
MOBILE

RIVER BASIN

The Mobile River is formed by the meeting of the Tombigbee and Alabama Rivers near Calvert, Alabama. The Mobile River watershed (Figure 1) contains 44,000 square miles and flows south for 45 miles, where it drains into the Mobile Bay. The Mobile River basin provides 65 percent of the drainage area for all land in Alabama (Figure 2). The Mobile River was named after the Muscogee Village "Maubila," which was controlled by Chief Tuskaloosa and discovered by Europeans around 1540.

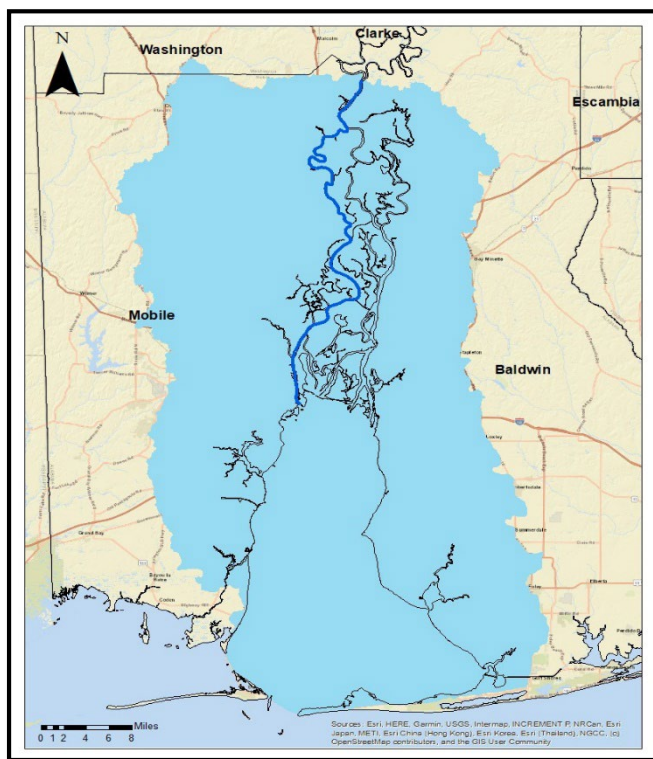


Figure 1. The Mobile River Basin Watershed

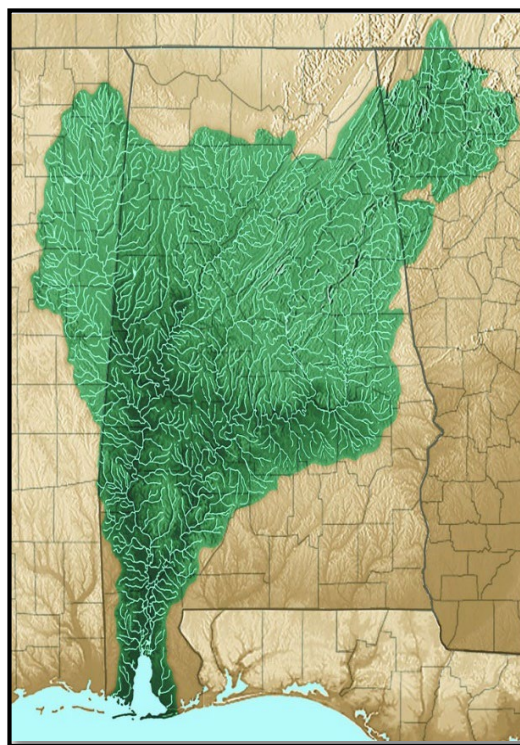


Figure 2. The Mobile Bay basin drainage area.

The Mobile River watershed encompasses three 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). The Mobile River watershed is the sixth largest basin in the United States, and the fourth largest basin

in terms of streamflow, with an average streamflow of 64,000 cubic feet per second. The Mobile River watershed contains the cities of Mobile, Spanish Fort, Creola, and Saraland in Alabama. The Mobile River watershed contains several large areas that are forested, and others that are developed into urban areas (Figure 3) allowing travelers to experience a multitude of different activities. It is also home to numerous animal species such as the North American river otter, American alligator, bald eagle, largemouth bass, and striped bass.

The Mobile River basin contains the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Historic Blakeley State Park, the USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park, and the Mobile Mardi Gras Festival. The [Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve](#) (WBNERR) is a 9,317 acre research reserve that protects upland and bottomland hardwood forests, salt and freshwater marshes, submerged aquatic vegetation, and bog habitats. The WBNERR contains walking trails, a visitor center, and a research and education center. The Weeks Bay Pitcher Plant Bog is a popular attraction at the WBNERR where travelers can observe White-topped Pitcher Plants, Purple Pitcher Plants, and the Gulf Coast Sundew, all carnivorous plants native to Alabama. Birdwatchers also come to the WBNERR to try to spot some of the 350 species of resident and migratory birds that utilize the Reserve.

