

SOUTHEAST AQUATIC RESOURCES PARTNERSHIP



“With partners, protect, conserve, and restore aquatic resources including habitats throughout the Southeast, for the continuing benefit, use, and enjoyment of the American people.”

Recognizing the Southeast’s unique biological diversity, looming threats to its aquatic species and critical habitats, and limited resources to meet the immense challenges, State and Federal agencies and organizations with management authority for fisheries and aquatic resources in the Southeast joined forces to form a groundbreaking partnership in 2001. The Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP) includes fish and wildlife agencies from 14 States (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia); the Gulf and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commissions; the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and NOAA Fisheries. These entities have signed a Memorandum of Understanding pledging to work together for the conservation and management of aquatic resources in the Southeast. The SARP also involves a number of other non-governmental organizations, private industry and Federal agency partners.

Aquatic Resources of Global Importance

The people of the Southeastern United States live in an area that has **more aquatic freshwater species** (62 percent of the freshwater fishes and 75 percent of the freshwater mussels) than any region of the country. The Southeast has the **most aquatic diversity in the country**, more than 70 major river basins, more miles of coastal shoreline (26,000 miles), the **highest economic return** on recreational fishing (\$17 billion in total economic output), **more licensed anglers than any other region**, and **the bulk of the country’s wetlands** important to fisheries and other aquatic organisms (45 percent of the country’s wetlands and 78 percent of its coastal marsh).

Threats to Aquatic Resources

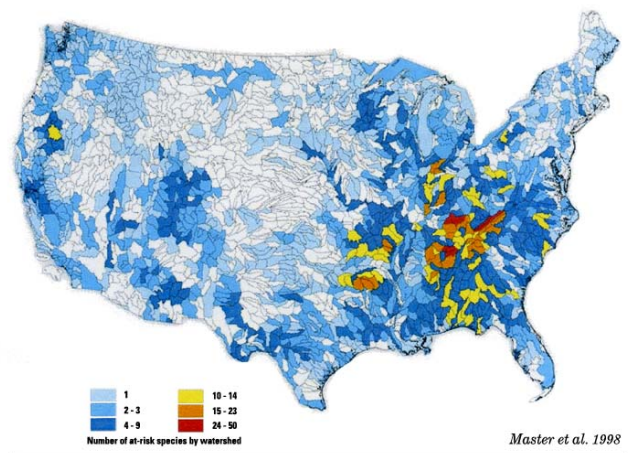
Human populations in the Southeastern United States are projected to grow by about 25% between 2005 and 2025. Five of the top 10 most sprawling U.S. metropolitan areas of 1 million people or more are in the Southeastern United States – Nashville, Charlotte, Greensboro, Atlanta, and Memphis. Nine Southeastern States are among the top 20 States that lost the most open space and farmland to urban sprawl during the 1990’s. New and expanding communities need clean and dependable water



The Southeast is home to nearly half of all the wetlands in the U.S.

supplies, green space, and locations for outdoor recreation. At the same time, human population growth and land use changes present increased threats to the sustainability of aquatic resources and fish habitats in rivers, lakes, and coastal waters. Water resource needs must be balanced among municipal and industrial water supplies, agricultural interests, transportation, outdoor recreation and sustainable fish habitats. Increases in public use of aquatic resources and water based recreation will require focused and coordinated efforts to ensure that economic vitality and human health are not at odds with fisheries and aquatic resource conservation, but rather are seen as the results of healthy aquatic resources.

Hot spots for at-risk fish and mussel species in the continental United States



Key Issue Areas

The SARP focuses on six key issue areas that were identified by member groups as being areas of greatest concern and interest to the Southeast. The six Key Issue Areas are:

- Aquatic Habitat Conservation
- Public Use
- Imperiled Fish and Aquatic Species Recovery
- Fishery Mitigation
- Interjurisdictional Fisheries
- Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS)

Accomplishments

Since its inception in 2001, the SARP has realized significant accomplishments. The SARP has received more than \$700,000 in grants for regional aquatic conservation and conservation planning, as well as substantial contributions from the SARP members to begin laying the foundation for the creation of a **Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan**. This regional habitat plan will serve as the **National Fish Habitat Action Plan's (NFHAP)**, primary delivery mechanism for the Southeast Region. The Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan will identify the highest priority aquatic habitat needs and effective conservation strategies to better address the conservation and management of aquatic resources across the region. The Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan is scheduled to be completed in late 2007. Successful steps in this process have included:

■ **Pilot Rivers Aquatic Habitat Planning Project** – The SARP worked with The Nature Conservancy to complete pilot aquatic habitat plans for 4 priority watersheds in the Southeast Region - Roanoke River (NC), Altamaha River (GA), Pascagoula River (MS), and Duck River (TN).

■ **Regional Integration of State Wildlife Action Plans** – The SARP is conducting a southeastern regional assessment of aquatic species identified in recently completed State Comprehensive



The Altamaha River in Georgia is one of four rivers for which pilot watershed conservation action plans are being developed.

The shortnose sturgeon is among 34% of North American fish species designated as endangered, threatened or of special concern which are found in the Southeast.

Wildlife Conservation Strategies as being of the greatest conservation need, developing a process for integrating the aquatic elements of the plans, and identifying areas of regional importance for aquatic diversity.

■ Aquatic Nuisance Species

Coordinator – The SARP has hired a full-time coordinator to work with SARP States to develop aquatic nuisance species (ANS) management plans. State plans are scheduled to be completed in late 2007. Development and implementation of these plans will enhance the capabilities of the States to detect and respond to ANS introductions.

■ Development of a GIS referenced aquatic habitat database and condition assessment tools for the Southeast

SARP recently received funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and began work on regional aquatic habitat condition database and assessment tools that will allow our partners to track habitat conditions over time, view conservation projects, and assess results on a local and regional scale.



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National Fish Habitat Initiative:
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