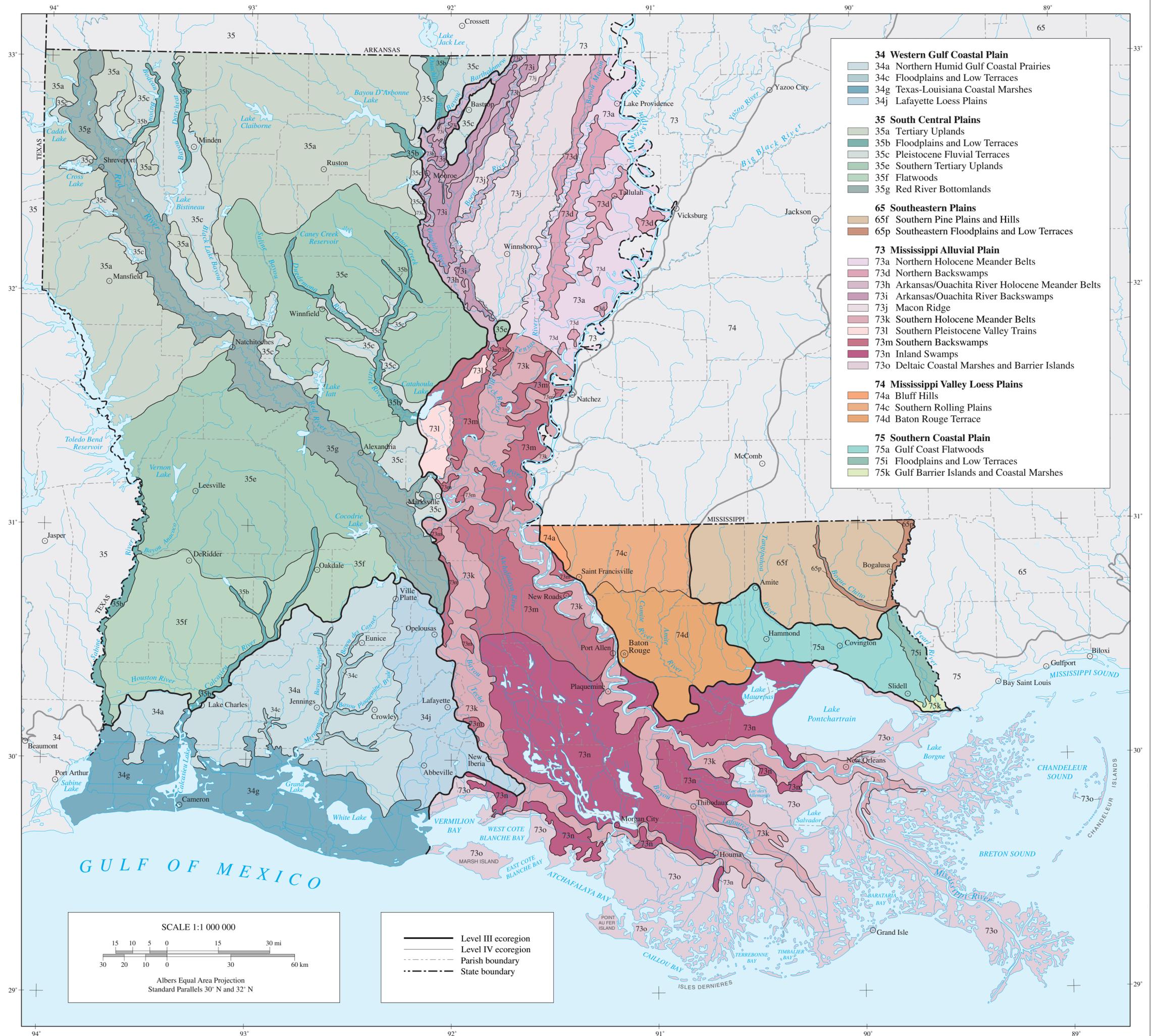


Ecoregions of Louisiana



Ecoregions denote areas of general similarity in ecosystems and in the type, quality, and quantity of environmental resources. They are designed to serve as a spatial framework for the research, assessment, management, and monitoring of ecosystems and ecosystem components. By recognizing the spatial differences in the capacities and potentials of ecosystems, ecoregions stratify the environment by its probable response to disturbance.

Ecoregions are general purpose regions that are critical for structuring and implementing ecosystem management strategies across federal agencies, state agencies, and nongovernment organizations responsible for different types of resources in the same geographical areas. The approach used to compile the ecoregion map of Louisiana is based on the premise that ecological regions can be identified through the analysis of the spatial patterns and the composition of biotic and abiotic characteristics that affect or reflect differences in ecosystem quality and integrity. These characteristics include geology, physiography, vegetation, climate, soils, land use, wildlife, and hydrology. The relative importance of each characteristic varies from one ecological region to another regardless of ecoregion hierarchical level.

Louisiana contains barrier islands and coastal lowlands, large river floodplains, rolling and hilly coastal plains with evergreen and deciduous forests, and a variety of aquatic habitats. There are 6 level III ecoregions and 28 level IV ecoregions, and most of these continue into ecologically similar parts of adjacent states.

This ecoregion map was compiled at a scale of 1:250,000, and depicts revisions and subdivisions of earlier level III ecoregions that were originally compiled at a smaller scale. It is part of a collaborative project primarily between USEPA-National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory (Corvallis, Oregon), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), U.S. Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Louisiana Natural Heritage Program (LNHP) within the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), Louisiana Geological Survey (LGS), and Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ). Collaboration and consultation also occurred with the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF), Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Department of Agriculture-Forest Service (USFS), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and USGS-Center for Earth Resources Observation and Science. This project is associated with an interagency effort to develop a common framework of ecological regions. Reaching that objective requires recognition of the differences in the conceptual approaches and mapping methodologies applied to develop the most common ecoregion-type frameworks, including those developed by the USFS, the USEPA, and the NRCS. As each of these frameworks is further refined, their differences are becoming less discernible. Each collaborative ecoregion project, such as this one in Louisiana, is a step toward attaining consensus and consistency in ecoregion frameworks for the entire nation.

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Electronic versions of ecoregion maps and posters as well as other ecoregion resources are available at <http://www.epa.gov/wed/pages/ecoregions.htm>.