

The Nature
Conservancy 

ALABAMA

A Year of Results
FUNDRAISING UPDATE 2024

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ON THE COVER

A controlled burn in the Longleaf Pine
ecosystem on the Conecuh National Forest
© Donna Vassallo



Mitch Reid, State Director The Nature
Conservancy in Alabama ©TNC

Dear Friends,

2024 was an exceptional year! I am so very grateful for all the work that our staff, trustees, and supporters have done to advance our strategies for conservation here in Alabama and across the Southeast. As Greg Curtis, Managing Director of Patagonia’s Holdfast Collective, put it: “Alabama is important!” It is rewarding to see the work that we have been doing for so long finally beginning to be recognized.

Throughout the past year, TNC’s work has accelerated in all our strategies from exciting new opportunities to restore and protect our coastal communities to the stewardship through fire of thousands of acres of forest lands across Alabama. The Chapter is steadily leaning forward towards Alabama’s maximum contribution to TNC’s global 2030 goals. Our strategic plan aligns perfectly with these goals and our impacts are receiving due praise. In FY24, we closed on the largest land deal that we have ever pursued and secured nearly 8000 acres in the Land Between the Rivers in Clark County; we are at the cusp of one of the most significant ecological restoration projects ever under taken in North America with our Alabama River Fish By-pass Project; and we are literally transforming the northern Gulf of Mexico with our work in Mississippi Sound and Perdido Key.

The key to all of this success is the amazing team of conservation professionals here at TNC. Over the past year, our teams have been hard at work in our communities building support for protection and restoration in critical rural and urban landscapes. With your help, our protection team has teed up several new land deals that will leverage your contributions, including to the Ireland Opportunity Fund, for strategic conservation across Alabama’s Resilient and Connected

Landscapes. As a marker of this success, we were thrilled to dedicate our new Fenvkvcėkv Creek Preserve (pronounced finuh-guh-jee-guh) at Flagg Mountain in Coosa County on Earth Day 2024.

Additionally, we have been steadily working to incorporate Alabama’s landscapes into the conservation priorities of TNC’s Southern U.S. Division, its North America Region, and TNC’s Global One Conservancy Protection Initiative. Alabama’s conservation efforts in the Appalachians, the Longleaf Pine landscapes and the Southern Deltas are receiving notice, and our Alabama River Fish Passage Project has been selected as a priority for the Southern Division and the North American Region. We are also exploring opportunities to expand existing collaborations with Mississippi and Louisiana to new partnerships in marketing and fundraising and eventually to greater collaborations across all conservation programs.

In all of this, the support of our board and donors has been essential. In 2024, we raised over \$7.7M in total fundraising. Over \$5M of that was for our Land Between the Rivers purchase and \$1.3M was for our expansion of the Fenvkvcėkv Creek Preserve at Flagg Mountain. I am thrilled to announce that the Our Alabama campaign hit the fiscal halfway point of \$15M on Earth Day, 2024. We look forward to carrying that momentum forward into 2025 and throughout the remainder of the campaign.

Mitchell Reid, State Director



Brian Ethridge, Board Chair, The Nature Conservancy in Alabama © Brian Ethridge

Letter From Our Chairperson

As we reflect on 2024, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the achievements of The Nature Conservancy of Alabama. Thanks to your unwavering support, we have made significant strides in our mission to protect our precious natural resources and the rich biodiversity of our state.

This year, we celebrated several key milestones that exemplify our commitment to conservation. We successfully expanded our protected lands, ensuring the preservation of vital habitats for countless species. Our efforts across the state have shown remarkable progress, with a number of partnerships that speak to the effectiveness of our collaborative approaches.

Community engagement has been at the heart of our work this year. Through educational programs and volunteer opportunities, we have inspired a new generation of conservationists. We had a large number of individuals participate in our outreach initiatives, helping to foster a deeper understanding of the importance of protecting our environment.

Our partnerships with local organizations, government agencies, and dedicated volunteers have been instrumental in driving our success. Together, we have tackled challenges such as climate change and habitat loss, creating innovative solutions that benefit both people and nature. The impact of our collective efforts is evident across the state.

Looking ahead, we are excited about the opportunities that 2025 will bring. With your continued support, we will focus on Our Alabama. We invite you to join us in this journey, whether through volunteering, advocacy, or contributing financially.

Thank you for being an integral part of our mission. Together, we can ensure that Alabama's natural treasures are protected for generations to come.

Brian Ethridge, Board Chair



Aerial photo of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, and TNC's recent acquisition, The Land Between the Rivers © Hunter Nichols

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONSERVATION

The William R. Ireland, Sr. Opportunity Fund
Goal: \$10,000,000

Since 2015, The Nature Conservancy has secured hundreds of acres for permanent protection using the William R. Ireland, Sr. Opportunity Fund. This revolving fund has fulfilled its promise. Interest-free dollars from the fund have been used for acquisition, and have been recouped and are able to be used multiple times to secure more lands in the future. This is a rare opportunity to multiply the impact of your contribution in perpetuity.

The Nature Conservancy is seeking to expand the fund to \$10 million to accomplish the kind of conservation at a scale that allows us to build a resilient and connected landscape in Alabama. The Ireland Opportunity Fund is a model for protection and philanthropy at scale, and is a necessary path forward to meet our goal of protecting 50,000 acres of priority forests in Alabama over the next 10 years.



Our Resilient Lands

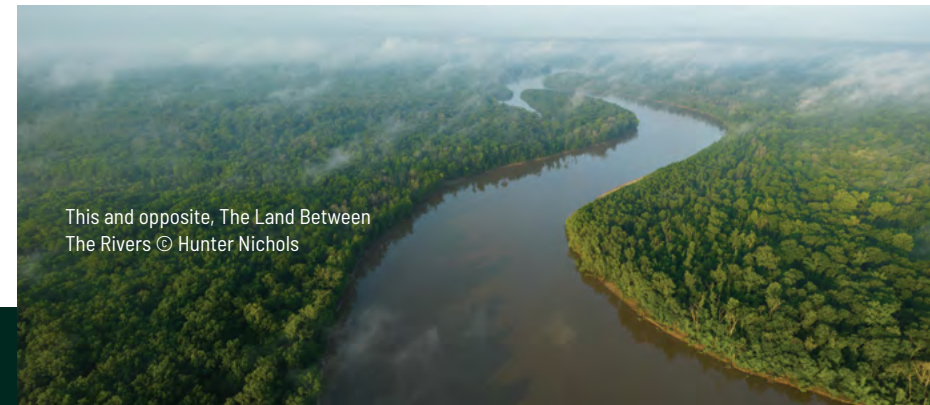
Together we have protected more than 10,000 acres across Alabama in 2024. These are our campsites, hiking trails, and hunting grounds. They are home to our families, and to the nearly 1,500 species that live here. They are part of a resilient and connected network of climate-resilient sites designed to sustain biodiversity and ecological functions into the future under a changing climate.

The Land Between the Rivers

The Mobile Delta is home to the greatest number of freshwater species in the United States, making it one of the most ecologically diverse places on Earth. This year, The Nature Conservancy acquired 8,000 acres in the heart of the Delta, where the Alabama and Tombigbee Rivers join.

The tract, known as the Land Between the Rivers, was the largest remaining block of land available for protection in the Delta. It is also one of the best high-yield opportunities for carbon capture projects in the United States. With proper protection and management, the forests will continue to capture and store carbon, becoming part of the Earth's natural solutions to fight climate change.

Holdfast Collective, Patagonia's nonprofit shareholder, provided a \$5.2 million gift for the purchase. We are fortunate that Holdfast recognizes the global importance of this landscape and became a principal investor in the project. Without Holdfast, this project would not have been possible.



This and opposite, The Land Between The Rivers © Hunter Nichols



The Nature Conservancy's newest preserve, Fenkvckvk Creek Preserve (pronounced finuh-guh-jee-guh) at Flagg Mountain, abuts the Weogufka State Forest. © Hunter Nichols

A New Preserve for Alabama

The April dedication of the new Fenkvckvk Creek Preserve (pronounced finuh-guh-jee-guh) at Flagg Mountain was the culmination of years of work and new partnerships to protect a special place.

The Fenkvckvk Creek Preserve, located in Coosa County, is home to the montane longleaf pine ecosystem, one of the rarest landscapes in North America. Shaped by fire, this unique ecosystem bridges the coastal plain with the Appalachian Mountains.

The 1,000-acre preserve's name honors the Muscogee People, the original caretakers of the land, and is the original Muscogee name for the ecologically rich Finikochicka Creek, which borders the property.



White-Topped Pitcher Plant
(*Sarracenia leucophylla*), at
TNC's Splinter Hill Bog Preserve
© Carlton Ward Jr.


A Splinter Hill Thank You

This year we had the opportunity to expand our protection of one of Alabama's most iconic species, the pitcher plant, but we needed your help - and you delivered. In just under a month, we raised \$40,000 to acquire an in-holding within the heart of our Ruth McClellan Abronski Splinter Hill Bog Preserve in south Alabama.

While The Nature Conservancy managed the land for many years, we did not own it, thus it could be sold at any time and we would be able to guarantee the lasting protection of the unique plants and animals that depend on this property.

With your help, we were able to acquire this property and add it to the preserve, ensuring the protection of this habitat for future generations. Thank you.

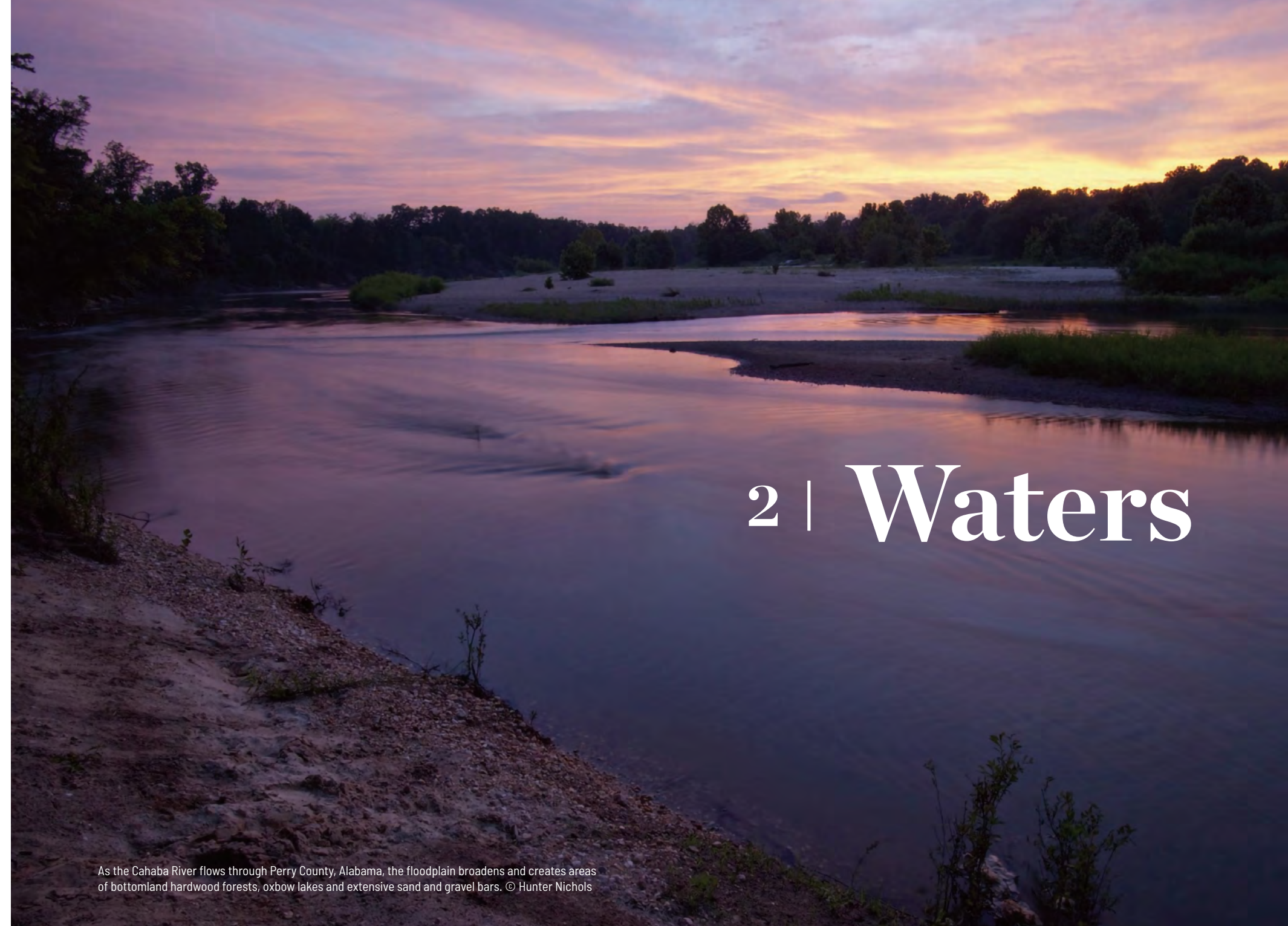
By the Numbers

50 
acres
of longleaf pine seedlings
planted

131 
acres
of longleaf habitat improved

5,973 
acres
of TNC-led burns

65,746 
acres
of partner-assisted
prescribed fire



2 | Waters

As the Cahaba River flows through Perry County, Alabama, the floodplain broadens and creates areas of bottomland hardwood forests, oxbow lakes and extensive sand and gravel bars. © Hunter Nichols



Cahaba River © Hunter Nichols

Our Healthy Waters

A whole-system approach to protecting our waters means working across the state, in a range of environments. From our urban efforts in the Birmingham area, to supporting farmers in north Alabama, and building fish bypasses in the south, our strategies address a system that is by definition interconnected.

Revisiting Restoration

Alabama's freshwater circulatory system holds some of the most ecologically diverse waters in the United States, and some of the most vulnerable. Erosion and sedimentation are altering habitats, degrading water quality, and carrying pollutants like extra nutrients and heavy metals into waterways.

