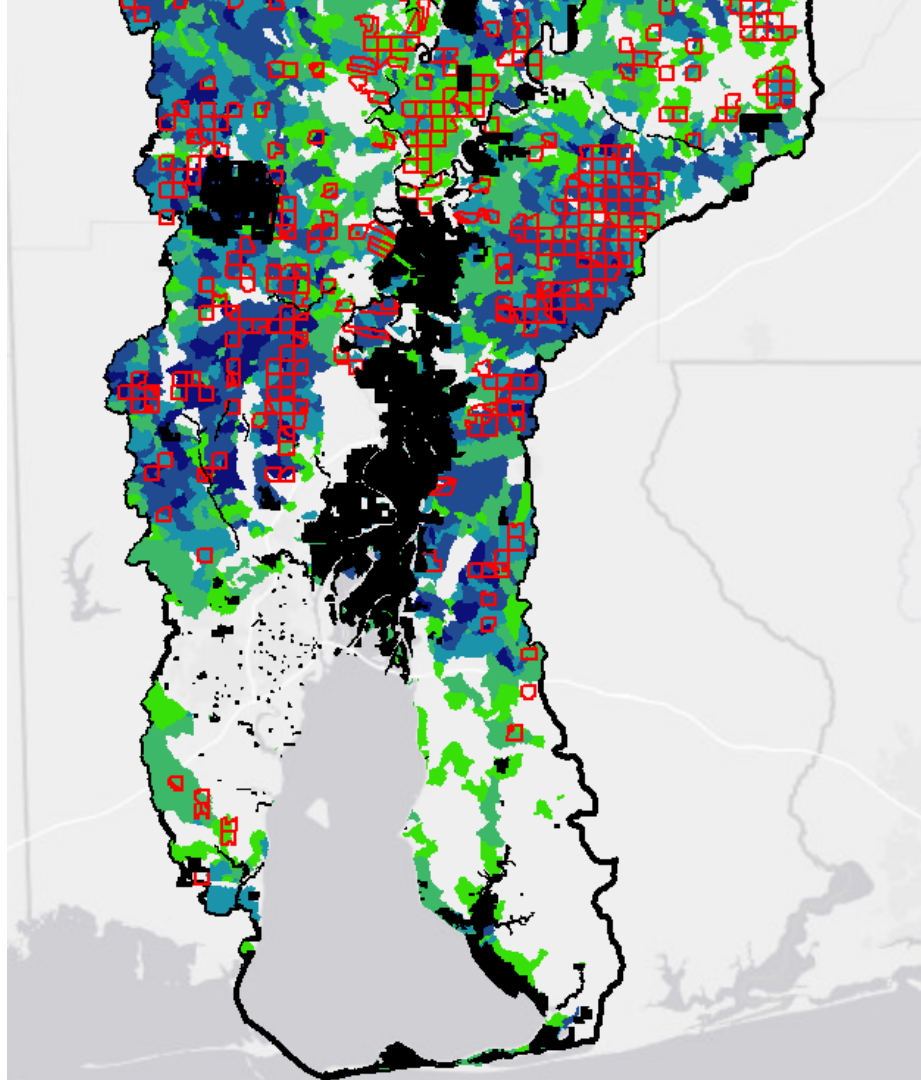


Priority Headwater Habitats: Parcels



Priority Parcels (500 ac +)

~ 800 parcels
totaling over
450,000 ac.