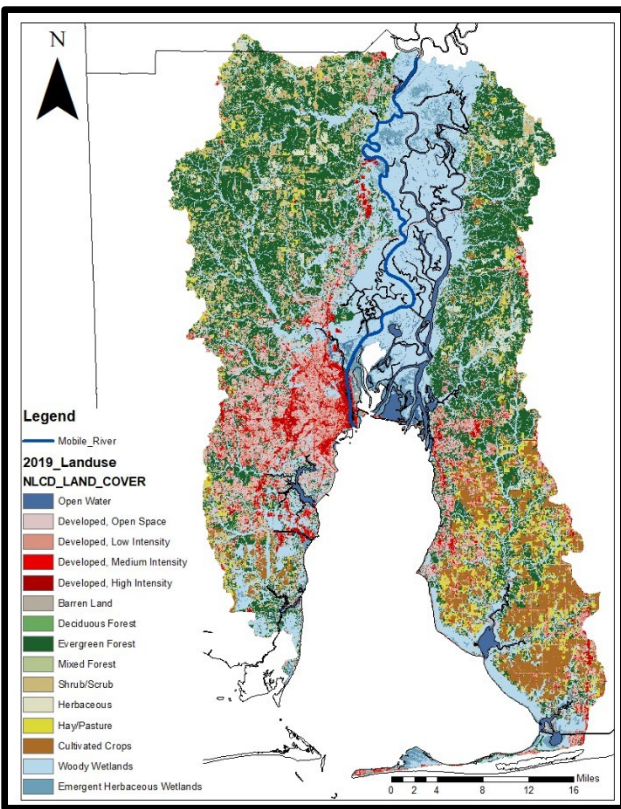


Figure 3. 2019 land use data for the Mobile River

The [Historic Blakeley State](#) Park encompasses over 2,100 acres, making the Park the largest National Register Historic Site in the eastern half of the United States. The park contains the site of the town of Blakeley, unspoiled fortifications from



Figure 4. Town of Blakeley State Park aquatic habitat.
Photos Credit: Jennifer Barker

the Civil War, from the Battle of Fort Blakeley, and evidence of Native American habitation of the area from 8,000 to 3,000 BC. The town of Blakeley was chartered in 1814, making it one of Alabama's oldest recognized towns. The park also provides over twenty miles of walking, bicycling, and horseback riding trails, and options to explore the park's aquatic habitat (Figure 4) by boat cruise or kayak rental. The [USS Alabama Battleship memorial Park](#) is home to the USS Alabama Battleship, USS DRUM Submarine, Metal of Honor Aircraft Pavilion, and several tanks and artillery. The USS Alabama Battleship (Figure 5), known as "The Mighty A" first set sail in 1943, and sailed the North Atlantic Ocean during World War I. During World War II, "The Mighty A" sailed the North Atlantic Ocean and South Pacific Seas and was decommissioned on January 9, 1947.

In May 1962, the Federal Government announced the USS Alabama, and other battleships, would be demolished and scrapped, but a group of Alabamians proposed to have the USS Alabama be the main attraction of the Veterans Memorial Park in Mobile, Alabama (Figure 6). The USS Alabama and Veterans Memorial Park opened to the public on January 9, 1965.



Figure 5. USS Alabama Battleship.
Photo Credit Jennifer Barker

The first [Mardi Gras Carnival](#) was held in 1703, at the French Fort Louis de la Mobile, modern day Mobile, Alabama. However, the carnival received its name around three years prior when Jean Baptiste Le Moyne Sieur de Bienville and his troops purchased a tract of land in 1699. Bienville and his men arrived at the tract of land on March 2, 1699, the day before the Christian holiday of Ash Wednesday. In celebration of the holiday, Bienville named the area "Pointe du Mardi Gras". In 1703, Bienville founded the French Fort Loius de la Mobile, in modern day Mobile, Alabama, and held the first Mardi Gras Carnival.

Today, the annual Mobile Mardi Gras Carnival consists of a two-week long festival with almost a million people in attendance. The carnival is so large that teams work year-round to construct two story parade floats that can hold up to fifteen people. During the carnival, parade goers are thrown Moon Pies, bead necklaces, bubblegum, and plush animals as a part of the parade. The Moon Pie has become a staple of the Mardi Gras Carnival in the 1960's. The Mardi Gras Krewe "Maids of Mirth," made Moon Pies a part of the carnival experience due to it being a cheap, safe alternative to throwing bead necklaces. It is estimated that over 500,000 Moon Pies are thrown at the Mobile Mardi Gras Carnival every year.



Figure 6. USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park.
Photo Credit: Jennifer Barker