Streambank restoration is an important part of our conservation strategy, particularly in North Alabama. Restoration projects on the Paint Rock River and the Calvert Prong of the Locust Fork River demonstrate the impact of successful conservation, and the importance of restoring habitat for imperiled species like the Flattened Musk Turtle.



Before and after of streambank restoration on The Calvert Prong of the Locust Fork River
© Alana Reynolds

Growing Conservation

For generations, farmers in Blount and St. Clair counties have been providing for Alabamians. Now, with help from The Nature Conservancy, farmers who have worked the land as long as they can remember – and some who are brand new to the work – are improving their practices to save money and protect Alabama's lands and waters.

Nature Conservancy teams are leading outreach efforts to farmers to encourage them to enroll in Farm Bill programs that can help develop management plans for the property, save farmers money, and expand conservation practices in priority watersheds.

To date the program has enrolled over 500 acres of private lands in the Locust Fork and Big Canoe Creek Watersheds in Farm Bill programs.

Cows at pasture © Patrick Flood



Riffle

Reconnecting Our Waters

This year we reached two major milestones in our efforts to reconnect the Alabama River, our ambitious project that will restore connections from the Cahaba River headwaters to the Gulf of Mexico. First, at the request of The Nature Conservancy, the Alabama State Legislature appropriated \$1.5 million in support of the Lower Alabama River Fish Passage Project. The funding is crucial to ensuring that the early first steps of the project are completed.

Additionally, we are finalizing the feasibility study for the project. TNC served as the non-federal sponsor for the \$3 million study, which outlines project costs and plans for the reconnection project. The United States Army Corps of Engineers is expected to sign off on the study before the end of 2024.

When completed, the reconnection project will allow many different fish species, including Gulf Strain Striped Bass, Alabama Shad, Gulf Sturgeon, and mullet to migrate once again throughout Alabama's freshwater circulatory system.

