

**Alabama Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program**  
**2020-2021 Activities Report**  
**Annual Alabama Rivers and Streams Network Meeting - January 19, 2022**

The current Alabama Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (PFW) Strategic Plan has defined five (5) work areas within the state. We have four full-time, permanent PFW biologists that work within these five work areas. These areas are designated as: **North Alabama, East-Central Alabama, West-Central Alabama, South Alabama, and Southeast Alabama.**

PFW biologists currently have six (6) active Cooperative Agreements with third party entities who assist and manage funding from PFW to the end-user, e.g., the contractor or landowner who implements a project. The following are the entities who currently administer PFW project dollars: CAWACO RC&D Council, Inc., Alabama Mountains Rivers and Valleys RC&D Council, Inc., The Nature Conservancy-Alabama Chapter, Alabama Department of Natural Resources-Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, The Longleaf Alliance, and The American Forest Foundation. **The following are projects either completed or under consideration during years 2020 and 2021.**

**North Alabama Work Area:**

Tennessee River Basin

Paint Rock River

Two (2) streambank stabilization projects were planned, designed, permitted, and implemented: one project located on the mainstem of the Paint Rock River for a total of 340 linear feet; the other on Larkin Fork, a tributary stream to Paint Rock River, for a total of 425 linear feet;

Three (3) streambank stabilization projects are currently under consideration; designs are forthcoming during Winter/ Spring 2022.

Cypress Creek

Two streambank stabilization projects were planned, designed, permitted, and implemented: located on the same property, on the mainstem of Cypress Creek in two locations for a total of 700 linear feet;

One fish barrier removal project is under consideration in unnamed tributary stream of mainstem Cypress Creek.

Bear Creek

Four (4) streambank stabilization projects are currently under consideration; engineer designs are underway on two sites; expect designs by Spring 2022 with project work implemented last Summer-early Fall 2022;

## Elk River

Visited Harms Mill Dam, where the landowner (TWRA) has interest in full removal of the structures from the stream. TWRA and other agencies and organizations are continuing due diligence in gathering environmental documentation for the demolition and restoration activities at the site.

*Miscellaneous* – Visited several properties supporting remnant native plant populations and in each case, those sites need vegetation released via prescribed fire and/or mechanical clearing or thinning activities; plan to work via existing Cooperative Agreement with Southeastern Grasslands Initiative and will propose action on these sites during 2022. Also, coordinated utilization of native warm season grass (NWSG) seed drill resulting in conversion of approximately 30 acres of pasture or row crop lands on private property to early-successional, native grass/forb habitat. Over the past two decades, approximately 2,500 acres of NWSG have been planted on privatelands in Alabama.

## East-Central Alabama Work Area:

### Mobile River Basin

#### **Black Warrior River Basin**

##### Locust Fork –

*Dry Creek* (Etowah County) - barrier removal project completed in Fall 2020; removed two perched culverts and replaced with bridge structure; multiple partners on project; USFWS FAC/Fish Passage and Etowah County provided most of the funding for project (bridge structure and installation); numerous other partners provided funding/assistance for various project components

Browns Creek (Winston County) – on-going project efforts to remove barrier and restore hydrologic regime in Browns Creek; project will remove a series of tanker car culverts and replace with a bridge structure; PFW working with Winston County, AFA/AFF, USFWS FAC Fish Passage, and GSA on this project

Mulberry Fork/Hurricane Creek (Cullman County) – stream bank restoration and instream habitat enhancement completed Fall 2020; stabilized approximately 650 linear feet on mainstem Mulberry Fork and Hurricane Creek; instream habitat to improve upstream migration in Hurricane Creek; Cawaco RC&D and PFW worked with the landowner to provide funding for this project.

#### **Coosa River Basin**

Hatchet Creek (Clay County) – riparian enhancement and invasive species control project completed Fall 2021; this project improved riparian habitat along approximately 0.75 miles of Hatchet Creek; partnership between the landowners, American Forestry Foundation, and PFW

Big Canoe Creek

*Big Canoe Creek* (mainstem; St. Clair County) – streambank restoration; ongoing project pending for early 2022 to stabilize approximately 400 linear feet of streambank on mainstem BCC; partnership between the landowners, Cawaco RC&D, ADCNR, and PFW

*Little Canoe Creek* (St. Clair County) – barrier removal project pending for 2022; remove two perched culverts and replace with bridge structure; part of larger NFWF project that is looking at other Trispot Darter needs; multiple partners on this effort with Cawaco RC&D, St. Clair County, and PFW coordinating efforts

Big Wills Creek (Etowah County) – dam removal project; coordinating with City of Gadsden and USFWS FAC Fish Passage to remove dam on Big Wills Creek; efforts to move forward are targeted for early 2022

Miscellaneous – numerous technical assistance efforts, field surveys, and projects in initial development stages.

