

## What is an Estuary?

An estuary (*es-choo-er-ee*) is where freshwater from inland is mixed with saltwater from the sea. Estuaries provide some of the most sensitive and ecologically important habitats on earth. They offer sanctuary and food for abundant bird species and breeding grounds for many ocean animals including shrimp, crabs, red fish and mullet. Brooks Park is located in the Mobile Bay Estuary.

## Did You Know... That Mobile Bay is Where Five Major Rivers Meet the Gulf of Mexico?

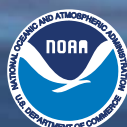
Rivers, creeks and streams from over 65 percent of the state of Alabama and portions of Mississippi, Georgia, and Tennessee flow into Mobile Bay and mix with saltwater pushed in by tides and wind from the Gulf of Mexico. This makes the Mobile Bay Watershed the sixth largest in area and the fourth largest by freshwater flow volume in the continental U.S. Due to changing weather conditions and the shallow nature of Mobile Bay the "saltiness" or salinity of the water changes constantly.

### Mobile Bay By the Numbers

**Drains:** 43,662 square miles  
**Receives:** 62,000 cubic feet of freshwater per second  
**Average Depth:** 10 feet  
**Length, North to South:** 32 miles  
**Widest Point:** 23 miles  
**Width at City of Mobile:** 10 miles



Gulf of Mexico



## About the Mobile-Tensaw Delta

Just north of Mobile Bay lies the country's second largest delta, the Mobile-Tensaw. Designated a National Natural Landmark it stretches over 30 miles long and 12 miles wide and is home to more than 200,000 acres of swamps, marshes and rivers bottomlands that support the lives of some 337 different fish, 126 reptiles and amphibians, 370 birds, and 49 mammals.

### Chickasaw Creek Watershed By the Numbers

**Area:** 250 square miles  
**Location:** Northern Mobile County from Citronelle south and east to the Mobile River  
**Waterways include:** Eight Mile, Log, Meekers, Seabury, and Chickasaw Creeks

## Chickasaw Creek Watershed...

is where five sub-watersheds drain into the Chickasabogue. Anglicized from the Indian words, "Chickasa Bok," this massive watershed includes lands utilized by both heavy and light industry, retail and commercial uses, farms and forests, as well as, both rural and dense residential. Drainage that has resulted from this diverse development is causing more erosion along with bacterial contamination and trash to flow into the waterway.

## You Are Here –

**Williams Brooks Park** is located in the Chickasaw Creek Watershed. It provides access to Chickasaw Creek; boating, fishing and paddling opportunities; boardwalks for bird watching and eco-tourism; and a place to picnic and celebrate holidays with friends and family.



## Did You Know...

Marshes are places where plants can thrive in wet conditions like those found around Chickasaw Creek. The plants and animals that live in marshes must be able to handle the unique conditions created by the always-changing water and tides of Mobile Bay and its tributaries.

An ecosystem includes plants and animals that depend on each other for food, shelter, and survival. The marshes of Brooks Park are examples of one of the most productive and beneficial ecosystems on the planet.

## What's in the water?

The land near Brooks Park is mostly silty sand. The water, while almost fresh, undergoes changes in salinity that make it more brackish, especially close to the bottom. This richness of tidal marsh habitat makes it a great nursery for fish and other aquatic species like:

- **Alligator** (*Alligator mississippiensis*)
- **Grass and glass shrimp** (*Palaemonetes* spp.)
- **Largemouth bass** (*Micropterus salmoides*)
- **Bream/Sunfish** (*Lepomis* spp.)
- **Crappie** (*Pomoxis* spp.)
- **Blue crab** (*Callinectes sapidus*)
- **Mullet** (*Mugil cephalus*)

## Plants of Brooks Park

The land area around Brooks Park is distinguished by forested wetlands along stream banks. Look for these plants as you walk along the wooded platforms:

### Canopy Trees provide the shade:

- **Swamp Tupelo** (*Nyssa sylvatica*)
- **Red Maple** (*Acer rubrum*)
- **Sweet Gum** (*Liquidambar styraciflua*)
- **Bald Cypress** (*Taxodium distichum*)

### Understory Plants found under the trees:

- **Wax Myrtle** (*Myrica cerifera*)
- **Yaupon** (*Ilex vomitoria*)
- **Groundsel Tree** (*Baccharis halimifolia*)
- **Marsh Elder** (*Iva frutescens*)

## Look for...

### These tall marsh plants grow in the shallow water:

- **Southern Wild Rice** (*Zizaniopsis miliacea*)
- **Bulrush** (*Schoenoplectus* spp.)
- **Cattails** (*Typha latifolia*)