● Darter Fish

The habitats created by riffles aid the darter fish in moving upstream



Run

Pool

● Gulf Striped Bass and Shad

Gulf Striped bass and Shad use the steady flow of the run to move upstream



● Sturgeon

The endangered sturgeon needs the slow moving water provided by a river's pools





The Cahaba River in Birmingham is the longest free-flowing river in Alabama.
© Devan King

Urban Impact

Expanding our urban freshwater work has been a priority for The Nature Conservancy for the past several years. In 2024, we continued our efforts to restore an approximately 30-acre site in Birmingham with wetlands, stream daylighting, and stormwater features. The design work will begin soon, with community engagement already underway to ensure that any improvements directly benefit the people who live there.

Elsewhere, our team assessed nearly 10 miles of stream as part of a Bank Erosion Hazard Index survey of Upper Shades Creek in Birmingham. The survey results were incorporated into the Shades Creek Watershed Management Plan, which will make projects in the watershed eligible for additional funding to address flooding, reduce pollutant loading, and repair erosion, and better manage stormwater.

By the Numbers

50 miles 
of river surveyed

14 acres 
of riparian buffer planted

3,000 linear feet 
of streambank stabilized

10 miles 
of river under improved management



Shrimp fishing boats in Bayou La Batre, Alabama
© Carlton Ward, Jr.

3 | Coast



Our Thriving Coast

Alabama's coast is home to unique and diverse communities of humans – and nature. Our restoration strategies consider both, and help ensure both are better protected in the face of a rapidly changing climate.

Protecting Our Shared History

Mississippi Sound is one of Alabama's, and our country's, most unique cultural, environmental, and historical treasures. Working together with Mobile County, we are protecting, restoring, and improving access to more than 30 acres on north Mississippi Sound in Coden. The project is supported through GoMESA, which provides funding through qualified revenues from oil and gas leases, and NOAA's Tribal and Underserved Communities program, funded through the Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

The project will help acquire and protect land with significant cultural and natural resources. Giant shell mounds 10 feet high with a base of 700 feet by 300 feet were once located on the site, as well as clay artifacts created by indigenous people that have since been preserved. Shoreline improvements for the Bayou Coden inlet will be designed and permitted with community involvement to protect the culturally important lands and significant working waterfront. To control nonpoint source pollution of Mississippi Sound, stormwater infrastructure improvements will be implemented within Bayou La Batre through these newly acquired grant monies.

Additionally, work will include increasing public access points to the water along the Mississippi Sound Coastline. Accessing the water for fishing and recreation has historically been difficult for underserved residents in the Coden and Bayou La Batre area.

Protecting Perdido

The Lower Perdido Islands are a group of small, undeveloped (and extremely popular) islands (Bird, Robinson, and Walker) located near Perdido Pass in Orange Beach, Alabama. This summer we began our Perdido Islands Habitat Restoration Project by moving more than an acre of seagrass – more than 4,000 sods – to their new home between the islands.

The seagrasses were moved out of harm's way for the pending restoration happening on the islands. The seagrass work is part of a larger restoration effort to slow erosion and help sustain the islands; improve habitat for birds, fishes, and invertebrates; and maintain recreational space on the islands. Construction is expected to begin in early 2025.



American White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) fly from coastal forest wetlands along the Gulf of Mexico at Mobile Bay, Alabama. © Ami Vitale

Coffee Island Restoration

This year we launched our Coffee Island Restoration project, a \$14.6 million effort to finalize shoreline designs and construct five breakwaters at the south end of the island located in Mississippi. Coffee Island is a critical resting and foraging site for various threatened and endangered species. Focused on shoreline protection and habitat enhancement, this project also buffers the nearby communities of Bayou La Batre and Coden from storms and wave action.

Construction of the nearly 5,000 linear feet of breakwaters along the southeast coast of the island will begin by the end of the calendar year.

