Alabama Range Demand and Placement

NSSF
The Firearm Industry Trade Association

June 2024
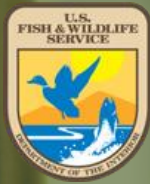
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About

- The National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) works closely with federal and state wildlife agencies to increase participation in hunting and target shooting. These state-specific reports are designed to help state agencies determine potential locations for future target shooting ranges in their states.

- Specifically, this study explored existing shooting range locations and the types of opportunities they offer, current target shooting demand in Alabama, and where demand is least served. The results will help the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) identify where the greatest needs are for additional shooting ranges.

- Understanding where demand is greatest, where current shooting range opportunities exist, and where potential new participants live are all factors that can inform shooting range development and placement to support the greatest number of people.

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Locations of existing Alabama ranges

- Alabama DCNR's range data plus industry sources were examined in 2024. The full list of ranges was vetted by internet searches to confirm that each shooting range was still operational, the types of shooting offered at each location, and whether the range was open to the public or not.

- A "public" range is any shooting range that is operated by a public entity such as a local, state, or federal government. A "private" range is any shooting range that is privately operated or requires membership.

- Any locations that offer hunting-affiliated services such as guided hunts, lodges, and more without also providing shooting opportunities were removed from the list.

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ESRI's® ArcGIS

- Range locations were visually verified using Google's satellite data and mapped in ESRI's® ArcGIS software.

- ArcGIS was used to learn where target shooting participation in 2023, either archery or firearm, was clustered according to ESRI's Market Potential data service.

  - This service is based in part on a series of consumer surveys from GfK MRI, a media and consumer research firm, and helps explain existing demand within given areas for many different products, activities, and services, including target shooting.

  - ESRI's Market Potential data is best used to identify where specific types of consumers are clustered and not to quantify the actual number of consumers.

- Together, these data help to identify areas where shooting range demand may exceed opportunity.

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Existing ranges and characteristics

Private vs. Public	Count	Percent	Shooting Range Type		Count	Percent
Public	43	73%	Rifle Only		2	3%
Private	16	27%	Handgun Only		3	5%
Total	59	100%	Shotgun Only		10	17%
			Archery*		1	2%
Outdoor vs. Indoor	**Count**	**Percent**	Rifle, Handgun		16	27%
Outdoor	48	81%	All firearms		27	46%
Indoor	11	19%		Total	59	100%
Total	59	100%				

*Source data prioritized firearm range listings and, as a result, not all archery ranges may have been captured in the count above.

The majority of Alabama's ranges are accessible to the general public, without the need of membership or fees. Most offer shooting opportunities for most weapon types.
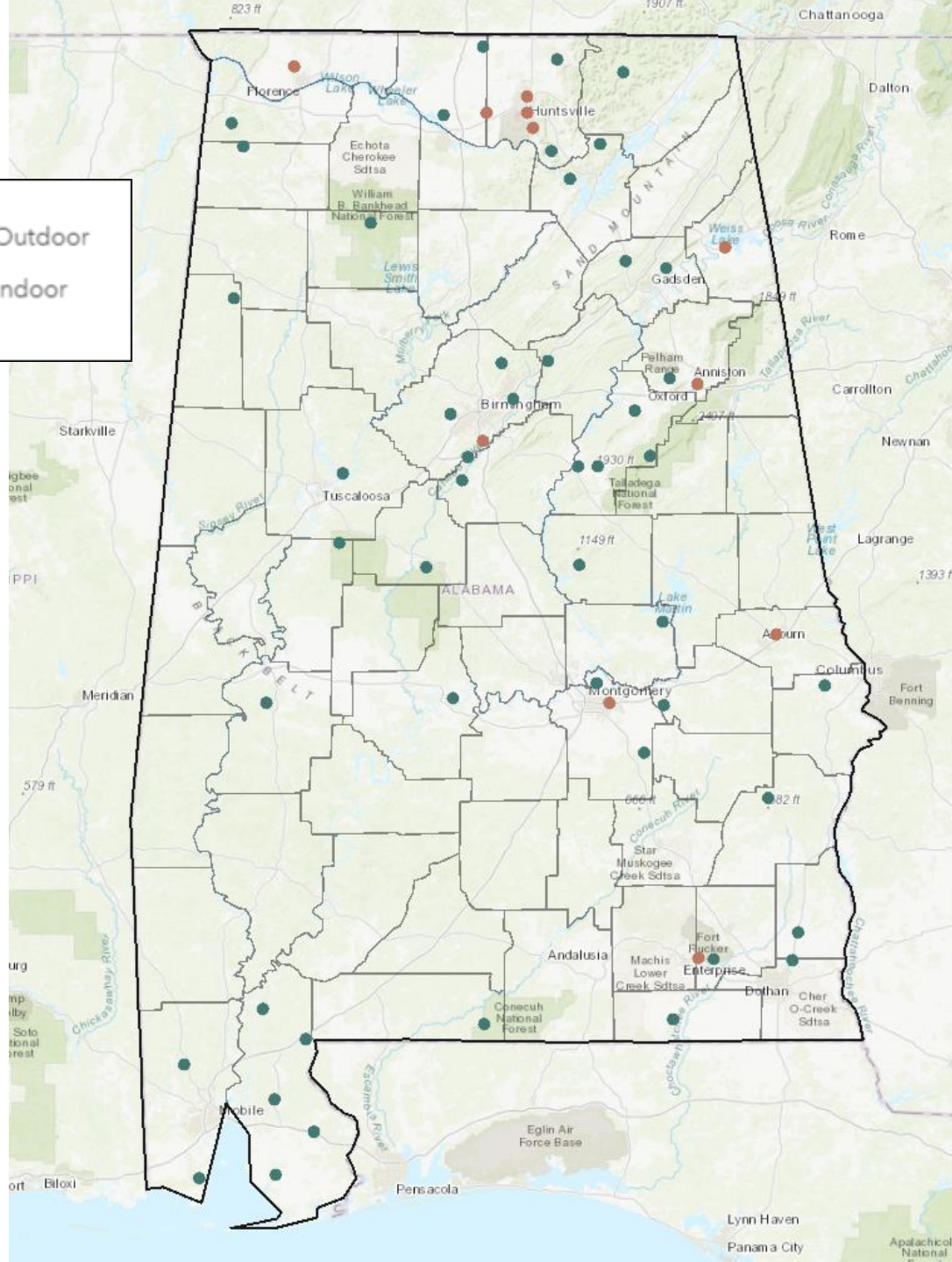
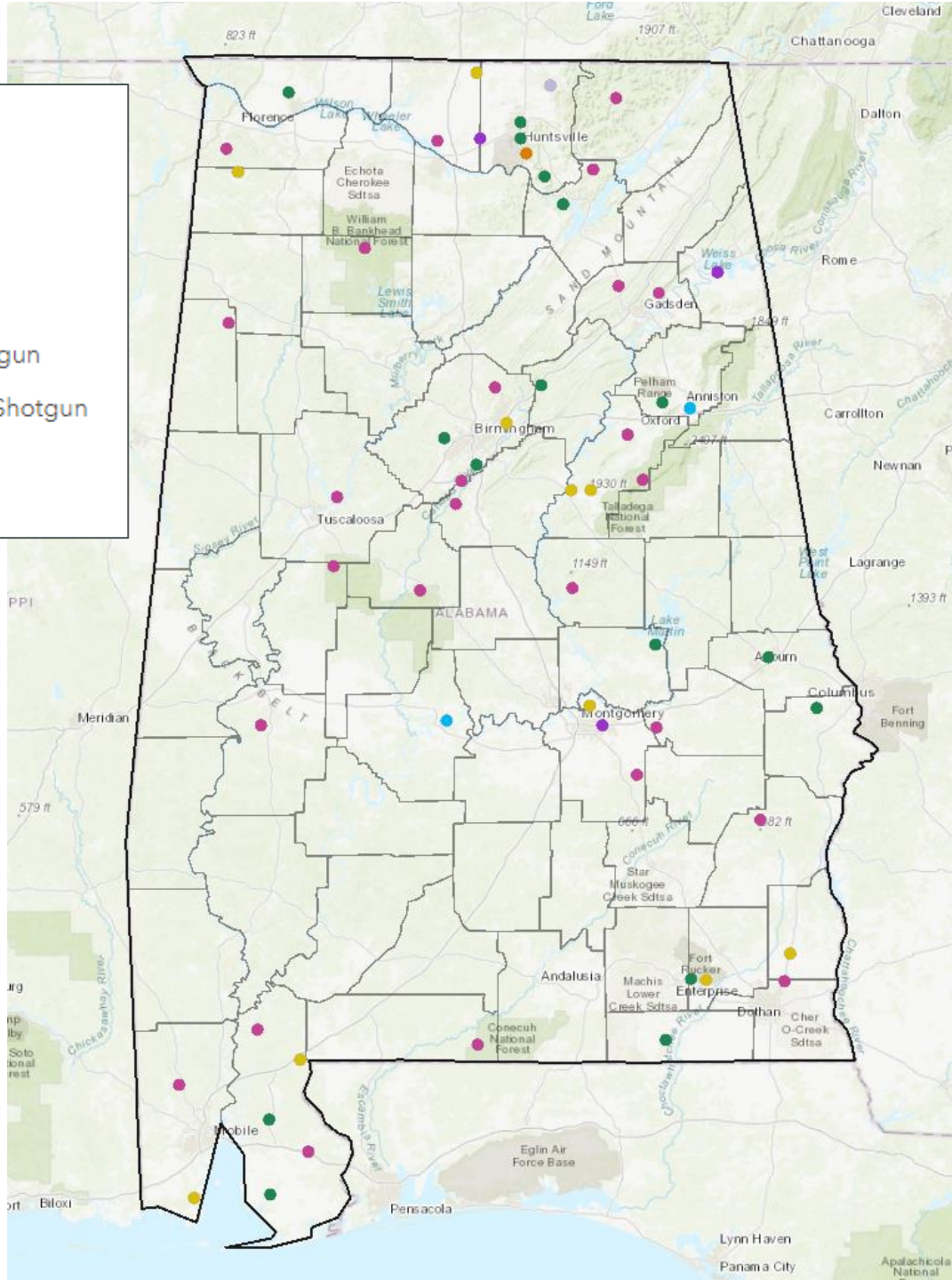## Geographical distribution of Alabama's ranges
