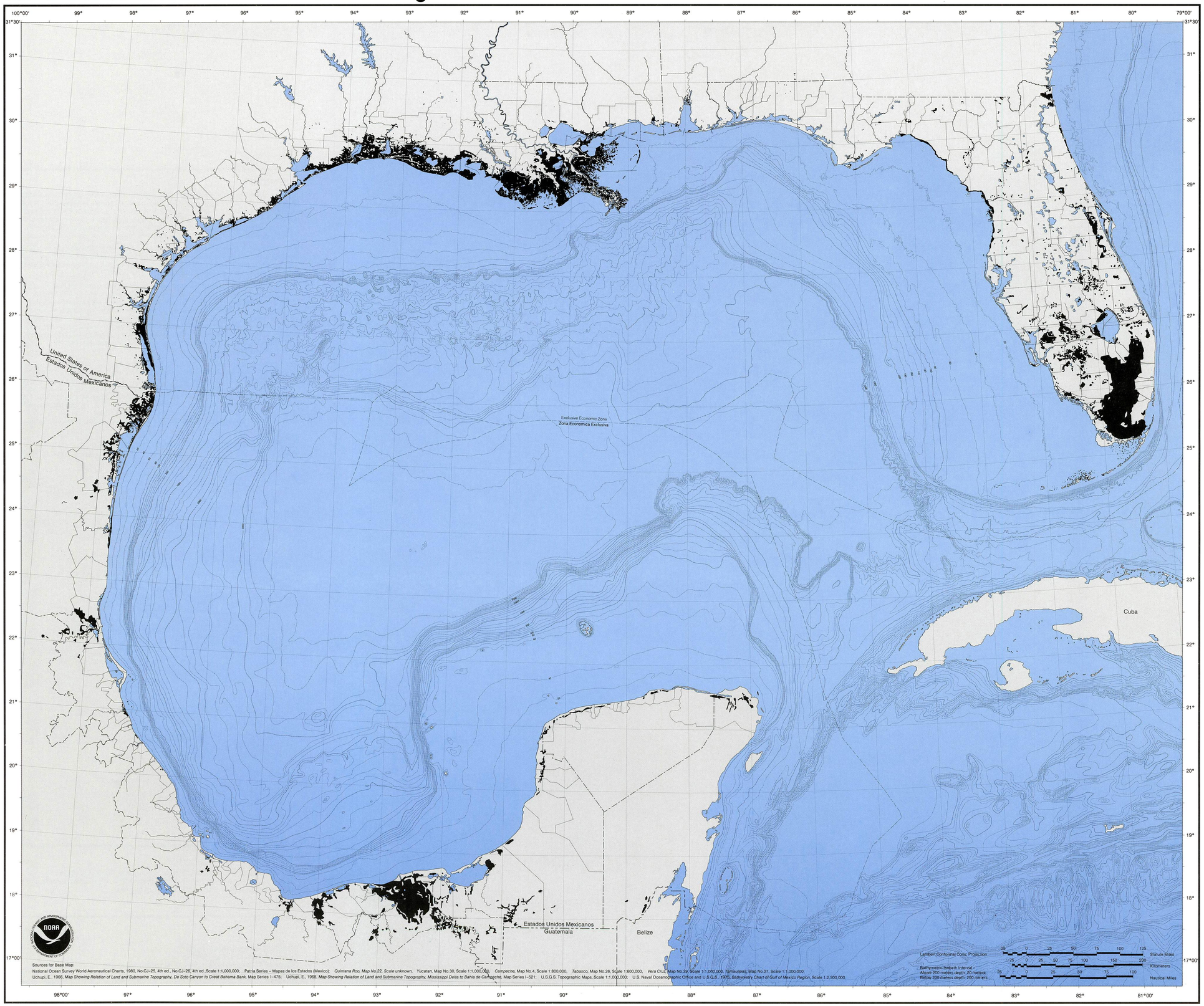

Nonforested Wetlands

Description

This map, the second of the wetlands set, shows the distribution of nonforested wetlands. Wetlands are generally characterized by herbaceous vegetation growing in soil or substrate that is permanently or periodically saturated with water. In addition to being prime habitat for fishes, invertebrates, waterfowl, reptiles, and mammals, nonforested wetlands help control flood waters and coastal erosion, trap sediments, and improve water quality by assimilating organic, inorganic, and toxic materials found in coastal waters. In some cases they also help replenish groundwater.

Examples of nonforested wetlands are saline, brackish, and freshwater marshes, mudflats, sloughs, and coastal ponds. The location of these different types of wetlands along the Gulf Coast depends upon factors such as salinity, turbidity, current speed, the frequency and height of tidal inundation, and the composition of the substrate. Species that are characteristic of nonforested wetlands in the Gulf include cordgrass and saltgrass (saline marsh); wiregrass, spikerush, and three-cornered grass (brackish marsh); maidencane and bull tongue (freshwater marsh); and water hyacinths (freshwater ponds).

Large areas of nonforested wetlands are found in coastal Texas, Louisiana, and Florida. Recent state estimates of coastal wetlands acreage (both forested and nonforested) are: Alabama (121,603 acres); Florida (2,254,160); Louisiana (3,910,664); Mississippi (64,805); and Texas (412,516) (Ringold and Clark, 1980).

Procedures used to prepare this map were the same as those used to prepare Map 2.01.

Areas of Nonforested Wetlands

References

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

Strategic Assessment Branch
Ocean Assessments Division
Office of Oceanography and Marine Assessment
National Ocean Service/NOAA
and the
Southeast Fisheries Center
National Marine Fisheries Service/NOAA