

Restoring Alabama's Waters

FOR LANDOWNERS AND NATURE



RURAL FRESHWATWERS

Alabama's freshwater circulatory system connects Mobile Bay to the mountains, and Alabama to our neighbors across the South. They are the most ecologically diverse waters in the United States, and some of the most vulnerable. Erosion and sedimentation are transforming streams for the worse, altering habitats, degrading water quality, and carrying pollutants like extra nutrients and heavy metals into waterways.

The Nature Conservancy is working with landowners to restore the waters that run through their lands for their benefit, and for all Alabamians that depend on healthy freshwaters.



Unique Threats to our Waters

Landowners in Alabama face multiple threats to their property, especially those that have water running through their property. Across the state erosion and sedimentation are transforming streams. These processes are:

- **Altering Habitats:** sediment physically covers instream habitat, smothers fish eggs, and disrupts the aquatic food chain
- **Degrading Water Quality:** sediment increases water turbidity, temperature, and transports pollutants into streams
- **Carrying Pollutants Into Our Waterways:** sediment often carries fertilizers, animal or industrial wastes, nutrients, and chemicals into streams

These issues present challenges for landowners, and the human and natural communities that depend on our waters. To protect these natural communities, and help landowners, The Nature Conservancy is working to restore priority streams, such as the Locust Fork, Paint Rock River, and Big Canoe Creek watersheds.

These streams are important biologically. They have been selected as focal watersheds by TNC and partners due to their high biodiversity, designation of critical habitat for imperiled species, and status as some of the State's remaining high quality freshwater streams. By working with landowners to improve their lands, we also protect and improve our natural resources for the future inhabitants of Alabama.



Opportunities for Human and Natural Communities

The Nature Conservancy has successfully demonstrated that a collaborative approach to addressing these issues can benefit both landowners and the human and natural communities that depend on our lands and waters. These solutions include:

- **Streambank Restoration**
These projects can include any of the following: stabilizing eroding streambanks through regrading bank slopes, revegetating banks with native plants to add stability through root structure, re-meandering straightened channels, floodplain reconnection, and/or adding instream components such as large woody debris or rock veins to mimic natural river systems.
- **Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP)**
Instream barriers such as culverts, low head dams, or other structures can alter stream flow and prevent fish passage. Many times, these barriers are obsolete or failing infrastructure that pose a risk to public safety and instream habitat. They can exacerbate flood risks and endanger people who recreate on the river. TNC and partners can help modify or remove barriers that restrict movement of aquatic organisms, which in turn provides passage for sensitive species to complete their life cycles.
- **Best Management Practices (BMPs)**
These may include planting cover crops that prevent soil erosion from entering waterways, riparian buffer planting along streams that are adjacent to agricultural fields or working with livestock producers to install heavy use areas, cross fencing to facilitate rotational grazing, exclusion fencing along streams, and providing clean, reliable watering facilities for cattle.
- **Federal Cost-Share Opportunities**
There are federal cost-share programs available that help landowners and farmers pay for the majority of the cost associated with installing the practices mentioned above. Potential cost-share opportunities may include Farm Bill programs through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.
- **Conservation Easements**
There are multiple easement opportunities available that can provide long term protection of your property for generations to come. These easements can have high financial returns and still allow activities such as farming, recreational hunting, and timber management on your land.



Why Restoration

Twenty years of successful restoration projects has demonstrated real benefits for people and nature. Restoration programs, when implemented correctly, can have far reaching benefits.

How does this benefit YOU?

- Landowners and farmers often benefit financially from restoration programs
- Successful projects can translate into improved economic success in farming or increased property value
- Some programs include free or low cost infrastructure upgrades
- Increased livestock health and higher financial gains at market
- Can help arrest property loss from streambank erosion and beautify your natural landscape

How does this benefit nature and your community?

- Less sedimentation means healthier streams for fish and wildlife
- These practices conserve aquatic biodiversity for future generations
- Improved water quality for species instream and downstream from project site
- Less pollutants in our waterways
- Better quality drinking water that requires less resources and less treatment to meet health standards
- Enhance natural beauty and recreational opportunities in your community

How It Works

An array of opportunities available also means the process can be complex. The Nature Conservancy staff can help landowners navigate the different programs available, at no cost to the landowner. Interested landowners are encouraged to contact and meet with our staff, who will answer questions and help identify available opportunities.

FAR LEFT top: Larkin Fork Pre AR; below: Larkin Fork Post AR. LEFT top: Larkin Fork Pre FPV; below: Larkin Fork Post FPV.



About The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy is a nonprofit organization with headquarters in Birmingham. Our mission is to protect Alabama's lands and waters.

The Nature Conservancy works with federal, state, and private partners to secure funding for opportunities that help us achieve our mission.



For more information, contact:

Alana Reynolds

Watershed Program Coordinator
Alana.Reynolds@TNC.org
(256) 558-4462

The Nature Conservancy
3700 First Ave. N.
Birmingham, Alabama 35222