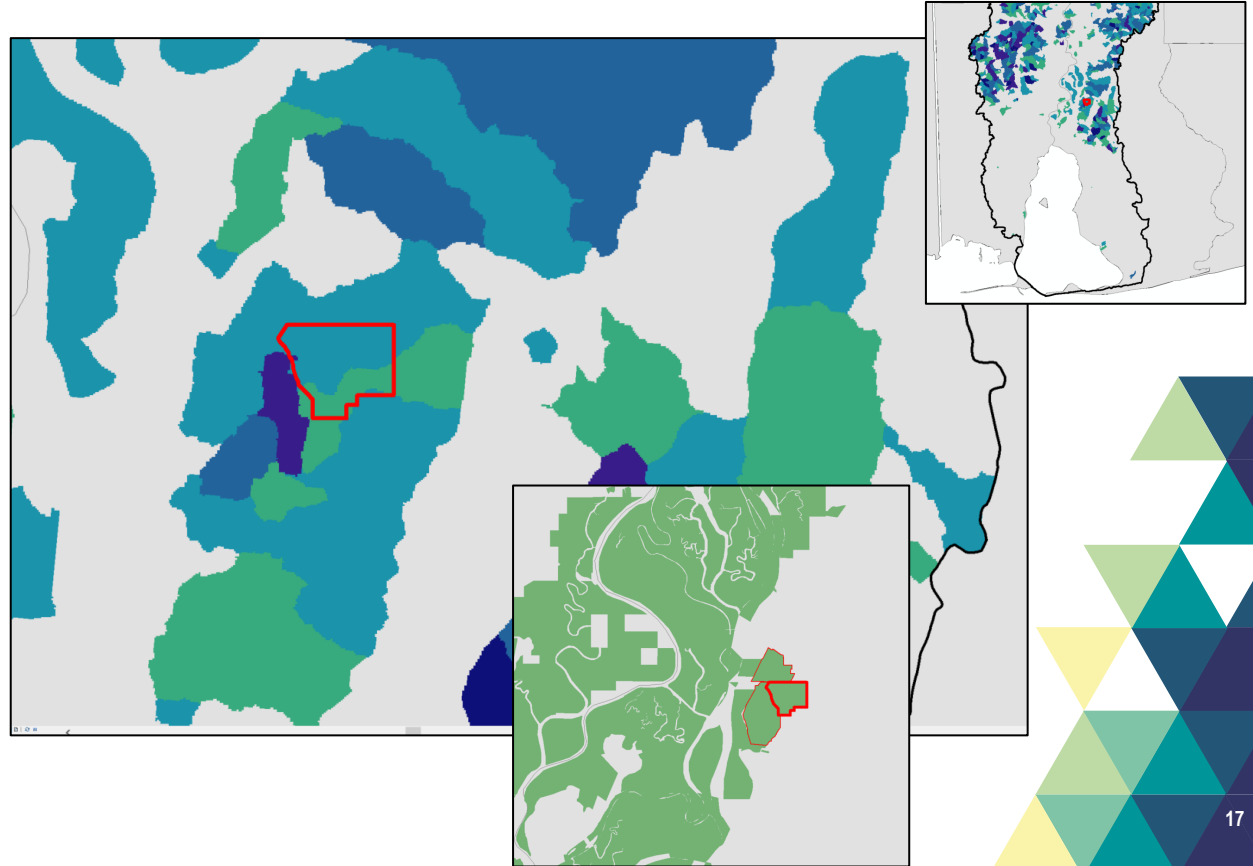


AFRC Easements Acquired Since Start of Project

			Primary Criteria		Secondary Objectives	
			500 acres or larger	Priority Catchments (connectivity >75 & habitat health > 50)	Adjacent (boarders) stream	Adjacent to existing Conserved Lands
ID	Property Name	Acres	2018 Easements			
1	Post Oak Plantation/ Farm	930.81	✓	✓	-	✓
2	Hooks lake/ Phase 1	5,878.25	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Weewoka Creek Farm	473.49	-	-	-	-
4	Ghost Fleet East	599.26	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Ghost Fleet West	940.36	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Cadwallader Place	1,953.39	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Gusto	923.8	✓	-	-	-
ID	Property Name	Acres	2019 Easements			
1	Arlington Plantation	363.62	-	✓	-	-
Total Acres Conserved		12,062.98				

Case Study: Ghost Fleet East Parcel, Baldwin County, AL

- ▲ Size: Approximately 600 acres
- ▲ Easement acquired in 2018
- ▲ High hydrologic connectivity & habitat health
- ▲ Adjacent to existing ALFRC and State conserved lands



Project Progress Update: Year 1

▲ Summary YEAR 1:

- Compiled parcel and ecological data layers into GIS Database
- Developed a framework & identified priority habitats
- Identified & contacted owners of potential properties for conservation
- Acquired 8 easements in since start of project totaling + 12,000 acres

Next Tasks

- ▲ Finalize GIS database
- ▲ Finalize Habitat Atlas Report

MOBILE BAY BASIN HABITAT ATLAS

ACCELERATING HEADWATER LAND PROTECTION IN THE MOBILE BAY BASIN

DRAFT December 2019

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Next Tasks

- ▲ Continue Outreach and Education
- ▲ Finalize Outreach video
- ▲ AFRC continue to acquire 100,000 acres for easement
 - Contact willing landholders
 - Educate landholders on easements

