

ALABAMA

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The Nature
Conservancy 
Southern Deltas



© Mitch Reid

The Nature Conservancy marks 75 years of protecting nature for all generations.

As TNC celebrates its 75th anniversary, we want to recognize the conservation work that is happening across the lands and waters of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Throughout this region, TNC has protected hundreds of thousands of acres of land, used prescribed fire to improve the health of forest habitat, and built barrier islands and oyster reefs to complete more than 100 coastal restoration projects. TNC believes in the conservation potential and opportunities in these states, and together with our partners and supporters, is committed to ensuring that our human and natural communities can prosper and thrive for generations to come. Thank you for your continued support.



Mitch Reid
TNC's executive director in
Louisiana, Mississippi and
Alabama



A kayaker floats along the Cahaba River. © Hunter Nichols

Legacy Win

Guided by science, TNC teamed up with public and private partners to connect and protect a globally unique ecological pocket of Alabama.

About 40 miles south of Birmingham, Georgia botanist Jim Allison climbed into a canoe on the Lower Little Cahaba River, dipped his paddle into the water and started a ripple effect that would lead to the protection of one of the most biodiverse places on the planet. It was the early 1990s, and Allison was on vacation when he steered his boat toward a cedar glade and stepped onto the shore.

That canoe ride would lead to dozens of subsequent research trips, resulting in the discovery of eight plants that had previously been unknown to science, including new species of rosinweed, blazingstar, prairie clover and Indian paintbrush. The discoveries caught the

“In hindsight, they should have accounted for maintaining the connection of the ecosystem when they built a dam below the Cahaba River. We’re trying to make it right now.”

Mitch Reid, TNC's executive director in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama

attention of The Nature Conservancy, which by the late 1990s had established the nearby Kathy Stiles Freeland Bibb County Glades Preserve to protect a 480-acre “biological wonderland” along part of the Little Cahaba.

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The Cahaba River snakes 194 miles across the state, earning its status as the longest uninterrupted river in Alabama. The watershed is home to 61 rare plant species and dozens of aquatic organisms, some of which are threatened or endangered.

Learning of Allison's findings, TNC recognized an opportunity—even an imperative—to protect as much of this fragile “lost world” of species as possible. As word was getting out about the area's incredible discoveries, Alabama's congressional delegation and conservation partners around the state,

spurred on by TNC, teamed up to support creation of a new refuge. Even after the refuge opened in 2002, located adjacent to the Kathy Stiles Freeland Bibb County Glades Preserve, TNC continued to play real estate matchmaker, strategically buying additional key parcels for transfer to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to further expand the refuge. The two organizations continue to collaborate today, managing prescribed burns and longleaf pine restoration projects at the refuge and at the preserve, both of which are open to the public.



The Cahaba lily (*Hymenocallis coronaria*) only grows in Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina. © Altairisfar/Wikipedia Commons

BEYOND OUR BORDERS

TNC leverages public and private support around the region.

Louisiana Legacy In the 1990s, a landowner was interested in selling a 10,000-acre property harboring an old-growth forest to become a wildlife refuge. When the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wasn't positioned to act quickly on the offer, TNC purchased the property. With support from Louisiana's congressional delegation, TNC transferred the property to USFWS to become the Cat Island NWR, which features one of the highest densities of old-growth bald cypress trees in the Mississippi River valley.



TNC staff and supporters visit an old-growth bald cypress tree at Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge. © TNC

Free-Flowing Waters in Mississippi

Over the years, TNC played a key role in securing approximately 70,000 acres of public and private lands and waters to connect with and the Pascagoula Wildlife Management Area. As one of the largest undammed rivers in the contiguous United States, the Pascagoula supports hundreds of bird species and endangered Gulf sturgeon.



Boneyard Lake is an oxbow lake and rookery located in the Pascagoula River WMA. © Becky Stowe/TNC