## **West-Central Alabama Work Area:**

### Mobile River Basin

#### **Black Warrior River Basin**

##### Locust Fork-

*Turkey Creek* (Jefferson County): Stream restoration project to improve habitat for vermilion and rush darters (*Etheostoma chermock* and *Etheostoma phytophilum*; respectively). Objectives are to restore streamflow to original stream channel and stabilize approximately 150 linear feet of streambank. Furthermore, an additional 150-ft of streambank will be stabilized upstream from this site. Designs, permits, and planning have been completed. Work is planned for January 2022. Project partners include Freshwater Land Trust, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, Jefferson County Environmental Services, and Cawaco RC&D.

*Upper Village Creek* (Jefferson County): Potential alternative watering source, fine scale riparian buffer enhancement along Roebuck Springs, and Village Creek bank stabilization project. Objectives are to improve habitat for watercress darters (*Etheostoma nuchale*) and general water quality. Several planning meetings with the city of Birmingham and the Roebuck Golf Course have taken place on steps needed to remove the irrigation system from the middle of the spring run. Also, several workdays have occurred designed to remove invasive vegetation to allow adequate sunlight to reach aquatic vegetation. Finally, Auburn University, Birmingham, Freshwater Land Trust, Roebuck Golf Course, Partners for Fish and Wildlife have begun planning a stream restoration project along Village Creek throughout the length of the golf course.

#### Upper Black Warrior-

Valley Creek (Jefferson County): Potential barrier removal and fine scale riparian buffer enhancement along Glenn Springs. Objective is to improve habitat at the watercress darter type locality. Feasibility meetings have begun with between the Lakewood Neighborhood Association, city of Bessemer Stormwater Department, and Partners for Fish and Wildlife. Also, two workdays have been completed in which invasive vegetation was removed to increase sunlight reaching aquatic vegetation. Large scale habitat improvement projects are planned for 2022.

#### **Alabama River Basin**

##### Cahaba River-

*Lower Cahaba River (Jefferson/Shelby County):* Streambank stabilization project in Hoover/Vestavia Hills, Alabama. Partners including Cahaba River Society, Alabama Department of Environmental Management, The Nature Conservancy, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, and others. The project objectives are to improve habitat for numerous threatened and endangered species and improve overall water quality through the stabilization of approximately 850 linear feet of streambank. Project partners have identified and met with the landowners. Initial planning and funding requests have begun. An ambitious start date is tentative for late 2022.

*Upper Cahaba River (HUC 10; Bibb County):* Upland restoration project on Talladega National Forest inholdings. Partners include US Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, AL Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and others. The project objective is to repair tornado damage to forests and increase available habitat for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. The partnership intends to remove tornado debris and replant with longleaf pine on private land inholdings. Implementation is proposed for 2022.

Miscellaneous – several technical assistance opportunities in watersheds including but not limited to North River, Noxubee River, Locust Fork River, and the Cahaba River. Initial planning stages of Blackbelt prairie restorations in Sumter County. The Urban Darter Project which focuses on community engagement in habitat restoration as well as outreach and education throughout the Birmingham metropolitan area.

#### **South Alabama Work Area:**

##### **Conecuh River Basin**

Jordan Creek – Current project benefitting Alabama pearlshell (*Margaritifera marrianae*). Project will increase riparian zone and reduce sediment entering Jordan Creek by constructing new fencing, applying herbicide on exotic vegetation, installing a water bar, and planting native vegetation. Work is slated to begin early 2022. Partners include Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Alabama Forestry Association, and Alabama Aquatic Biodiversity Center.

Upland – Longleaf pine restoration project underway benefitting gopher tortoise (*Gopherus poluphemus*) and eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon corais couperi*) in Conecuh County. Project is being done in partnership with The Longleaf Alliance, and will restore 21 acres of habitat through the use of herbicide application, installation of fire lanes, prescribed fire, and planting of new longleaf pine.

#### **Mobile River Basin**

Upland – Project plans are being finalized for improving nearly 2,200 acres of gopher tortoise (*Gopherus poluphemus*) habitat in Mobile and Washington County. Project will include construction of fire breaks and use of prescribed burning to create suitable habitat. Project being done in partnership with The American Forestry Foundation and Alabama Forestry Association

Miscellaneous – Several site visits for potential and past projects. Early stages of identifying possible project in Murder Creek SHU benefiting imperiled mussels. Currently identifying possible projects and potential landowners for projects benefiting listed and At-Risk plant species in south Alabama.

#### **Southeast Alabama Work Area:**

Miscellaneous – 100 acres of longleaf pine habitat restoration (herbicide application, prescribed burning, planting longleaf pine seedlings) near the town of Midway, Bullock County.