

# OHIO RIVER FLOODPLAIN COA

The Ohio River Floodplains COA is located along the banks of the Ohio River between McCracken County and Daviess County. This COA is the smallest in land area identified within Kentucky SWAP at 186,918 acres. Although small in acreage, the floodplains, forests and bluffs along the Ohio River corridor hold a vast importance for both terrestrial and aquatic life. Within the COA, cropland and hay/pastureland comprise 31% of the land use, while 28% of the acreage is considered deciduous forest or woody wetlands.

The Ohio River is a critical thoroughfare for barge traffic and the movement of goods from the northeastern United States to the Mississippi and on to the Gulf of Mexico. To facilitate navigation, an infrastructure of docks and industrial facilities are common. The channel of the river itself and areas around docks are routinely dredged to remove silt and debris to allow for movement of large vessels. The floodplains within this COA are nutrient rich and highly desirable for agriculture. In addition, historic settlements along the Ohio River have been expanded and developed into urban areas such as Henderson, Owensboro, and Paducah. These cities now represent the central hubs for urban development within this COA.

Remaining natural areas in this COA provide critical habitat for many SGCN. Noteworthy habitats include cypress swamps, sloughs, streams, bottomland hardwood forests, flatwoods, wet prairies, mesic forests and sandstone bluffs. Five highest priority SGCN, the eastern hellbender, Crittenden crayfish, and three mussel species (pyramid pigtoe, ring pink and catspaw) currently occur



River traffic on the lower Ohio River in Ballard County.  
Photo: Marc Evans



Minimizing nest disturbance is a high priority action for the recently delisted interior least tern.  
Photo: John Brunjes

Ohio River SGCN Priority by Taxa						
Taxa	Moderate Priority	High Priority	Highest Priority	Data Deficient	Plant	Grand Total
Amphibians	3	3	1	2		9
Birds	77	12		1		90
Crustaceans			1	3		4
Fishes	5	2		5		12
Freshwater Mussels and Snails	1	22	3	3		29
Insects		1				1
Mammals	4	4		2		10
Plants					3	3
Reptiles	1	3		5		9
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>167</b>

