

movement of aquatic species that can lead to a change in native species associations.

H. Threats to Aquatic Habitats

The decline of many native fish and mussel species is a result of the reduced quantity and quality of available habitat. Other specific causes of decline include levee construction, damming and channelization of the state's major rivers, including the Atchafalaya, Mississippi, Pearl, Red, and Sabine Rivers, for flood control and navigation along with agricultural uses, deforestation, erosion, pollution, and introduced species.

Threats that appeared repeatedly across basins included:

- Modification of water levels/changes in natural flow patterns
- Sedimentation
- Habitat disturbance
- Nutrient loading
- Altered composition and structure

Top sources of threats across all basins include:

- Channelization of rivers or streams
- Construction of navigable waterways
- Dam construction
- Invasive/alien species
- Levee or dike construction
- Oil and gas drilling
- Operation of dams and reservoirs
- Commercial/industrial development
- Conversion to agriculture or other forest types

I. Prioritization of Terrestrial Habitats by Ecoregions

Conservation actions or strategies were developed for each terrestrial habitat and key wildlife species of conservation concern within each of the habitats to address threats identified by the habitat assessments. In order to maximize conservation benefits using available resources, ranking or prioritization lists of habitats were developed. These lists of priority habitats will allow LDWF to direct conservation efforts to those wildlife habitats and associated species of concern that need the most attention, and will bring the greatest benefit to the maximum number of species.

A process was formed to create the habitat priority list, and, as with the threats assessments, this process was completed by ecoregion (Chart 3.1). Within each ecoregion, the habitats were divided into two groups or tiers based on whether or not they occurred only in that ecoregion (Tier 1) or in multiple ecoregions (Tier 2). This first step