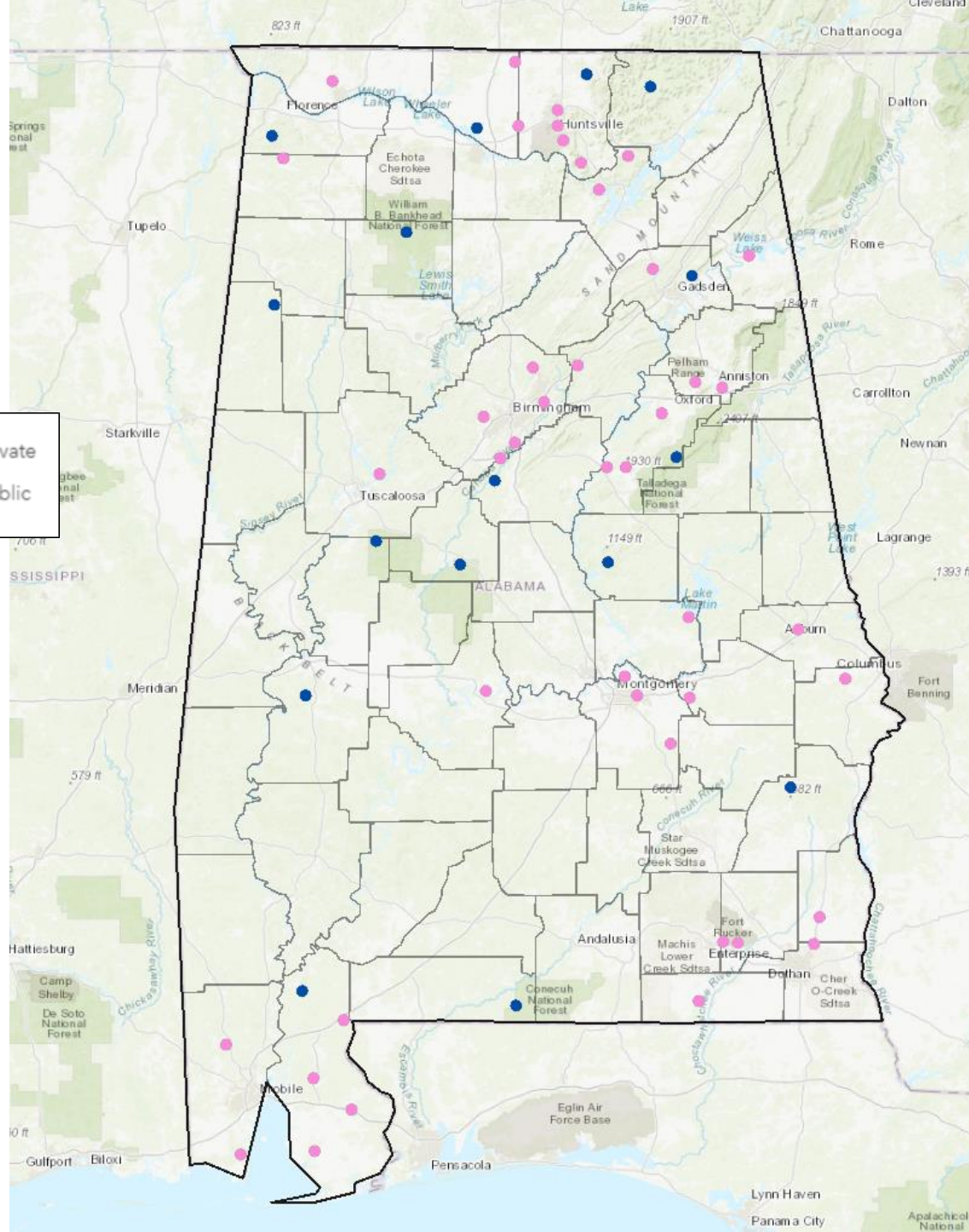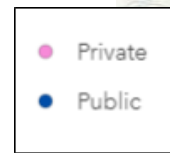
Ranges are widely distributed across the state, with clusters around population centers. The majority (73%) do not operate under a membership structure.

