



American Tree Farm System

Mississippi Tree Farm Committee

Mississippi Forests of Recognized Importance

The MS Tree Farm committee has discussed the Forest of Recognized Importance (FORI) related to the American Forest Foundation's (AFF) 2021 Standards of Sustainability. Their guidance from MyLandPlan.org: <https://mylandplan.org/content/what-forest-recognized-importance> provided the template for designation decisions used by the committee, and is presented here:

What are FORIs?

FORIs represent globally, regionally and nationally significant large landscape areas of exceptional ecological, social, cultural or biological values. These forests are evaluated at the landscape level rather than the stand level and are recognized for a combination of unique values rather than a single attribute.

FORIs may include but are not limited to landscapes with exceptionally high concentrations of one or more of the following:

- protected, rare, sensitive or representative forest ecosystems such as riparian areas and wetland biotopes
- areas containing endemic species and critical habitats of multiple threatened or endangered plant and animal species, as identified under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) or other recognized listings
- recognized large-scale cultural or archeological sites including, sites of human habitation, cities, burial grounds and in situ artifacts
- areas containing identified and protected water resources upon which large metropolitan populations are dependent
- areas containing identified unique or geologic features, including geysers, waterfalls, lava beds, caves or craters

Mississippi Forests of Recognized Importance

Based on this guidance we have determined the areas in Mississippi that meet the criterion for large landscape areas of "exceptional ecological, social, cultural or biological values." These areas are associated with the National Forests, National Wildlife Refuges, and watersheds of the Ross Barnett reservoir. It is important to note that the FORI designation does not compel the landowner to take any action, rather it acts as a reminder that management practice impacts may reach beyond their property boundaries and the presence of FORI should be considered when planning activities.

Although there are other small areas with single important species, social, cultural, or other values, they would not meet the landscape level necessary to be called a FORI. These other areas would be consistent with what the AFF considers a special site and, in some instances, might warrant management considerations by nearby Tree Farms; they would be at a much more local level than a FORI.

We consider the following to be Forest of Recognized Importance (FORI) in Mississippi:

National Forests in Mississippi

There are six national forests in Mississippi comprising some 1.2 million acres spread across the state:

- Bienville
- De Soto
- Delta
- Holly Springs
- Homochitto
- Tombigbee

See Appendix 1 for a map of National Forest Locations. For more detailed map information, visit:

<https://usfs.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=a6a32f0501754fdc8932b1c0090a1d83>

National Wildlife Refuges

Protecting biodiversity and habitat is the goal of Mississippi's 15 NWRs. In all they encompass close to 225,000 acres across the state:

- Bogue Chitto
- Coldwater River
- Dahomey
- Grand Bay
- Hillside
- Holt Collier
- Mathews Brake
- Mississippi Sandhill Crane
- Morgan Brake
- Panther Swamp
- Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee
- St. Catherine Creek
- Tallahatchie
- Theodore Roosevelt
- Yazoo

See Appendix 2 for a map of refuge locations. For more detailed information, visit:

<https://www.fws.gov/refuges/find-a-wildlife-refuge/>

Ross Barnett Reservoir

Ross Barnett is 33,000-acre reservoir, supplying drinking water to Jackson, MS. The watershed includes the upper Pearl River basin and encompasses some 3,000 square miles of land and 4,000 miles of flowing rivers and streams¹. Adherence to Mississippi Best Management Practices is key to helping address some of the concerns with land use in the watershed.

