

ALABAMA



Thirty-five million acres of wetland forests provide valuable ecosystem services for people living in the US South, including:

- Protection from extreme events
- Recreation, tourism, and aesthetics
- Water filtration and waste treatment
- Food and pollination
- Climate regulation
- Raw materials.

Wetland forest ecosystem services are worth more than \$500 billion per year. But wetland forests are constantly under siege by external forces, including urban expansion, invasive species, increased demand for timber, conversion to intensively managed plantations or

agriculture, pollution, sea-level rise, and the changing climate. Over the next 30 years, how will we protect the valuable services our Southern wetland forests provide? What can we gain if we do the right thing? And what do we stand to lose if we do not invest in our forests?

We investigated how the value of wetland forests in the US South would increase if we protected more land, extended natural riparian buffers, and managed forests more responsibly. Here are the best facts from Alabama.

Alabama's Wetland Forests Are Worth \$34.3 Billion

- Worth could increase up to \$2.3 billion by investing in conservation
- Wetland Forest Gem: 652 acre Beaverdam Creek Swamp in the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge
- 2.2 million acres of wetland forest, including 96 swamps and 6543 streams¹
- Only 4% of wetland forests in Alabama are in permanent protection

Protection From Extreme Events: Alabama's Wetland Forests Provide \$10.3 Billion

- Value in protection from extreme events and water flow regulation could increase up to \$650 million by investing in conservation
- Three flood events caused over a billion each in damages since 1980²
- 6 major hurricanes (categories 3,4, or 5) and 16 minor hurricanes made landfall on the Alabama coastline between 1851-2004

Aesthetics, Tourism, and Recreation: Alabama's Wetland Forests Provide \$8.7 Billion

- Value in aesthetics and recreation could increase up to \$610 million by investing in conservation
- Alabama had 25.8 million visitors in 2016, who spent \$13.3 billion and supported 179,644 tourism jobs³
- Roughly half of Alabama residents participate in wildlife-related recreation, and they spent \$2.7 billion in 2011 alone⁴

Water Supply and Waste Treatment: Alabama's Wetland Forests Provide \$7.9 Billion

- Value in water supply and waste treatment could increase up to \$550 million by investing in conservation
- More than half of Alabama residents rely on public sewer systems. Many public facilities rely on natural infrastructure to reduce costs of waste and water treatment⁵
- Over 10% of Alabama residents rely on private water sources like wells. Residents rely on forests to naturally filter pollutants from their water supply⁵

Food and Pollination: Alabama's Wetland Forests Provide \$5 Billion

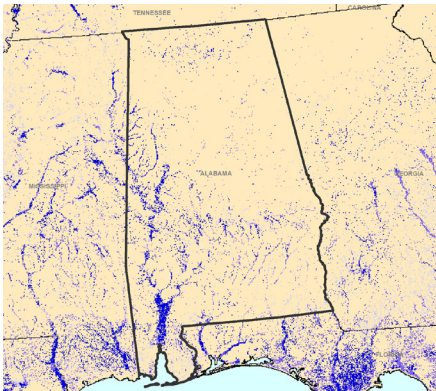
- Value in food and pollination could increase up to \$340 million by investing in conservation
- Alabama wetland forests provide habitat for pollinators of agricultural crops
- Nearly 750,000 residents in Alabama hunt or fish⁴
- In 2016, hunters purchased 200,000 deer hunting licenses^{6,7}
- In 2016, hunters harvested over 100,000 ducks and geese within Alabama^{6,7}

Regulating Services: Alabama's Wetland Forests Provide \$2.44 Billion

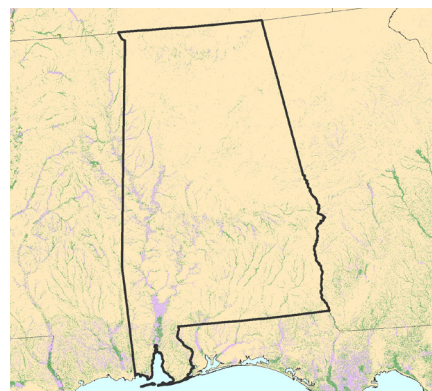
- Value in climate regulation, air quality, soil formation, and erosion control could increase up to \$78 million by investing in conservation
- There are an estimated 93 million megagrams of carbon stored in Alabama wetland forests, and continual carbon storage reduces the worst impacts of climate change

Raw Materials: Alabama's Wetland Forests Provide \$58 Million

- In 2011, there were 115 forest product mills (e.g., pulp and timber) employing 13,517 people in Alabama⁸
- Wetland forests currently provide raw materials worth \$58 million in value, this could double to \$118 million by investing in conservation



There are 93,052,000 megagrams of carbon stored in Alabama wetland forests.



Alabama currently has 2.2 million acres of protected wetland forest (green), with an additional 999,000 acres of wetland forest proposed (purple) to be protected.

REFERENCES

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