By the Numbers

11.4M
dollars



of state and federal funding secured for coastal restoration

4,640
seagrass pods



successfully transplanted

495
oysters



live oysters salvaged at Coffee Island project

1.59
acres



restored through Perdido Island transplanting

Supporter Spotlight

Wayne Hall Gives to Benefit People and Nature

From Franklin County, Tennessee to Honduras to Nairobi, Kenya, Wayne Hall's concern for nature and his fellow humans has been a positive force on two continents. Growing up in the creeks and forests around Boiling Fork Creek in Franklin County, Tennessee, Wayne and his brother, Howard, waded, swam, fished, and explored on their grandmother's property. Wayne says he spent most of his childhood turning over rocks for crawfish and hunting squirrels and rabbits with his Winchester .22. Later when he was married, he and his wife Clyda camped every fall in the Smoky Mountains. They have instilled that same love of nature in their daughters, Sharon and Lynette.

Wayne's love of nature was complemented by his friendship with former TNC trustee, the late Carolyn King. Carolyn and Wayne worked for Provident Life and Accident Insurance Company in Chattanooga, and in the mid-nineties began working for Protective Life Insurance Company in Birmingham. A resolute supporter of The Nature Conservancy, Carolyn introduced Wayne to the conservation organization. When she tapped Wayne to be her executor, she focused on her many passions, which included TNC, the Greater Birmingham Humane Society, Red Mountain Theater, and First Light Shelter. As her executor, Carolyn's passions became Wayne's. He faithfully guided the careful distribution of her estate to support the work they both cared about.

Through Wayne's commitment to their shared philanthropic vision, the freshwater strategy of The Nature Conservancy was revitalized and given the tools necessary to transform and expand. Our Healthy Freshwater strategy now includes the most significant ecological reconnection project in the United States, focused on the Alabama River. An Urban Conservation program is engaging municipal, corporate, and nonprofit partners to manage stormwater in urban streams and to mitigate flooding. In addition, our streambank stabilization work in rural streams now serves as a model for replicating the work beyond Alabama.

Wayne also saw the need for TNC Alabama to have a permanent home to plan our work and raise awareness for statewide conservation. He helped secure the historic City Paper Building in Birmingham. Serving on our board of trustees, Wayne guided us through the hectic and challenging remodel and reconstruction process. Thanks to his wise and calm leadership, we moved into the beautiful and environmentally sustainable Alabama Conservation Center in January 2024.

Wayne's giving extends beyond Alabama and beyond the USA borders. He supports conservation in Tennessee, helping purchase a 4,500-acre tract near where he grew up. He is extremely enthusiastic about the work of Mission Lazarus in Honduras, where he has visited many times to participate in the life changing work there. He will return in January 2025 to participate in a leadership conference in Honduras. Wayne also works firsthand to support the H.E.A.R.T. work in Kenya, which benefits women with AIDs, and their families.

We appreciate every gift to TNC Alabama no matter the size. But every once in a while, a gift transforms the course of our conservation efforts. Wayne Hall, through the Carolyn King Legacy Trust, has changed the positive course of conservation in Alabama for generations to come. Wayne's giving philosophy is a simple one: "Don't show me a television commercial. I want to feel a connection to the work I support. I want to see my gifts benefitting people. That's a good feeling."

Join Wayne in giving to The Nature Conservancy, where you can see your gifts put to work benefitting people and nature in Alabama.



The Carolyn King Conservation

© TNC

An aerial photograph of a small blue boat moving down a river, leaving a white wake. The river is flanked by dense, lush green trees. The word "Giving" is overlaid in a large, white, serif font on the right side of the image.

Giving

It's easy to give to TNC in Alabama. You can help protect the lands and waters you love while achieving your financial objectives. Tax-wise giving options include funding your gift with cash, stock, real estate, making a bequest, or giving a gift that pays you income for life.

- If you're 70 ½ or older, you can make a charitable gift of up to \$100,000 directly from your IRA* and you may receive federal tax savings.
- Do you have a donor-advised fund or "Giving Account"? Recommend a grant to support TNC in 2024.

