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# CHIPOLA

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## RIVER BASIN

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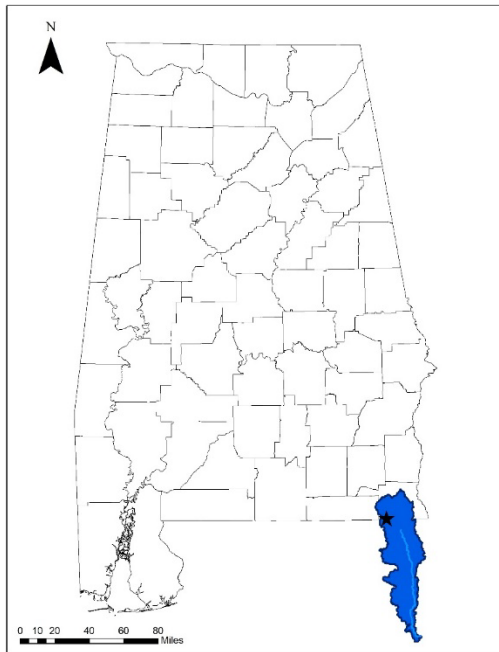


Figure 2. Chipola River Basin Watershed.

The Chipola River flows for 92.5-miles through Florida and is approximately 1,280 square miles with 259 square miles or 20 percent of the basin in Alabama and the remaining 80 percent in Florida. While the Chipola River flows through Florida, its watershed (Figure 2) extends north into Houston County and Geneva County, Alabama. The watershed moves south through Jackson, Calhoun, and Gulf Counties in Florida. A watershed is an area of land through which rainwater drains by flowing across, though, or under the soil surface to a common low point, typically a stream, river, lake, or ocean. (Brantley, Bell, & Dictson, 2019)

The Chipola River starts in Jackson County, Florida near Greenwood and continues south into Gulf County where it flows into the Apalachicola River. The Chipola River is the third largest tributary to the Apalachicola River. The Chipola River is defined by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection as an “Outstanding Florida Waterbody”.

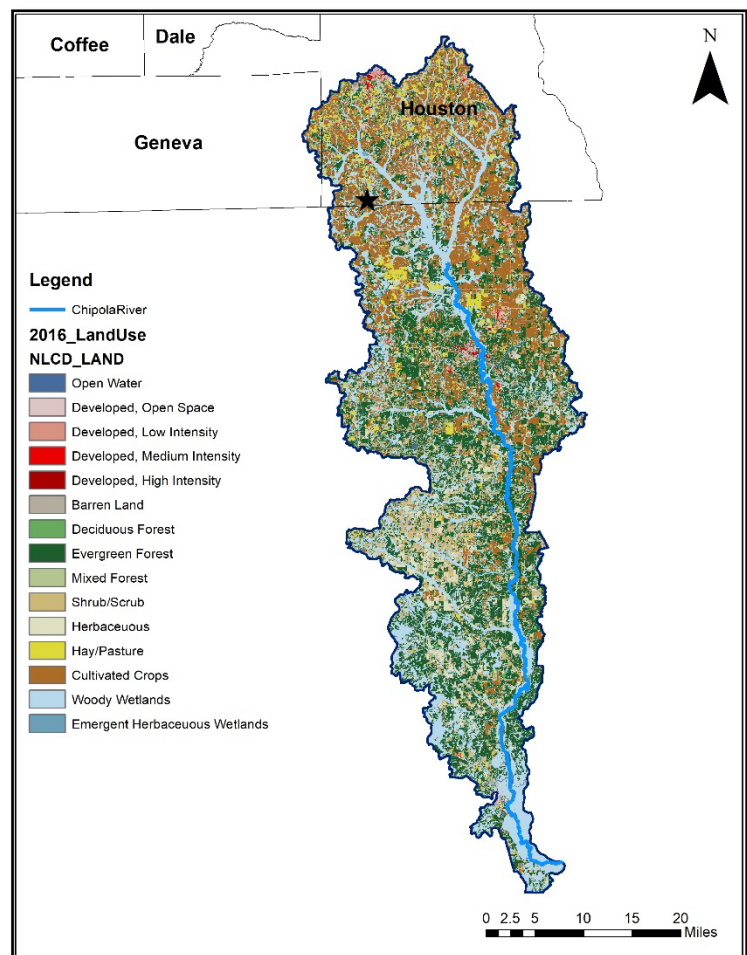


Figure 1. 2016 Landuse data for Chipola River Basin.

Big Creek and Cowarts Creek are the main tributaries of the Chipola River in Alabama. Although the exact origin of the name “Chipola” has been lost over time, some say it comes from the Choctaw language and means “sweet water.” (Collett, 2022)



*Figure 3. Tupelo Trees in Florida Swamp.  
Photo Credit: Florida Natural Areas Inventory.*

The Chipola River and its watershed are generally thought of as places of unique biological character, especially for aquatic or water-dependent species and habitats. The Chipola River has over 60 freshwater springs (Northwest Florida Water Management District, 2017) and includes a variety of habitats such as longleaf pine forests, bottomland hardwood swamps, wetlands, and creeks (Figure 1). These habitats support a variety of fish, mussels, birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptile species.

The Chipola River basin contains various fish species such as the largemouth bass, shoal bass, Coosa bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, and redbreast sunfish, iron color shiner, dusky shiner, bluenose shiner. The river also boasts several mussel species and crayfish such as the jackknife crayfish and the peninsula crayfish. The river basin also hosts threatened and endangered species including the American alligator, eastern indigo snake, flatwoods salamander, Arctic peregrine falcon, southeastern kestrel, bald eagle, wood stork, red-cockaded woodpecker, Indiana bat and the gray bat.

Crops such as peanuts, pecans, and cotton are common. This region is also the center for tupelo honey. Tupelo trees (Figure 3) only bloom for about five days in the spring, so beekeepers strip their hives and place them near tupelos and watch closely until the blooms fall away, signaling the end of the tupelo harvest along the swampy banks of the Chipola. (Collett, 2022)



*Figure 4. National Peanut Festival in Dothan, Alabama.  
Photo Credit: Jennifer Barker*



The Alabama portion of the Chipola River Basin watershed contains the cities of Ashford, south Dothan, Cottonwood, Madrid, Avon, and Taylor. Dothan is known as the peanut capital of the world and the peanut farms surrounding the city supply most of the peanuts in the United States. Every fall there is a [Peanut Festival](#) (Figure 4) in Dothan celebrating the rich heritage of this locally grown product. Across town, keep an eye out for specially designed peanuts in honor of the festival and the event's rich history (Figure 5).

Dothan is also home to the Dothan Opera House, [Wiregrass Museum of Art](#), [Dothan Area Botanical Gardens](#), [Dothan Forever Wild Trails](#), U.S. Army Aviation Museum, and Murals of the Wiregrass (Figure 6). If you want to experience a faster paced option, travel north from Dothan to Cottonwood and visit the [Cottonwood Dragway](#).



Figure 5. Krispy Kreme designed peanut.  
Photo Credit: Jennifer Barker



Figure 6. One of many beautifully painted murals in downtown Dothan, Alabama. Photo Credit: Jennifer Barker