Diversity of Alabama's range facilities

The majority (81%) of facilities are outdoor ranges, with indoor ranges concentrated in and around urban areas.
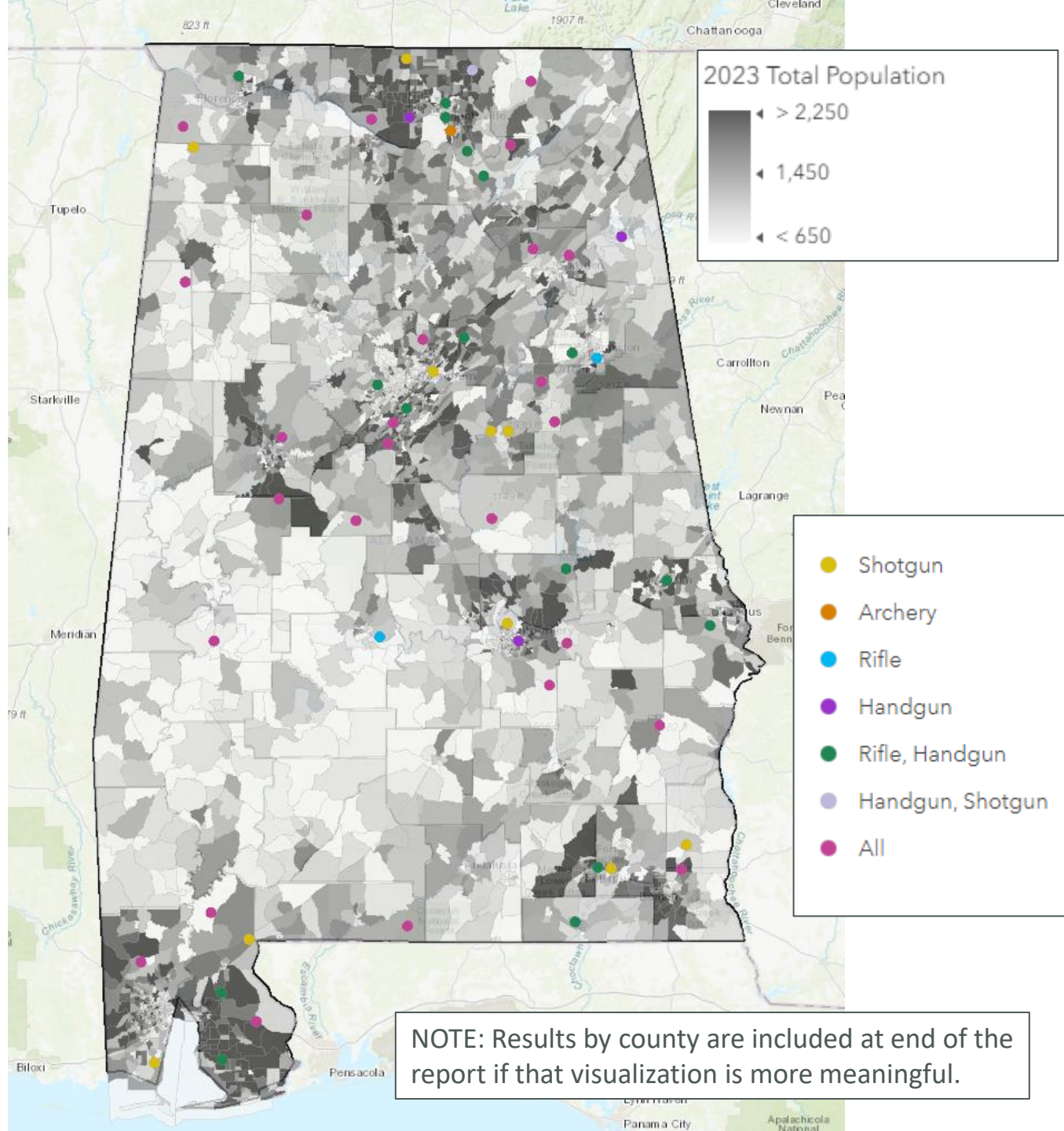
Shooting opportunities offered by Alabama's ranges

46% of ranges offer opportunities to operate most types of weapons.

Legend:
- Shotgun
- Archery
- Rifle
- Handgun
- Rifle, Handgun
- Handgun, Shotgun
- All

Distribution of population with range overlay

All data was explored at the block group scale. Block Groups (BGs) are statistical divisions of census tracts, are generally defined to contain between 600 and 3,000 people. Block groups are smaller divisions than zip codes and allow us more granularity in looking at data, especially for urban areas.

2023 Total Population
- ◄ > 2,250
- ◄ 1,450
- ◄ < 650

Legend:
- ● Shotgun
- ● Archery
- ● Rifle
- ● Handgun
- ● Rifle, Handgun
- ● Handgun, Shotgun
- ● All

NOTE: Results by county are included at end of the report if that visualization is more meaningful.

2023 Participated in Target Shooting/12 Mo

◀ > 125

◀ 75

◀ < 25

- ● Shotgun
- ● Archery
- ● Rifle
- ● Handgun
- ● Rifle, Handgun
- ● Handgun, Shotgun
- ● All

NOTE: Results by county are included at end of the report if that visualization is more meaningful.

Distribution of target shooters with range overlay

Though a greater proportion of rural residents participate in target shooting, urban and suburban areas have a greater number of adults who participate due to greater population densities, resulting in overall greater demand.