Contact us today to learn more about your options:

Phone: 205-251-1155

Email: give.alabama@tnc.org

Online: <https://support.nature.org/alabama>

Mail: 3700 First Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35222

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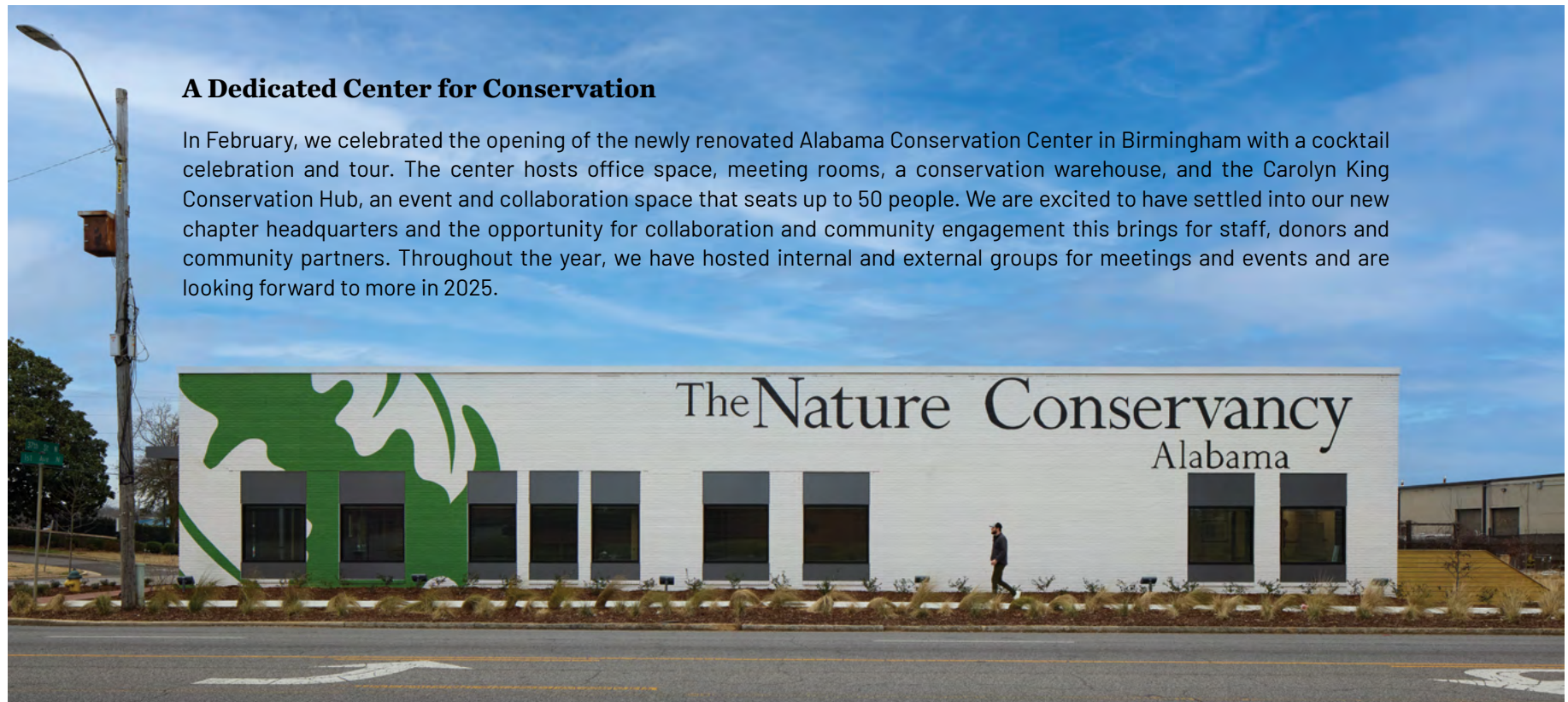


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A Dedicated Center for Conservation

In February, we celebrated the opening of the newly renovated Alabama Conservation Center in Birmingham with a cocktail celebration and tour. The center hosts office space, meeting rooms, a conservation warehouse, and the Carolyn King Conservation Hub, an event and collaboration space that seats up to 50 people. We are excited to have settled into our new chapter headquarters and the opportunity for collaboration and community engagement this brings for staff, donors and community partners. Throughout the year, we have hosted internal and external groups for meetings and events and are looking forward to more in 2025.