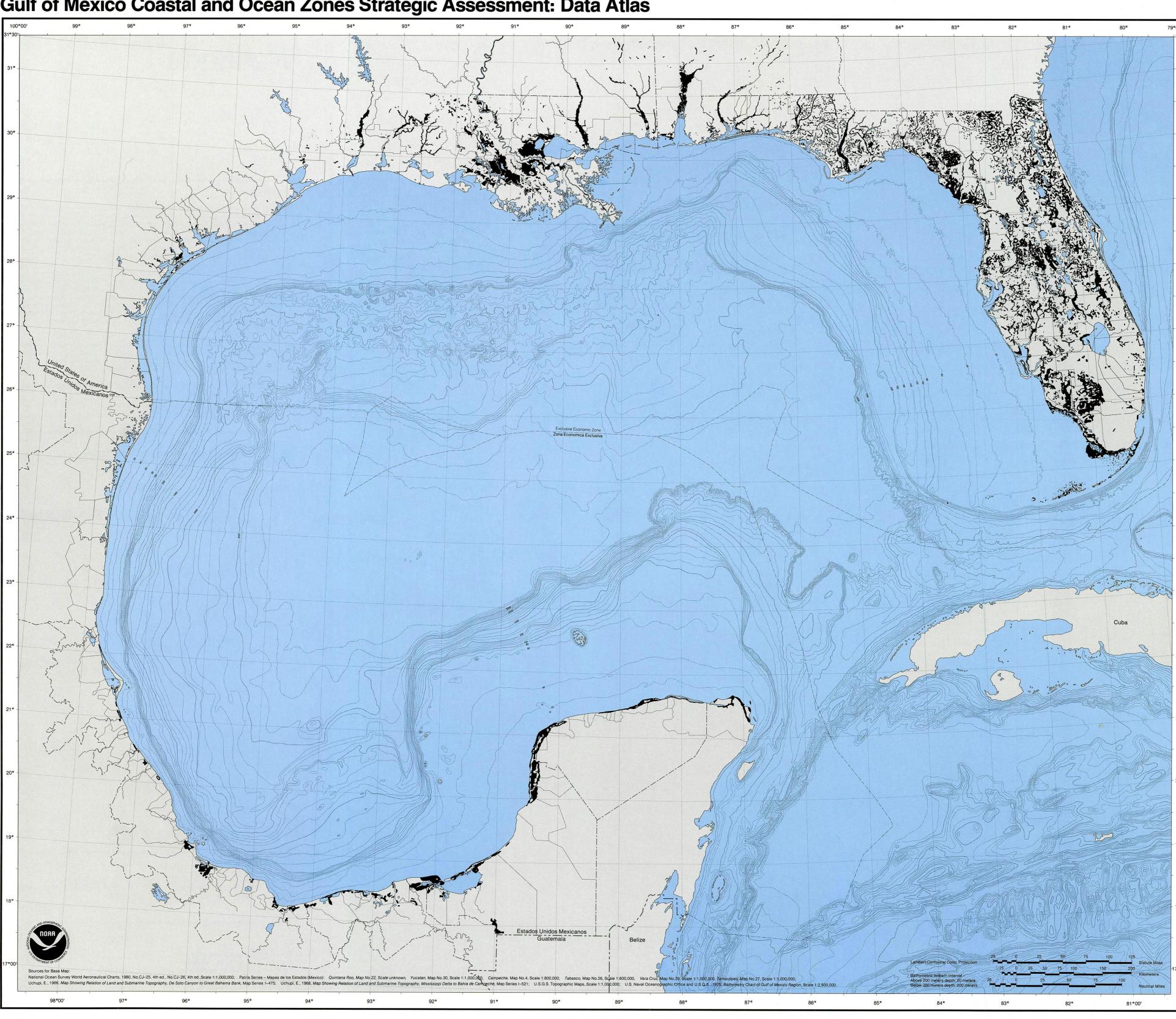
## Gulf of Mexico Coastal and Ocean Zones Strategic Assessment: Data Atlas



## **Forested** Wetlands

## Description

This map and Map 2.02 form a set showing the distribution of two types of wetlands in the Gulf of Mexico - forested and nonforested wetlands. In general, wetlands provide important habitat and food for commercially and recreationally valuable fishes, shellfishes, waterfowl, reptiles, and mammals. Wetlands play a major role in the primary productivity of estuaries and coastal waters by exporting large amounts c/f detritus and nutrients. In forested wetlands, mangroves in particular buffer the shore from waves and

Wetlands include areas where the water table is usually at or near the surface or where the land is covered by shallow water. These habitat types are abundant in the Gulf of Mexico. Wetlands may be forested, such as swamps and mangroves, or nonforested (Map 2.02), such as marshes, mudflats, and natural ponds.

Forested wetlands differ from nonforested wetlands in the predominance of woody plants, such as water oak, tupelo gum, mangrove, and bald cypress. The largest forested wetland areas of the American coast of the Gulf of Mexico extend from Florida Bay north to Cape Romano, where red and black mangrove stands penetrate 0.5 to 6 mi inland (and up to 14 mi along rivers) grading into brackish and freshwater wetlands, including the bald cypress and swamps of the Everglades. Virgin swamp forests, predominantly bald cypress and water tupelo, lie in the Mississippi Delta and along major rivers of the north central Gulf. Extensive mangrove forests are also found along the western Yucatan

Wetland areas shown for the USA are compiled from land-use and land-cover maps (at a scale of 1:250,000) prepared by the US Geological Survey from LANDSAT satellite imagery and high-altitude aerial photographs. The smallest wetland areas mapped at this scale were 16 hectares (40 acres). For Mexico, wetland areas were identified from maps in the Atlas Nacional de Medio Fisico based on aerial photographs at scales ranging between 1:25,000 and 1:90,000 taken between 1969 and 1980 and from LANDSAT images between 1972 and 1978. Minimum size of Mexican wetlands illustrated is unknown.



**Areas of Forested Wetlands** 

## References

Anderson, J.R., et al., 1976; Ringold, P.L., and J. Clark, 1980; Secretaria de Programacion y Presupesto, 1981; US DOI, FWS, Office of Biological Services, n.d.; US DOI, Geological Survey, 1973–1979; Wicker, K.M., 1980.

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