Open spaces to safely shoot are much more available to target shooters in rural areas.
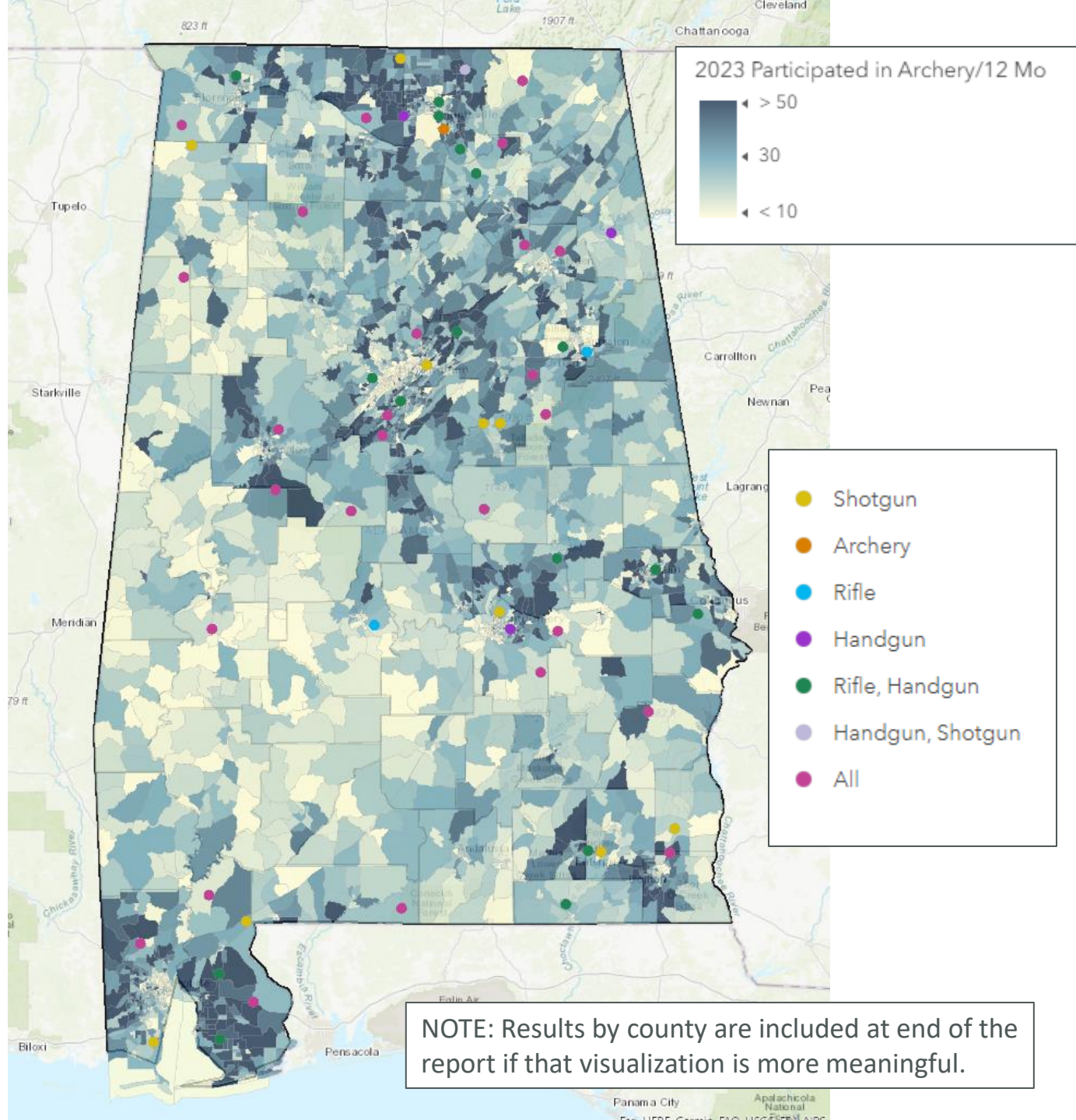
Distribution of archery shooters with range overlay

The geographic distribution of archery shooters is largely similar to that of firearm target shooters.
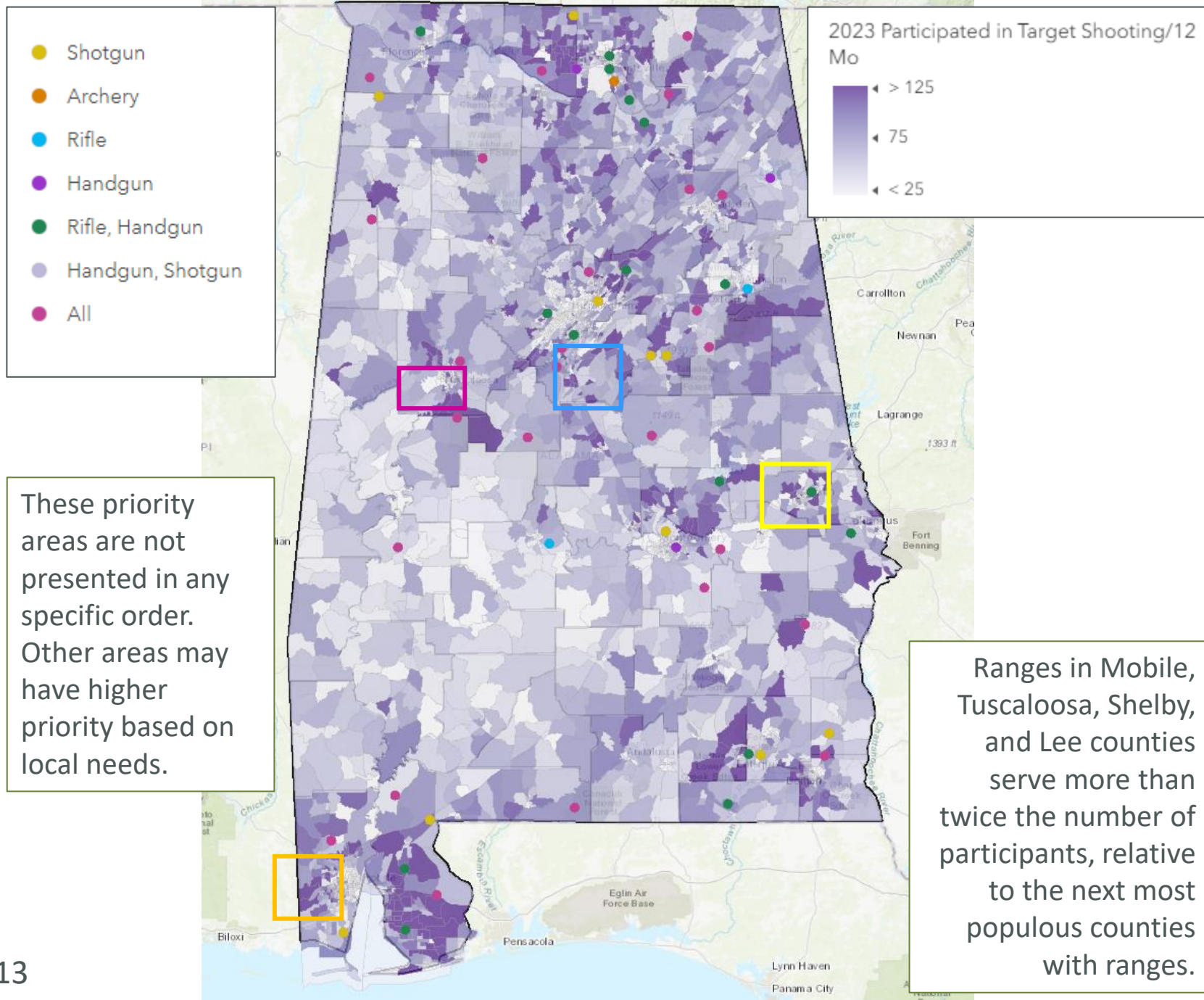
Please note the participation results, archery & firearm, only show areas where current target shooters live. There may be many more interested in participating who do not due to a lack of convenient shooting, crowding, and/or poor experiences.

