

# Atchafalaya

National Estuarine Research Reserve



## About NERRS

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) represents a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and coastal states. Each site is managed by a lead state agency with input from local partners with funding and guidance from NOAA.

Reserves are established for long-term stewardship, research, education, and training.



This proposed Atchafalaya reserve would use current monitoring efforts and restoration activities to increase physical and biological monitoring in fresh, floating, brackish, and salt marshes.



This proposed Atchafalaya reserve would provide vital research opportunities and access. It would be the only active delta estuarine system in the NERR network adding value to the significance of the research conducted at the site.



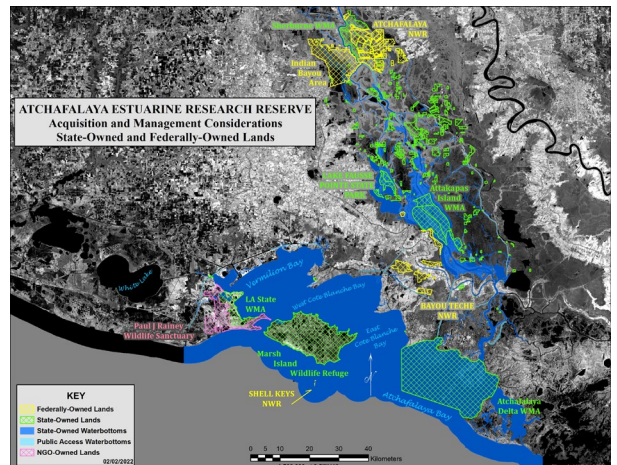
The Atchafalaya Basin is perfectly situated to offer a variety of opportunities for learning. Centrally located along the coast, it provides relatively short travel distances from major coastal zone cities and universities.



This region is an ideal place to discuss the interconnectedness of engineering, ecology, and its impacts on communities.

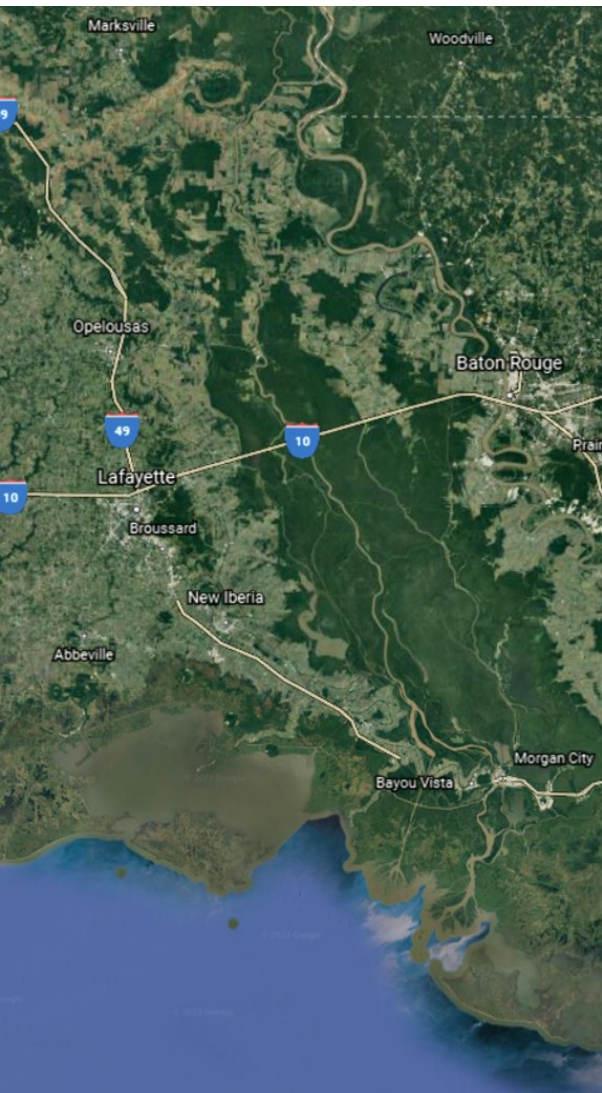
The Atchafalaya Basin has ecological and cultural significance for Louisiana and the nation.

The Atchafalaya and Wax Lake Deltas contain over 50,000 hectares of the newest created land in North America. The Atchafalaya Basin is a small-scale version of Louisiana including nearly all of the habitats and ecosystems found in the state. It provides opportunities to study all the important ecological dynamics that drive change in Louisiana and can be used to better understand other major river deltas. The site offers access to flood plains of the upland river to the active river delta transitioning to brackish and saltmarsh systems as well as riverine, estuarine, and offshore habitats.



For more information on the LA NERR process: [www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr](http://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr)

# Flora and Fauna of the Atchafalaya Basin



## Alluvial Floodplain Zone

- Upper: Bottomland hardwood forests
  - High sites with low flooding: American sweetgum, water oak, sugarberry
  - Low sites with high flooding: overcup oak, water hickory, green ash
- Lower: Cypress-Tupelo swamps
  - scrub-shrub community in some areas (water elm, swamp privet, buttonbush, scattered cypress)



## River Delta and Fresh Marsh Zone

- Upstream tips of islands: Black willow with understory of elephant ear, rice cutgrass, climbing hempweed, etc.
- As elevation decreases, tidal fresh marsh vegetation dominates



## Brackish and Salt Marsh Zone

- Moving away from river deltas, estuaries fringed with brackish and salt marshes and to a lesser extent black mangrove patches



## Important fauna of the Atchafalaya Basin

- Critical habitats for Louisiana black bear, neotropical migratory birds, American alligators, fish and invertebrates
- More than a dozen threatened or endangered species:
  - piping plover and other birds of concern, west Indian manatee, pallid sturgeon, and 5+ species of turtles



The proposed Atchafalaya NERR is supported by partnerships with the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, Audubon Delta, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Louisiana Sea Grant, Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON), University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Louisiana State University, Nicholls State University, United States Geological Survey, Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, Restore and Retreat, Inc., Boy Scouts of America, the Atchafalaya River Basin Restoration & Enhancement (ARBE) Task Force, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), and municipalities within the basin.