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# COOSA

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## RIVER BASIN

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The Coosa River is formed by the meeting of the Oostanuala and Etowah Rivers in Rome, Georgia. It flows southwest to join the Tallapoosa River near Wetumpka, Alabama and forms the Alabama River. The Coosa River Watershed (Figure 1) contains 10,000 square miles and flows for over 280 miles. Georgia contains 10 percent of the watershed, while the remaining 90 percent is in Alabama. The Coosa River got its name in commemoration of two Native American towns, Old Coosa and Cosa, and translates to “reed brake” (Coosa Riverkeeper, 2022).

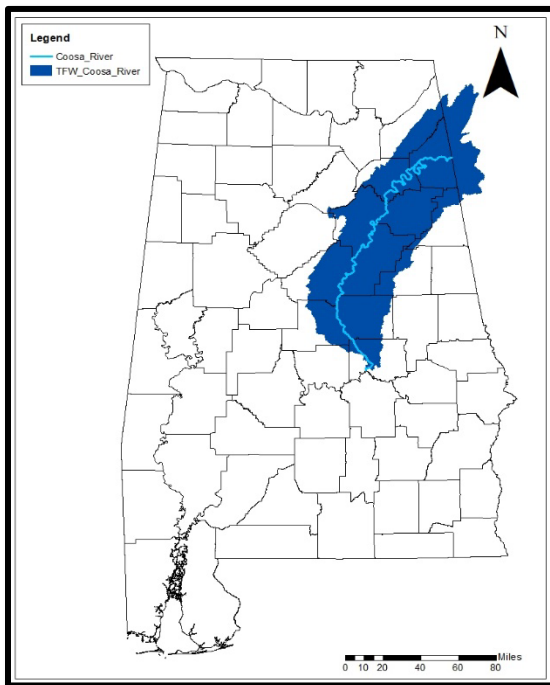


Figure 1. The Coosa Watershed

and is home to Lake Jordan, Lake Bouldin, Lake Mitchell, Lay Lake, Lake Logan Martin, Lake Neely Henry, and Weiss Lake. The river and its tributaries, Big Cedar Creek, Little River, and Chattooga River are all navigable waters (Coosa Riverkeeper, 2022).

Numerous fish species such as the blue catfish, channel catfish, flathead catfish, spotted bass, largemouth bass, striped bass, white crappie, and longnose gar make their home in the Coosa River. A large portion of the basin is forested (Figure 3), which provides travelers with areas to hike, birdwatch, and camp.



Figure 2. Clanton, Alabama water tower.

Photo Credit: Jennifer Barker

The Coosa River watershed extends into thirteen counties within Alabama. A watershed is an area of land through which rainwater drains by flowing across, through, or under the soil surface to a common low point, typically a stream, river, lake, or ocean (Brantley, Bell, & Dictson, 2019). It contains the cities of Gadsden, Rainbow City, Childersburg, Southside, Wetumpka, and Clanton (Figure 2) in Alabama (Byington, 2022). The Coosa River is controlled by hydroelectric release

It is also a popular spot for those who love to canoe and kayak (Figure 4) with an abundance of class II and III rapids and wildlife, with evidence of deer, turkey, and raccoon tracks on every sandbar (Koehler, 2023).

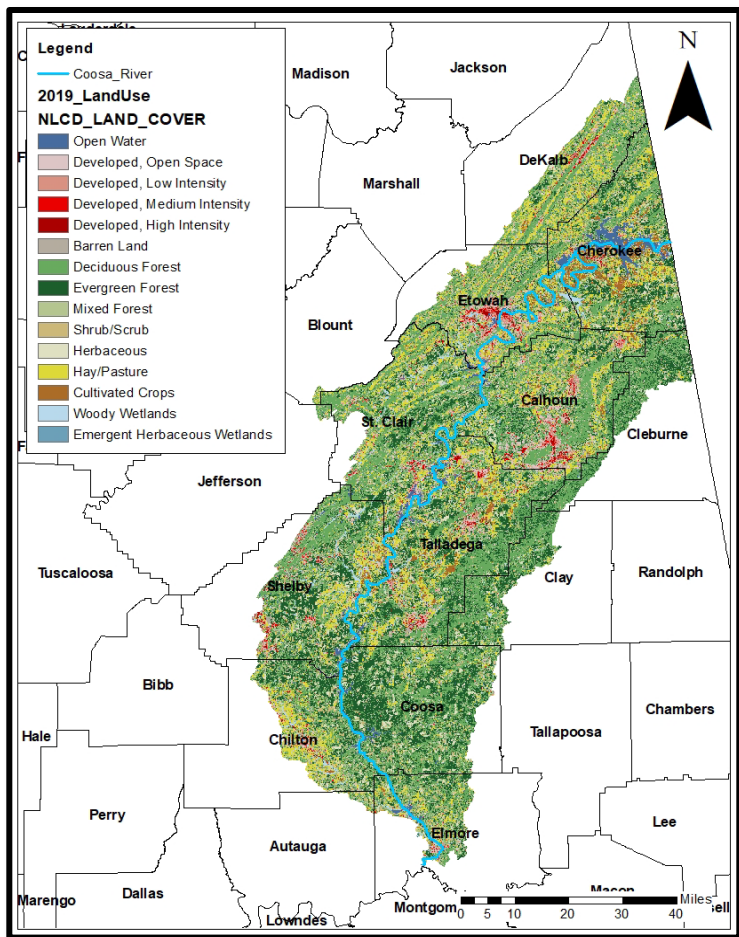


Figure 3. 2019 Land use data for the Coosa River watershed.

Recreational opportunities can be found at the Noccalula Falls Park and Campground in Gadsden, Alabama and Little River Canyon National Preserve near Fort Payne, Alabama. Noccalula Falls encompasses 500 acres of the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. The park contains a ninety-foot waterfall (Figure 5), a botanical garden, fifteen miles of trails, and several historical buildings. The park has become a popular destination among hikers, campers, and families (Shields, 2023). Little River Canyon National Preserve protects 15,288 acres of forested uplands, waterfalls, and canyon rims and bluffs. The preserve is located on Lookout Mountain and contains the nation’s longest mountain-top river, Little River (Thomas, 2021). The preserve provides areas for birdwatching, bicycling, fishing, hiking, and horseback riding throughout the preserve.

For the history lover, The Fort Toulouse-Fort Jackson Park in Wetumpka, Alabama, Kymulga Grist Mill, Covered Bridge, and Park in Alpine, Alabama, and the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum in Calera, Alabama provide an opportunity to step back in time. Fort Toulouse was established by the French in 1717 where the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers meet, forming the Alabama River. The Muscogee Nation, French, and English traded goods at Fort Toulouse for over four decades. In 1763, the French abandoned Fort Toulouse after the French and Indian War. In 1813 and 1814, during the Creek War, the American Fort Jackson was constructed and used until its decommissioning in 1817. Today, the Park consists of the 1751 French Fort Toulouse replica, the partially restored 1814 American Fort Jackson, and a 1,000-year-old Indian mound. The Kymulga Grist Mill, Covered Bridge, and Park is home to the 1864 Kymulga Grist Mill, 1860 covered bridge, and the Butler-Harris Rainwater Museum. The Mill was constructed during the Civil War to provide supplies to the Confederate Army and is still operating to this day. The Park offers several educational tours of the mill and property that focus on natural resources, ecology, and engineering.





*Figure 4. Coosa River. Photo Credit: Jennifer Barker.*

The National Railroad Historical Society provides opportunities for the history lover at the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum (Figure 6). The Museum was constructed in 1962, to help restore, preserve, and operate historically significant railroad equipment.



*Figure 6. Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum.  
Photo Credit: Jennifer Barker.*



*Figure 5. Noccalula Falls. Photo Credit: Jennifer Barker.*

The Museum has acquired steam locomotives, wooden cabooses, dining and sleeper cars, and unused rails to construct a five-mile closed railroad system. Along the museum's railroad are two historic Alabama depots. The Wilton Depot, originally from Wilton, Alabama, is currently used as the museum's depot exhibit. The Woodlawn Depot, originally from Birmingham, Alabama, is currently used as a library with over 1,400 books, technical manuals, passenger logs, and railway-themed publications.