2023 Participated in Archery/12 Mo
◄ > 50
◄ 30
◄ < 10

● Shotgun
● Archery
● Rifle
● Handgun
● Rifle, Handgun
● Handgun, Shotgun
● All

NOTE: Results by county are included at end of the report if that visualization is more meaningful.

Participation and population in Alabama's urban areas

Alabama MSAs	Percent of the state's ranges	Percent of the state's population	Percent of the state's adult target shooters
Birmingham	14%	23%	21%
Tuscaloosa	3%	5%	5%
Montgomery	7%	8%	7%
Mobile	3%	8%	7%
Auburn-Opelika	2%	4%	3%
Total	29%	48%	44%

*Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)

Alabama's metro areas are among the top locations with the highest need for additional ranges, as the existing ranges are serving 1.5 times the number of target shooters than others across the state. Currently, demand is high in these areas and will likely continue to rise as populations increase. Though the availability of land is a limiting factor and major cost driver, these areas have the greatest need for range development and/or expansion.

Possible priority areas for range development

Legend:
- Shotgun
- Archery
- Rifle
- Handgun
- Rifle, Handgun
- Handgun, Shotgun
- All

2023 Participated in Target Shooting/12 Mo
- > 125
- 75
- < 25

These priority areas are not presented in any specific order. Other areas may have higher priority based on local needs.

Ranges in Mobile, Tuscaloosa, Shelby, and Lee counties serve more than twice the number of participants, relative to the next most populous counties with ranges.

Four areas are identified as priority regions for additional ranges or range expansion based on:

1) The number of ranges within reach of people and the diversity of range types available, and

2) The proportion of the surrounding public engaged in target shooting – OR -

3) For denser urban areas, the total number of people participating in target shooting.

- Mobile County area
- Tuscaloosa County area
- Shelby County area
- Lee County area

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Closing thoughts

Building new ranges and increasing capacity at existing ranges is one step to meeting statewide demand for target shooting. A need also exists to ensure current and potential new target shooters are aware of any new opportunities and that any new ranges offer the types of shooting they want in a safe, welcoming environment.

These results only show areas where current target shooters live. There may be many more people interested in participating who do not due to a lack of convenient shooting locations, crowds, and/or poor experiences. Also, these results do not explain the capacity or quality of existing ranges and the shooting experiences and offerings desired most by current and would-be target shooters.

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In 2023 and 2024, multiple projects were funded by the FWS Multi-State Conservation Grant program, covering resources for range managers to boost operations, the types of shooting activities people desire most at a public range, and how to increase the number of non-traditional range consumers to range. These are all available at no cost.

For more information, contact

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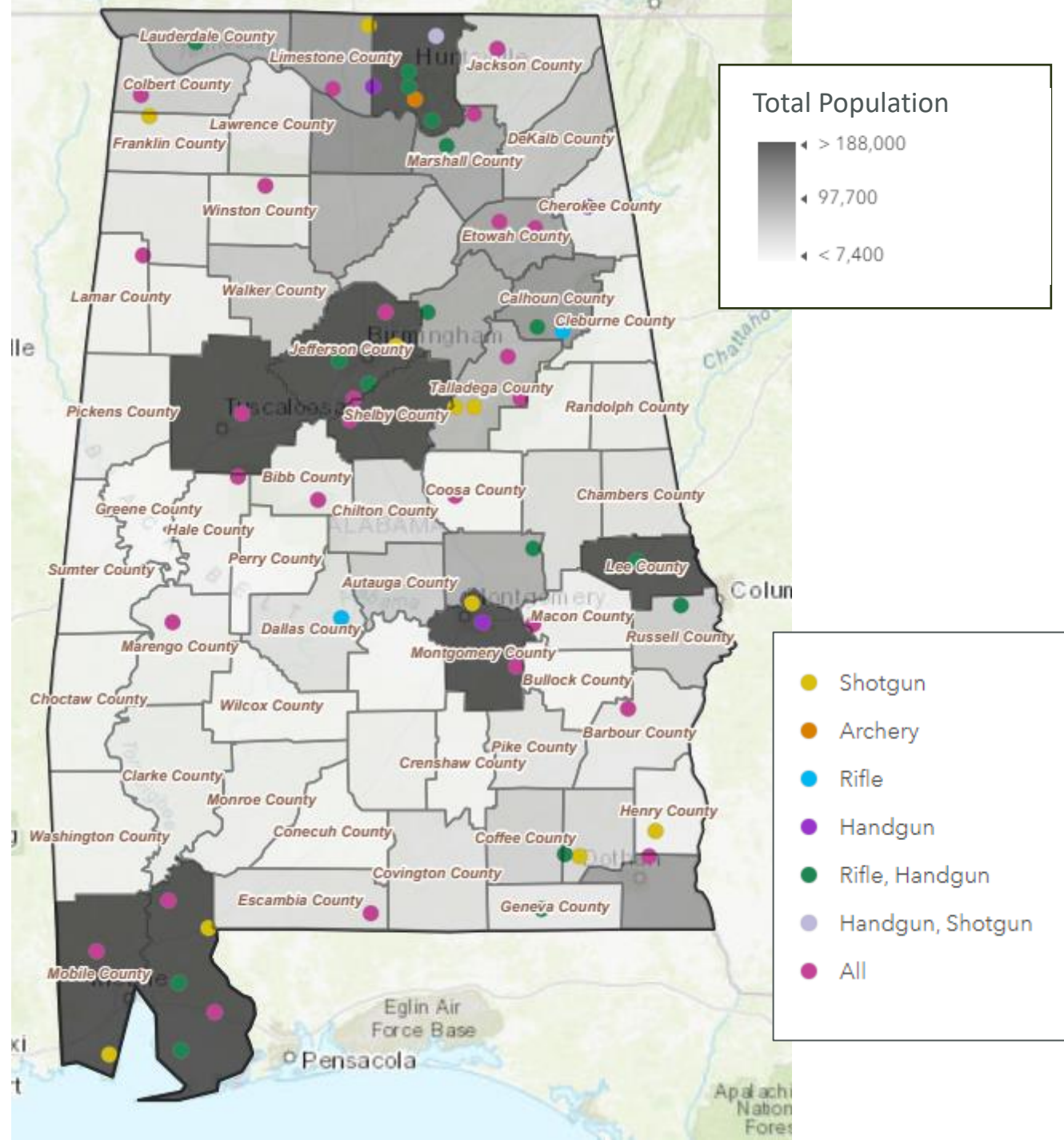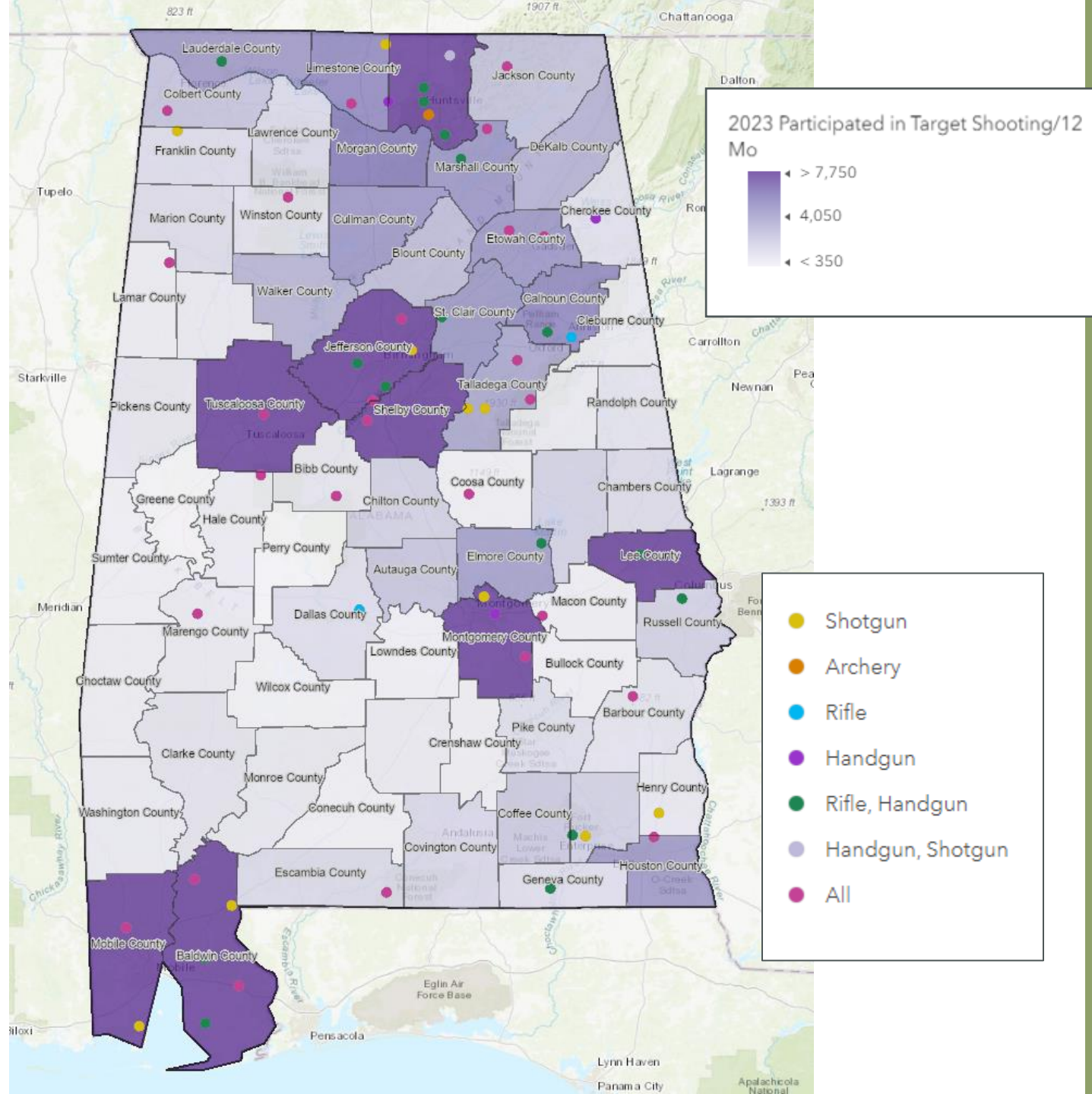
Jenn Carter: Jenn@SouthwickAssociates.com

