

Figure 21. Location of the ecologically significant tidal segment of the Aransas River (TNRCC segment 2003) (Scale 1": 1 mile; Base map source: TxDOT county files).

Aransas River Tidal

The tidal segment of the Aransas River (TNRCC stream segment 2003) runs from a point about 3.3 miles upstream from the confluence of Chiltipin Creek about 6 miles to its confluence with Copano Bay (Fig. 21). The ecological significance of this segment is based upon the following criteria:

1. Biological function - This tidal segment supports very productive estuarine wetlands in the Aransas River Delta (Figs. 22, 23)¹². These wetlands, and the tidal river segment itself, support economically valuable commercial and recreational fisheries and wildlife resources.
2. Hydrologic function - The deltaic wetlands function to filter excess nutrients, sediment, and contaminants from runoff entering the river and Copano Bay from farmland within the drainage basin.
3. Riparian conservation areas - Black Point is site CTC 043 and Egery Flats is CTC 044 on the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail (Figs. 24 a,b)¹⁰. These estuarine flats and marshes are very important feeding habitat for shorebirds, wading birds, waterfowl, and other waterbirds.
4. High water quality/exceptional aquatic life/high aesthetic value - This segment and its deltaic wetlands support very diverse and abundant estuarine fisheries and wildlife resources of considerable commercial and recreational economic value. The area offers exceptional birdwatching opportunities⁷.
5. Threatened (T) or endangered (E) species/unique communities - Rare species that occur in or along this segment and the deltaic wetlands include the brown pelican (Fed.&St. E), piping plover (Fed.&St. T), snowy plover, reddish egret (St. T), white-faced ibis (St. T), wood stork (St. T), and perhaps whooping cranes (Fed.&St. E), and interior least terns (Fed.&St. E); possibly the opossum pipefish (St. T); and the Gulf saltmarsh snake and diamondback terrapin⁹.



Figure 22. Extensive estuarine wetlands of the Aransas River Delta, Copano Bay (Aransas River Tidal, TNRCC stream segment 2003).
Source: Rincon Bend and Bayside DOQs, Jan. 1995, 1m CIR.

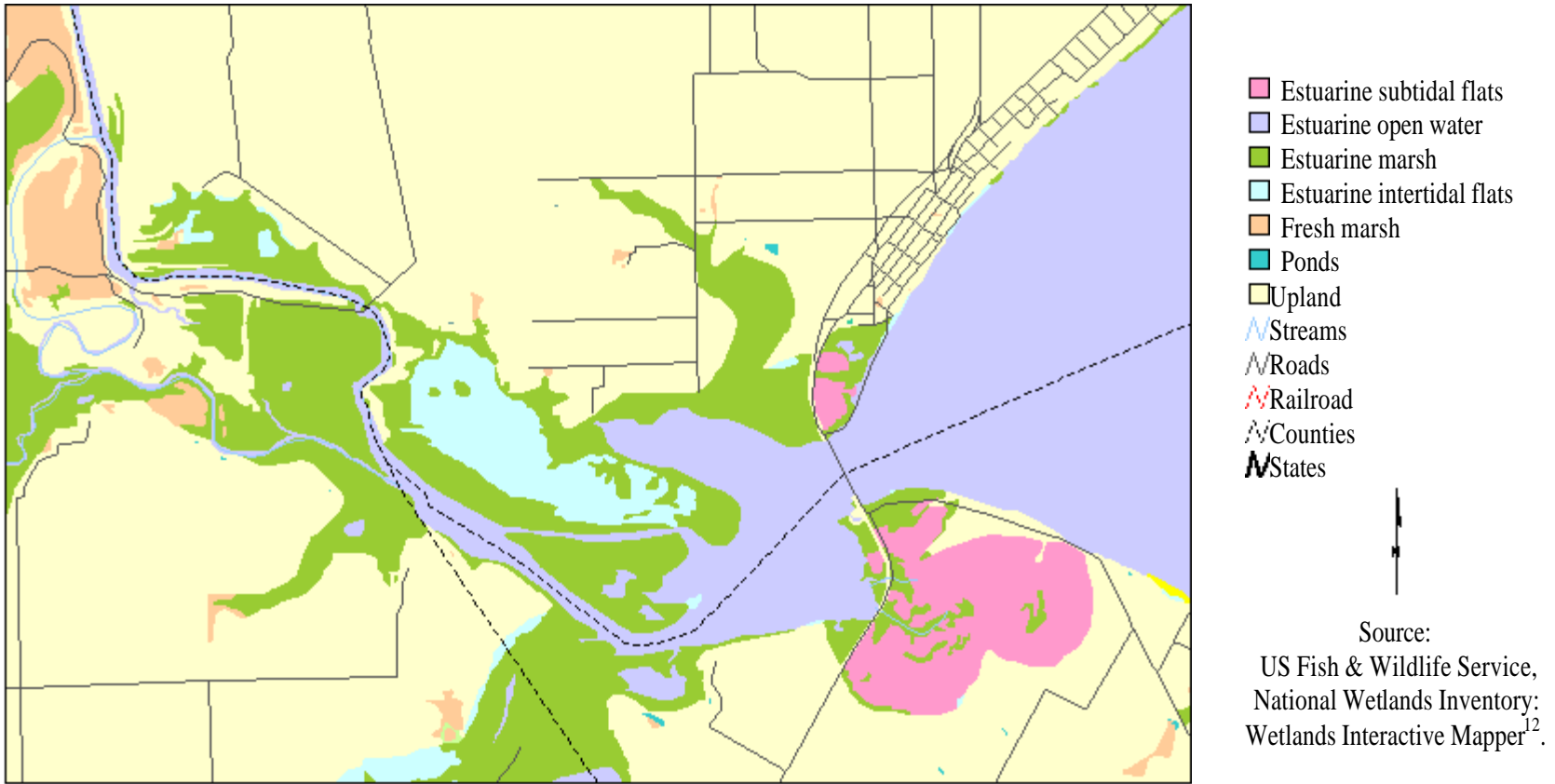


Figure 23. Mapped wetland habitats of the Aransas River Delta (See Fig. 22).



Figure 24(a). Shorebirds and wading birds in the extensive estuarine habitats at Egery Flats off FM 136.



Figure 24 (b). Shorebirds and wading birds in the extensive estuarine habitats at Egery Flats off FM 136.