



Tallapoosa River Basin

Tallapoosa is believed to mean "pulverized rock," in the Choctaw Indian language. It is also thought to be named for a Creek Indian term meaning 'swift current'.

Quick Facts

- The basin is comprised of the Tallapoosa River and the Little Tallapoosa River.
- The river basin is a total of 4,680 square miles, of which 15 percent lie in Georgia. The remaining 85 percent is located in Alabama.

Population and Location

- Population centers in the Tallapoosa watershed include Bremen, Villa Rica, and Carrollton.
- The Tallapoosa basin includes portions of five Georgia counties; however, only three counties have a significant fraction of their land area within the basin.
- As of 1995, about 98,800 people lived in the Georgia portion of the watershed.
- The Georgia portion of the Tallapoosa River basin supported 36,700 jobs in 1990, dominated by a variety of manufacturing interests.

Wetlands

Most are forested and located in floodplains of streams and rivers. "Forested floodplain wetlands are maintained by the natural flooding regime of rivers and streams, and in turn, influence the water and habitat quality of riverine ecosystems. Total wetland acreage based on landsat TM imagery is 4761.3 acres or 1.1 percent of land area in the Tallapoosa River basin. These data underestimate the acreage of forested wetlands, where considerable acreage may have been classified as hardwood or mixed forest.

Biological Resources

The Tallapoosa River basin supports cold and warm water fisheries. Species important to recreational anglers include largemouth, spotted, and redeye bass; rainbow trout; black crappie; channel catfish; and various species of sunfish.

Endangered Species

Six fish species occurring within the Tallapoosa River basin have been listed for protection by the State as endangered, threatened, or rare; however, none of these species have been listed at the Federal level. Nearly three-fourths of the southeastern freshwater mussel fauna is federally listed or has candidate species status. Modification of river channels for shipping, sedimentation from improper land use or inadequate erosion control, and non-point source pollution are the factors most responsible for mussel population declines.

Georgia Natural Heritage Program has identified two “Special Concern” plant species occurring in the Tallapoosa River basin, including species designated as unusual, rare, threatened, or endangered. Among these, there are two wetland species with state threatened or uncommon status.

Health of the River

Identified Issues

Listed among the nation’s most endangered rivers in 1999.

305b/303d

In the Tallapoosa River Basin, there are approximately 5 rivers and streams listed on the 2002 303(d) list as waters not meeting their designated use of fishing. These impaired waters include roughly 12 miles of rivers and streams in the Tallapoosa River Basin.

Fishing Advisories

For a complete listing of fish consumption guidelines for the Tallapoosa River Basin and other basins in Georgia see *Guidelines for Eating Fish from Georgia Waters, 2002* at <http://www.state.ga.us/dnr/environ/>.

NPDES Discharges

The Clean Water Act (CWA), the basic federal law designed to control water pollution in the United States, prohibits the discharge of any pollutant into waters of the United States except in compliance with a National Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit issued pursuant to the Act. Currently, there are approximately 21 facilities, including industries and municipalities, authorized to discharge wastewater into the Tallapoosa River Basin pursuant to NPDES Permits.

Impoundments

The river is free flowing in Georgia with no major impoundments until it reaches Harris Reservoir in Alabama. However, the West Georgia Reservoir has been proposed for the Georgia portion of the basin, and would significantly alter fish habitat. Several studies of fish in the Tallapoosa basin have been conducted in conjunction with planning for the proposed West Georgia Reservoir. Beisser (1990) developed an inventory of fish species in the vicinity of the proposed reservoir and identified 72 species inhabiting the drainage based on museum collections and literature citations, of which 46 were confirmed by electrofishing in 1989–1990. Of these, five species are endemic to the Tallapoosa basin and three are rare or exhibit unique distribution patterns in Georgia.

The Tallapoosa basin contains no major dams and associated impoundments within Georgia at this time, although the Harris impoundment in Alabama extends into Georgia.

How to Get Involved

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