### These wetland plants produce beautiful flowers:

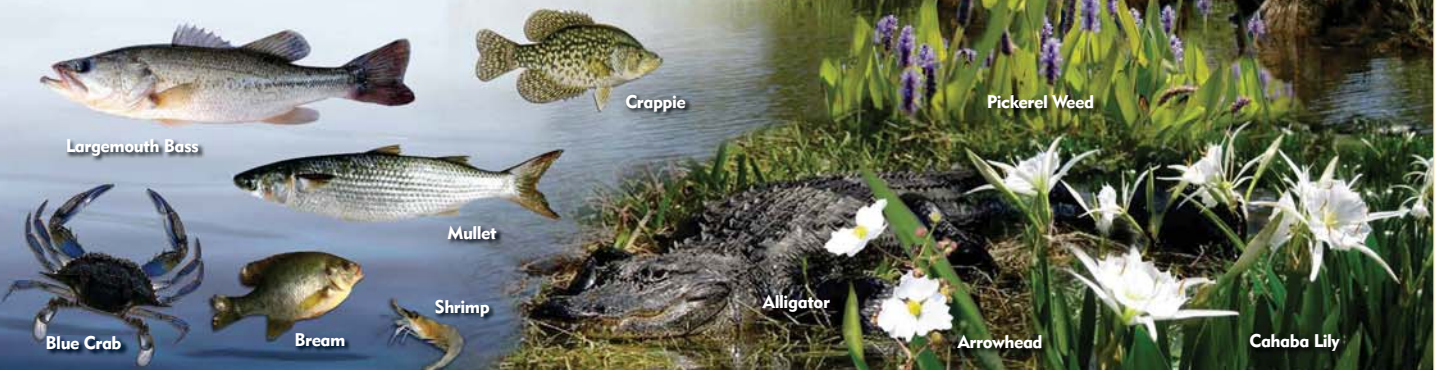
- **Cahaba Lily** (*Hymenocallis coronaria*)
- **Pickerel Weed** (*Pontederia cordata*)
- **Duck Potato** (*Sagittaria latifolia*)
- **Arrowhead** (*Sagittaria lancifolia*)

## Birds of Brooks Park



### Look for these birds in the sky, trees, and shallows:

- **Osprey** (*Pandion haliaetus*)
- **White Ibis** (*Eudocimus albus*)
- **Great Blue Heron** (*Ardea herodias*)
- **Red-wing Blackbird** (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)
- **Laughing Gull** (*Leucophaea atricilla*)
- **Snowy Egret** (*Egretta thula*)
- **Mockingbird** (*Mimus polyglottos*)





Wetland trails at Brooks Park allow visitors to experience Alabama wetlands up close. The trails are named based upon historical, geographical, and natural references:



Birdie Tower Trail

## Birdie Tower Trail

Many species of birds call this area home, including raptors like ospreys, owls and hawks.



Magnolia Trail

## Magnolia Walking Trail

This one half mile wooded trail begins at a board walk and continues on to a gravel trail leading to the uplands.



Ferry Boat Landing Trail

## Ferry Boat Landing Trail

The original ferry landing site was also used by barges and ships carrying goods between Chickasaw and Mobile.



Wooden Bridge Trail

## Wooden Bridge Trail

Records show that the first wooden bridge over Chickasaw Creek was built near this site in the early 1900s.



Basket Factory and Magnolia Trails

## Basket Factory Trail

The trail ends at the site of a German immigrant family-owned factory, that once employed up to 20 people who manufactured and shipped baskets downstream to Mobile.



Boat Dock

## Boat Dock

The boat dock offers a launch site where paddlers can access unique canoe and kayak trails.

## History of Chickasaw

Like many communities, Chickasaw was originally settled because of its access to waterways. Apalachee Indians are said to be among the earliest settlers though the area had always been a crossroad for bands of Indians who seasonally migrated to other areas.

Records indicate the French Explorer, Sieur de Bienville (1680-1768) deeded a large tract of land containing what is now Chickasaw to his friend, D'Arraguette.

Later, legends describe "lawless elements" that engaged in piracy and used the backwater coves and bayous along the creek for hiding places.

The large tract of land that is now Chickasaw, was a planned community of attractive, well-built homes with neighborhood amenities for shipyard workers prior to WWI. Following the war some workers moved away, but a vibrant community remained where, in 1946, townspeople voted to incorporate and the Town of Chickasaw was formally born.

**Do your part – keep Brooks Park Clean!**

