
PERDIDO

RIVER BASIN

The Perdido River begins in Escambia County, Alabama and flows southwest along the Alabama and Florida state line before flowing into the Perdido Bay at Lillian, Alabama. While the Perdido River starts in Escambia County, Alabama, the Perdido River watershed encompasses both Alabama and Florida (Figure 2). 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 Perdido River watershed contains the cities of Perdido, Bay Minette, Robertsedale, Seminole, Lillian, Gulf Shores, Orange Beach, and Perdido Beach in Alabama.

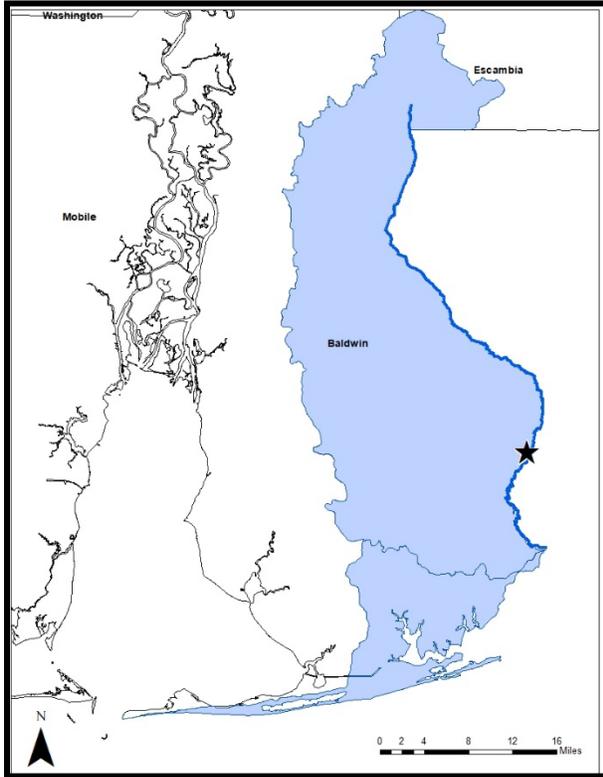


Figure 1. The Perdido River in Alabama.



Figure 2. The Perdido River Basin Watershed.

The Perdido River (Figure 1) flows southwest along the Alabama state line for 65 miles. The Perdido River watershed (including Perdido Bay) contains over 1,100 square miles: with 70 percent of the watershed in Alabama and 30 percent in Florida. (Northwest Florida Water Management District, 2017) The Perdido River from 1682 to 1763 formed the boundary between the French colony of Louisiana and the Spanish colony of Florida. In 1783, the river basin area was returned to Spain as part of the Treaty of Paris. The name Perdido means “lost” in Spanish and was named by Spanish settlers who occupied the area until 1813.

The Perdido River is considered the highest quality free-flowing blackwater river remaining in the southern Coastal Plain. (Alabama Water Watch, 2021) The Perdido River is classified as a ‘Blackwater’ stream, the watercolor resembling a glass of tea. The reason for the coloring is the tannin content, as the river slowly moves through vegetative areas, tannins leach into the water.

The Perdido River Basin contains many species of fish including, saltwater and freshwater. Species include longnose gar, hogchoker, striped bass, rainwater killifish, skipjack herring, chain pickerel, and longear sunfish. The Perdido Key beach mouse is also a native to the basin and is currently listed as an endangered species. The Perdido River flows through forested swamps, wetlands, pine forests, and urban cities as it makes its way to Orange Beach and Perdido Beach. The Forever Wild Land Trust in association with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, has secured more than 270,000 acres of land in Alabama for public use. (Alabama Forever Wild, 2020) Of the acquired land, the [Splinter Hill Bog](#) (627 acres), [Lillian Swamp Complex](#) (2,141 acres), and [Perdido River Wildlife Area](#) (6,208 acres) are located in the Perdido River Basin. Splinter Hill Bog Preserve is one of “most-visited conservation sites in the state.”



*Figure 4. Pitcher Plant at Splinter Hill Bog Preserve.
Photo Credit: Siegfried R.H. Hartmeyer*



Figure 3. Perdido Key at Perdido Beach. Photo Credit: Heather Griffin

In addition to these conservation areas, the Perdido River Basin is home to Orange Beach, Ono Island, and Perdido Beach, which are popular spots for residents and tourists alike. You might even find buried treasures in Perdido Key (Figure 4), as the town of Perdido Beach was a historical meeting spot for pirates!

(Alabama Water Watch, 2021) The popular and well known [Flora-Bama Mullet Toss](#) (Figure 5) is held in Perdido Key every Spring and has turned into a three day festival. While you are in the area stop by the [Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge](#) and walk along the dunes, check out the trails, or go birding along the nearly 7,000 acres of coastal lands. [Gulf State](#)



Figure 5. Annual Flora-Bama Mullet Toss.
Photo Credit: Flora-Bama



Figure 6. Hillcrest Farm. Photo Credit: Hillcrest Farm

[Park](#) offers two miles of white sand beaches, trails, picnic areas, kayaking, biking, campgrounds, and other lodging. Gulf State Park is also home to Lake Shelby, a 900-acre freshwater lake, which provides kayaking and canoeing as well as lakeside cabins for those that want to stay a little longer.

Farther north in the river basin is [Alligator Alley](#) in Summerdale home to over 200 alligators, turtles, osprey, owls, and bullfrogs. [Perdido Trails](#) offer a 19-mile segment along the river perfect for a canoe trip. Get fresh vegetables, fruit, and jams from [Hillcrest Farm](#) (Figure 6) in Elberta.

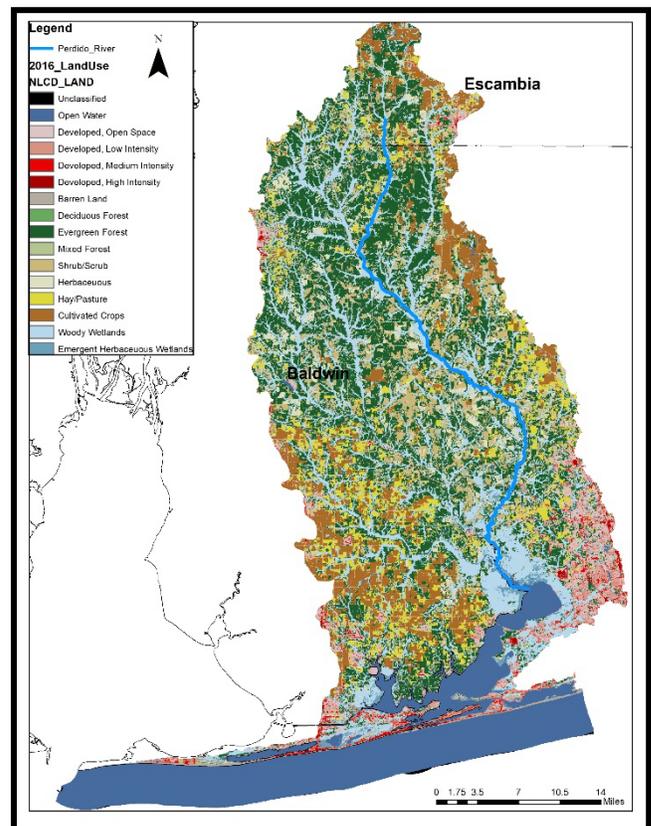


Figure 7. 2016 Landuse data for the Perdido River watershed.