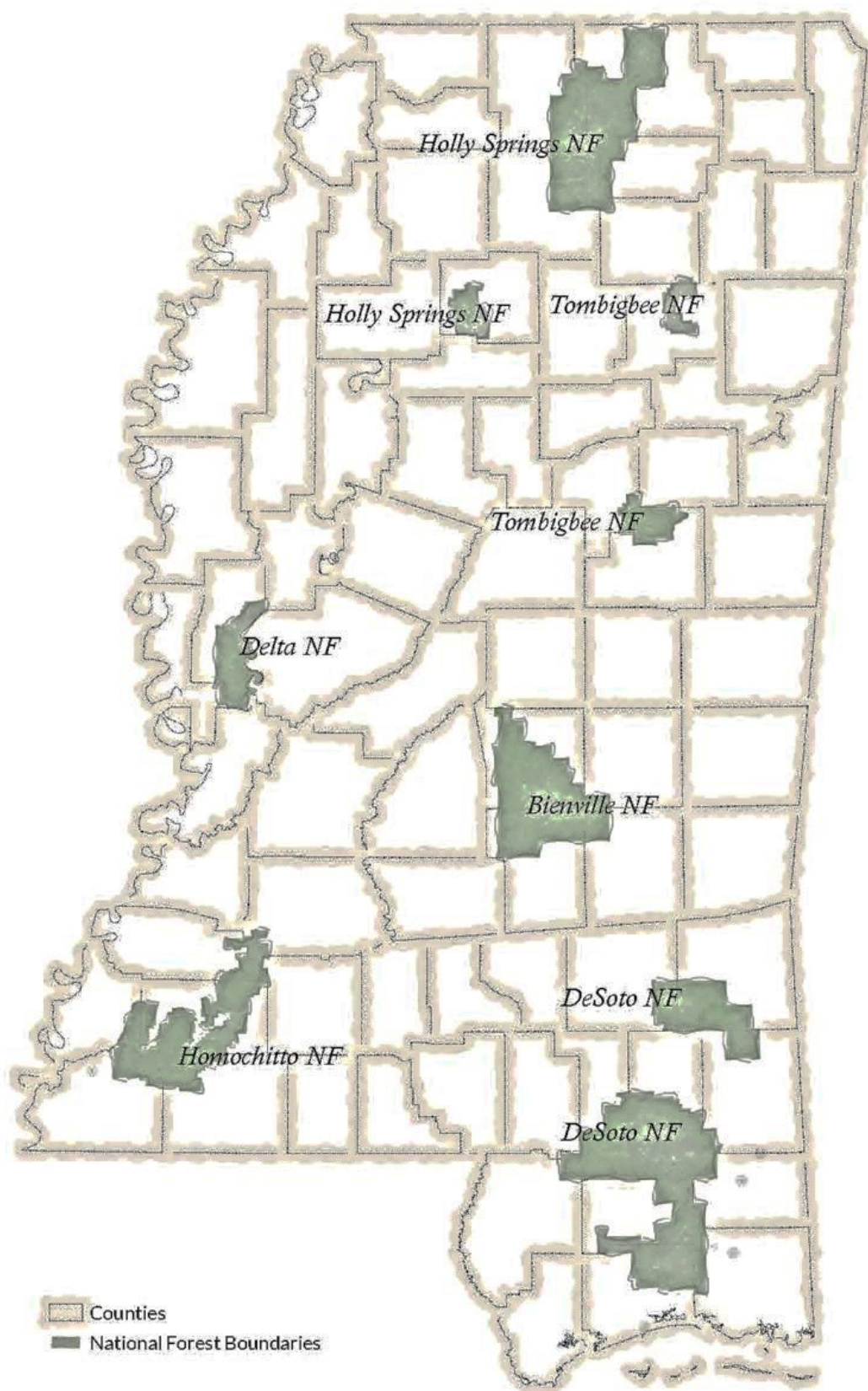
¹ 2011 Executive Summary of the Comprehensive Protection & Restoration Plan for the Ross Barnett Reservoir Watershed, Mississippi

The watershed is the upper Pearl River basin including the waterbodies:

- Besa Chitto Creek
- Tibby Creek
- Yockanookany River
- Lobutch Creek
- Tallahnaga Creek
- Noxapater Creek
- Pinishook Creek
- Nanih Waiya Creek
- Bogue Chitto Creek
- Standing Pine Creek
- Tuscolameta Creek
- Sipsey Creek
- Conehatta Creek
- Hontokalo Creek
- Tallabogue Creek
- Shockaloo Creek
- Pelahatchie Creek

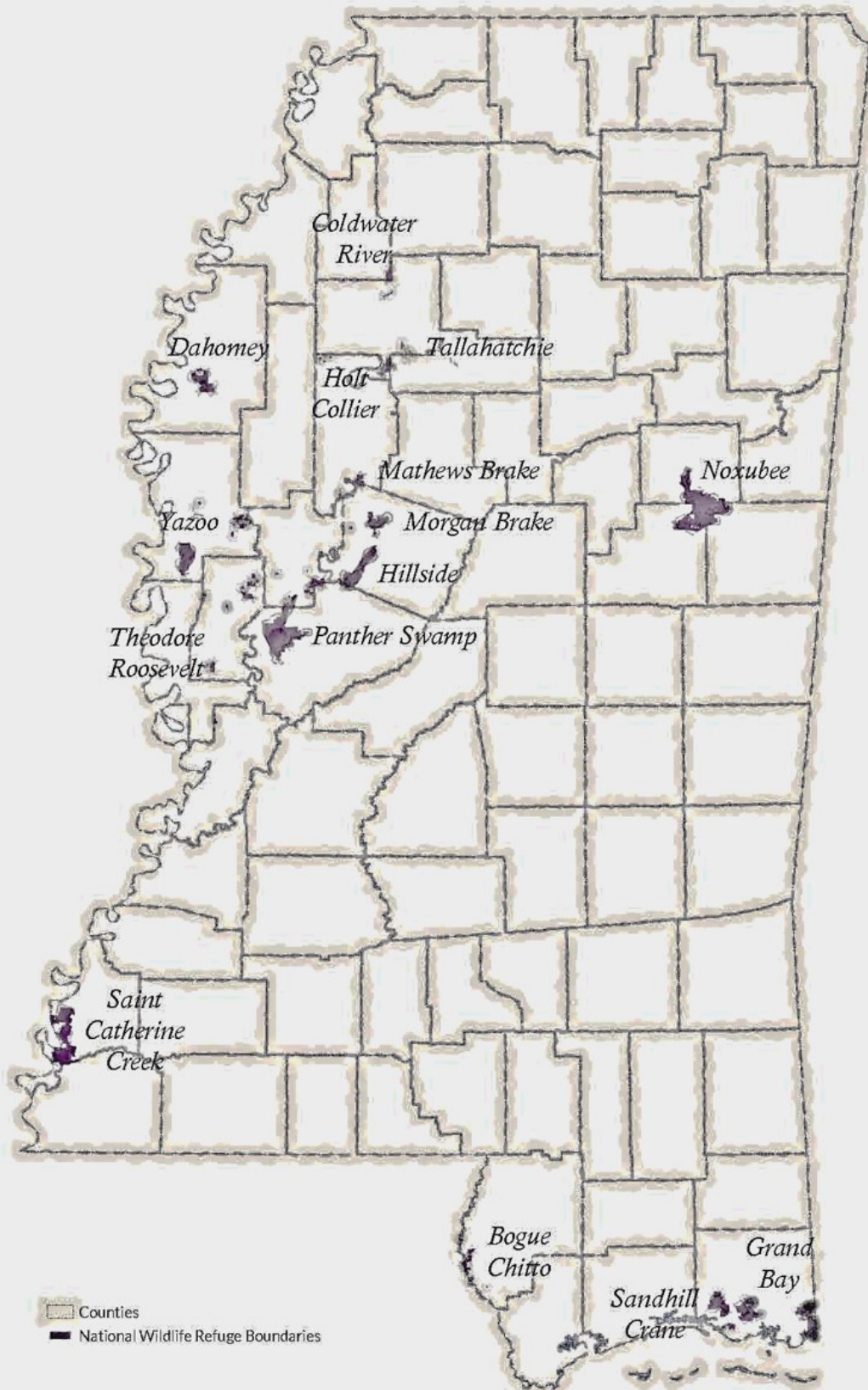
See Appendix 3 for a map of the Ross Barnett Watershed.

