

# Mississippi Sound Estuary Watershed

The Mississippi Sound Estuary watershed consists of three smaller watersheds (Pascagoula, Pearl River, and MS Coastal), containing 14 smaller water basins. It is also part of the larger South Atlantic-Gulf watershed. It neighbors the Mississippi River Basin, the largest watershed in North America.

## Estuaries

An estuary is a partially enclosed body of water where fresh water from rivers mixes with salt water from the ocean/gulf/sea. This mix of fresh and saltwater is known as “brackish” water.

Shallow waters allow sunlight to reach all levels of the water, providing an optimal habitat for many plant and animal species.

Heavily influenced by tides, factors such as temperature, turbidity, salinity, depth, and flow can all change daily. These fluctuations result in seasonal variations in fish communities.

Estuaries often provide the perfect conditions for nurseries for a wide variety of fish and other animals before they make their way out to sea. The nutrient-rich water provides an ideal environment for fish and shellfish to mature and grow, with many species using the estuarine waterways to reproduce. Due to this, many migratory fishes and birds utilize estuaries as seasonal breeding grounds.

Estuaries are vital to the protection and preservation of our environment.

## Watersheds

A watershed, often called a water basin, is a region of land that drains into a particular body of water. Watersheds can range in size, from small local water basins to large regional watersheds made up of many smaller basins. It not only influences the water quality in the surrounding water body but also has a significant impact on the well-being of the communities of people and wildlife that inhabit it. Healthy watersheds play a crucial role in safeguarding water quality and offer more advantages to the inhabitants than degraded ones.