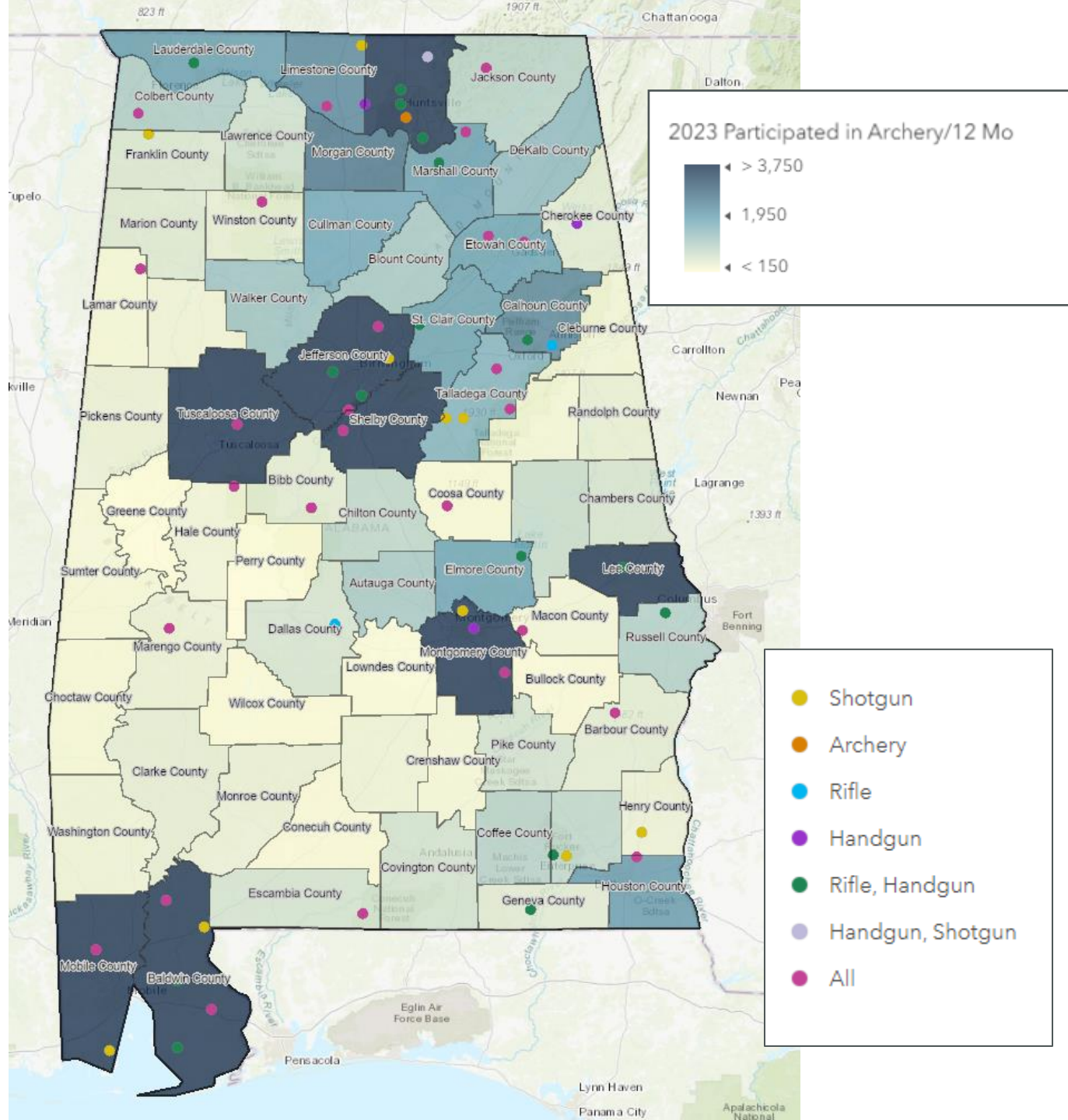# Distribution of Population with Range Overlay

by County

Distribution of Target Shooters with Range Overlay

by County

Distribution of Archery Shooters with Range Overlay

by County