Appendix 1: Mississippi National Forests*



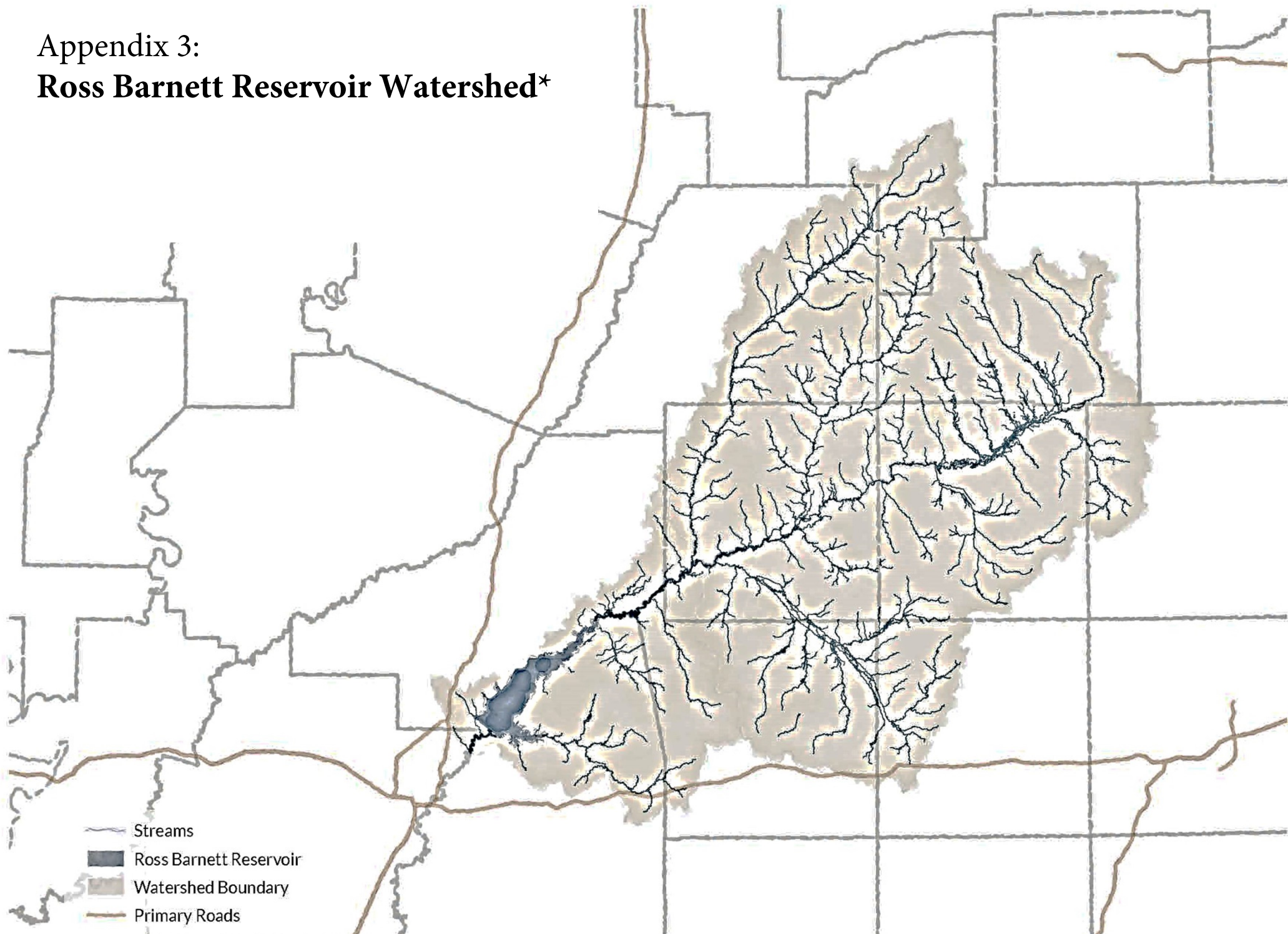
*Map created by Dr. Joby Czarnecki, Associate Research Professor, Geosystems Research Institute, Mississippi State University, 2022.

Appendix 2: Mississippi National Wildlife Refuges*



*Map created by Dr. Joby Czarnecki, Associate Research Professor, Geosystems Research Institute, Mississippi State University, 2022.

Appendix 3: Ross Barnett Reservoir Watershed*



*Map created by Dr. Joby Czarnecki, Associate Research Professor, Geosystems Research Institute, Mississippi State University, 2022.