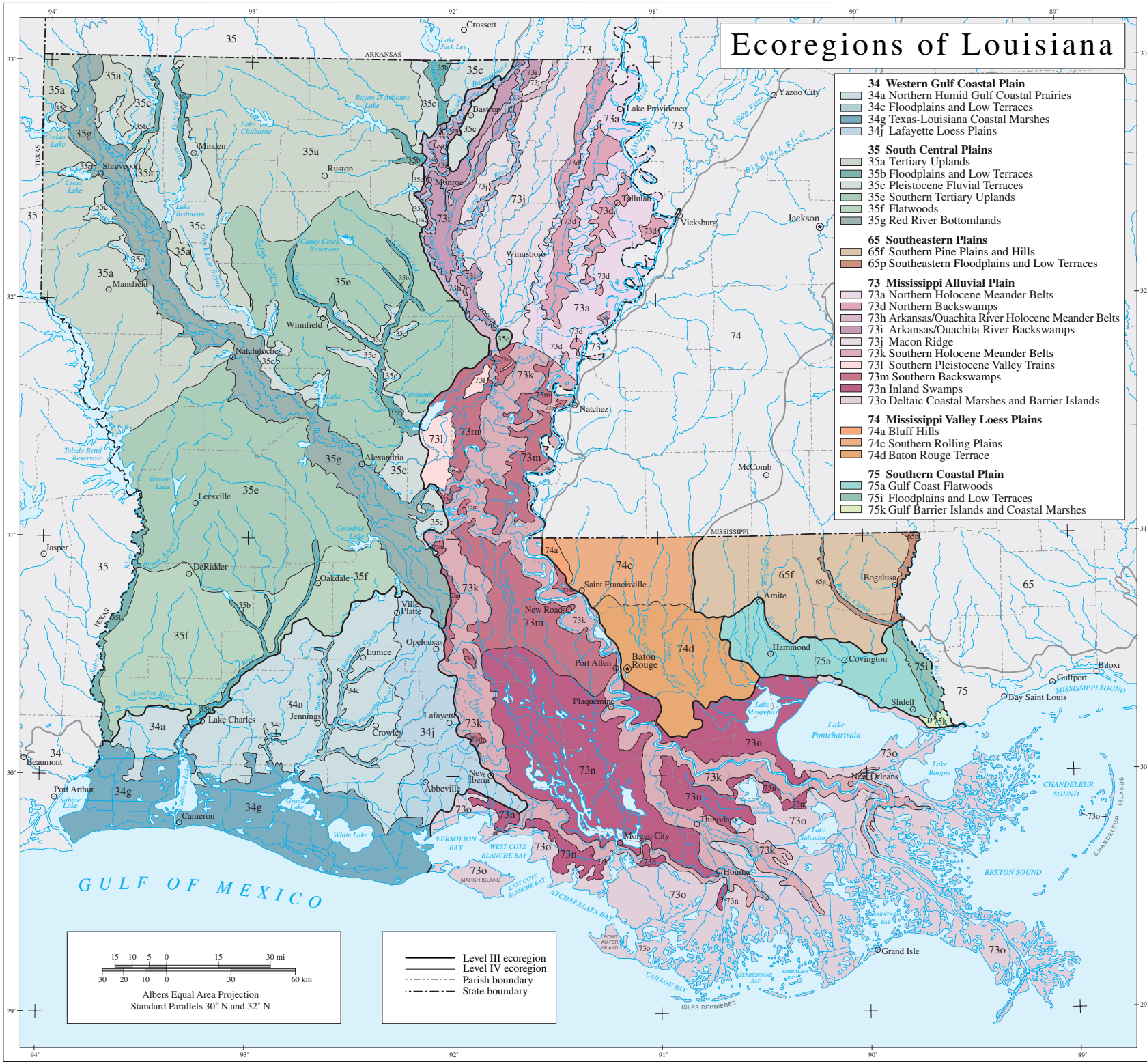
Ecoregions of Louisiana



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. 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 is based on the premise that ecological regions can be identified through 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.

This ecoregion map was compiled at a scale of 1:250,000, and depicts revisions and subdivisions of 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.

PRINCIPAL AUTHORS: Jerry J. Daigle (NRCS), Glenn E. Griffith (Dynamac Corporation), James M. Omernik (USGS), Patricia L. Faulkner (LNHP-LDWF), Richard P. McCulloh (LGS), Lawrence R. Handley (USGS-NWRC), Latimore M. Smith (The Nature Conservancy), and Shannen S. Chapman (Dynamac Corporation).

COLLABORATORS AND CONTRIBUTORS: Bradley Spicer (LDAF), Sue Smith (LDEQ), Paul Heinrich (LGS), John Novosad (USFS), Bill Vermillion (USFWS), Charles Demas (USGS), Dennis Demcheck (USGS), C. Edward Proffitt (USGS-NWRC), Philip Crocker (USEPA), Barbara Kleiss (USACE, ERDC-Waterways Experiment Station), Jan Boydston (LDEQ), Alan Woods (Oregon State University), Pat O'Neil (USGS), Brian Moran (Indus Corporation), John Hutchinson (Science Applications International Corporation), Jack Wittmann (USGS), and Tom Loveland (USGS).

REVIEWERS: Martin Floyd (NRCS), Anthony Lewis (Louisiana State University), and Chris Reid (LNHP-LDWF).

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Electronic files of ecoregion maps are available at http://www.epa.gov/wed/pages/ecoregions.htm.