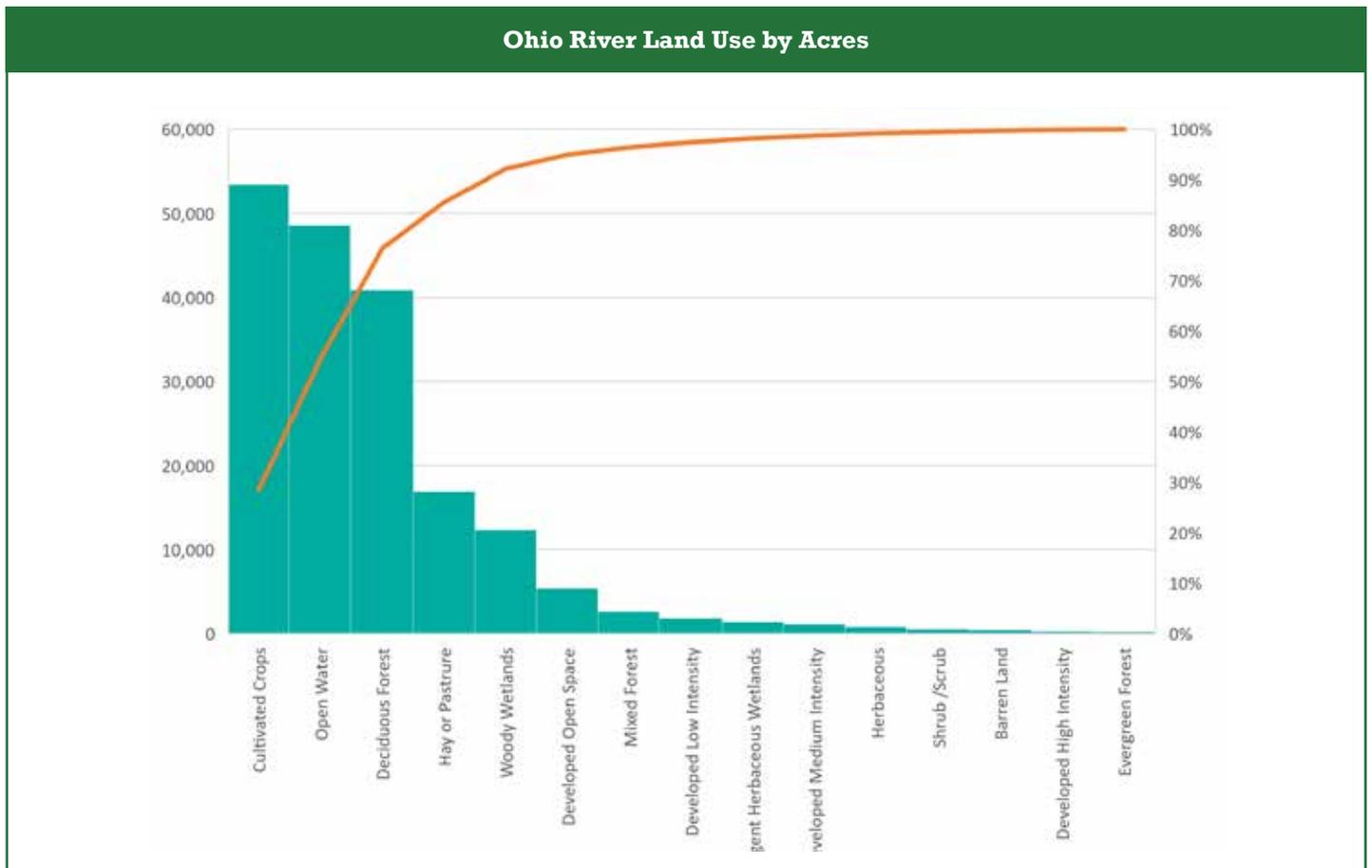
or have historic records in the COA. There are also 3 SGCN plants that occur in the wetlands and forests in this COA. Among the 47 SGCN considered High priority, 22 are freshwater mussels and 12 are birds. Natural System Modification, Agriculture and Pollution are noted as the top 3 threats in this COA. To address these threats, outreach and education regarding the impacts of improper land use practices and pollution impacts is important. Protection and proper management of land and water resources is critical to addressing the specific needs of Kentucky SGCN.

Kentucky's second National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Green River NWR was established in 2019 to protect bottomland hardwood forest habitat to support migrating and wintering waterfowl, shorebirds, songbirds, raptors and other fish and other wildlife species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identified a 53,000-acre Conservation Partnership Area in the region, from which they will assemble 24,000 acres of land through donation and acquisition from willing sellers. While land acquisition will take years to complete, a portion of this project area falls within the Ohio River COA and represents an opportunity to work with partners to acquire lands within this project area.

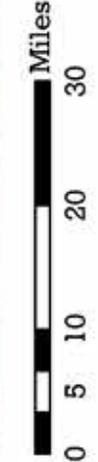
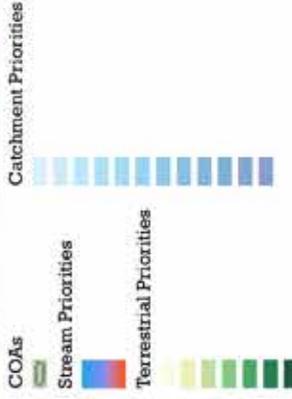
As with the previous example, external capacity building will be an important key to implementing conservation actions within this COA. Current and potential partners to assist with land protection and management within this COA include the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Kentucky Nature



Preserves, Kentucky State Parks, Kentucky Division of Water, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Kentucky Farm Bureau, Kentucky Division of Forestry, The Nature Conservancy, local governments, land trusts and collaborative environmental work groups.



# Ohio-River Floodplain COA



Maps prepared by GIS staff at KDFWR in partnership with OKNP and TNC. Services courtesy of Source: Esri, USDA, FSA, Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community, DGI, KyFloodBore Partners, Bart, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, FRC, NRTI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS.