

**Critical Habitat Designation**

The areas designated as critical habitat for the Gulf sturgeon provide one or more of the primary constituent

elements described above. Tables 1 and 2 summarize the location and extent of the designated critical habitat. All of the designated areas require special management considerations to ensure

their contribution to the conservation of the Gulf sturgeon. The boundaries of critical habitat units are described generally below.

TABLE 1.—APPROXIMATE LINEAR DISTANCE OF THE RIVERINE CRITICAL HABITAT UNITS FOR THE GULF STURGEON  
[Main Stems Are Listed First and Tributaries Are Indented]

Critical habitat unit— river systems	State	River kilometers	River miles
1. Pearl (East, West, and all distributaries) .....	Louisiana/Mississippi .....	632	393
Bogue Chitto .....	.....	163	101
2. Pascagoula .....	.....	203	126
Leaf .....	.....	164	102
Bouie .....	Mississippi .....	10	6
Chickasawhay .....	.....	232	144
Big Black Creek .....	.....	8	5
3. Escambia .....	Florida/ .....	117	73
Conecuh .....	Alabama .....	127	79
Sepulga .....	.....	11	7
4. Yellow .....	Florida/ .....	154	96
Blackwater .....	Alabama .....	18	11
Shoal .....	.....	13	8
5. Choctawhatchee .....	Florida/ .....	249	155
Pea .....	Alabama .....	92	57
6. Apalachicola .....	Florida .....	254	158
Brothers .....	.....	24	15
7. Suwannee .....	Florida .....	293	182
Withlacoochee .....	.....	19	12
Total .....	.....	2,783	1,730

TABLE 2.—APPROXIMATE AREA OF THE ESTUARINE AND MARINE CRITICAL HABITAT UNITS FOR THE GULF STURGEON

Critical habitat unit— estuarine and marine systems	State	Kilometers <sup>2</sup>	Miles <sup>2</sup>
8. Lake Borgne .....	Louisiana/ .....	718	277
Little Lake .....	Mississippi/ .....	8	3
Lake Pontchartrain .....	Alabama .....	763	295
Lake St. Catherine .....	.....	26	10
The Rigolets .....	.....	13	5
Mississippi Sound .....	.....	1,879	725
MS near shore Gulf .....	.....	160	62
9. Pensacola Bay .....	Florida .....	381	147
10. Santa Rosa Sound .....	Florida .....	102	39
11. Near shore Gulf of Mexico .....	Florida .....	442	171
12. Choctawhatchee Bay .....	Florida .....	321	124
13. Apalachicola Bay .....	Florida .....	683	264
14. Suwannee Sound .....	Florida .....	546	211
Total .....	.....	6,042	2,333

**Critical Habitat Unit Descriptions**

The river reaches within units 1 to 7 designated as critical habitat lie within the ordinary high water line. As defined in 33 CFR 329.11, the ordinary high water line on non-tidal rivers is the line on the shore established by the fluctuations of water and indicated by physical characteristics such as a clear, natural line impressed on the bank; shelving; changes in the character of soil; destruction of terrestrial vegetation; the presence of litter and debris; or other appropriate means that consider

the characteristics of the surrounding areas.

The downstream limit of the riverine units is the mouth of each river. The mouth is defined as rkm 0 (rmi 0). Although the interface of fresh and saltwater, referred to as the saltwater wedge, occurs within the lower-most reach of a river, for ease in delineating critical habitat units, we are defining the boundary between the riverine and estuarine units as rkm 0 (rmi 0).

Regulatory jurisdiction in coastal areas extends to the line on the shore reached by the plane of the mean (average) high water (MHW) (33 CFR

329.12(a)(2)). All bays and estuaries within units 8 to 14, therefore, lie below the MHW lines. Where precise determination of the actual location becomes necessary, it must be established by survey with reference to the available tidal datum, preferably averaged over a period of 18.6 years. Less precise methods, such as observation of the “apparent shoreline,” which is determined by reference to physical markings, lines of vegetation, may be used only where an estimate is needed of the line reached by the mean high water.