



Cahaba
River
Society



Your Gift to Us: A Healthy Cahaba River!

Thank you! You've been a part of the Cahaba's story through your membership and advocacy. As we embark on our 30th anniversary and a new strategic plan, we would be deeply grateful for your investment in the future we envision and are hard at work creating for the Cahaba and the people, wildlife, and communities that depend on the River.

CRS is a small, dedicated group. To scale up our impact, we partner, educate and collaborate to multiply the effective and informed efforts to save the River. Our 2017 strategic planning with 170 stakeholders deepened our **core goals and strategies**:

- ~ **Inspire and Grow River Stewardship** by connecting people with the River for education, recreation, and volunteer restoration projects.
- ~ **Restore and Protect the River** through improved policies, codes and practices for clean water, natural flows, green infrastructure, and diverse, healthy wildlife and people.
- ~ **Build our Impact** to achieve our mission through collaboration, communication, and celebration.

Your special gift can support one or more of these programs:

Raise Youth to Protect Rivers

Youth, the future managers of our water resources, are growing up separated from and afraid of nature. The CRS CLEAN program provides safe, educationally-effective **Cahaba stream walks, canoe trips, and classroom programs that connect 3rd -12th grade youth and college students with the River**. CLEAN is the premiere hands-on Cahaba River educational program, and has served over 36,500 youth and teachers since 1996!

Your gift would help us continue to increase service to youth from urban and economically-disadvantaged communities as well as suburban youth and to **open doors to science and environmental careers** for them. We aim to annually serve 1800 youth, of whom 50% would be youth of color, from 40 institutions, 15 of which would serve economically-disadvantaged communities. Please also see our **report on the CLEAN program's impact in 2017**.

This summer, youth will be inspired by an **in-depth multi-day CLEAN camp experience** with Camp Fletcher, established in the 1920's on Shades Creek to provide overnight camping experiences for African-American youth. We also are developing **partnerships with Birmingham Museum of Art, Better Basics, and Alabama Symphony Orchestra** to engage youth in experiences that merge nature, art and music. CLEAN serves youth with school systems in metro Birmingham and the Cahaba watershed, colleges, groups such as 4-H and Scouts, summer programs, and churches.

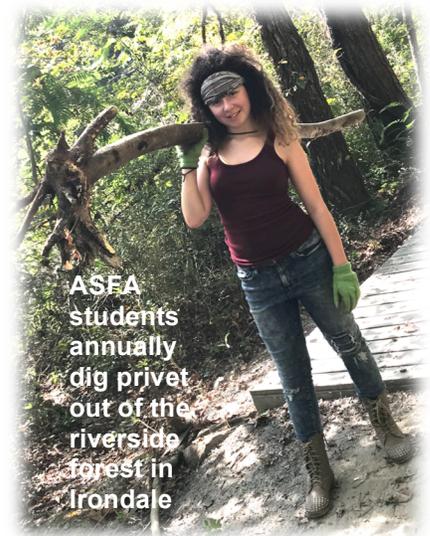


Enjoy a video of CLEAN in action at bit.ly/2018clean

Clean Up & Restore the River and its Forests with Volunteers

CRS' volunteer stewardship program has expanded beyond river cleanups to include removing invasive plants and replanting riverside forests with natives raised from Cahaba-sourced seed. With your gift we will continue intensive **education and removal efforts for wild Taro (Elephant Ear), which is rapidly invading riverbanks and Cahaba lily habitat.** With the Birmingham Botanical Gardens we've created an **educational brochure** and presentation that we are bringing to garden and landscape designers, managers and enthusiasts. **Contact Randy Haddock, to schedule a presentation - randyh@cahabariversociety.org.**

Over the past 2 years CRS has led over 500 volunteers in 29 work days that have cleaned up the River and restored forest and bank habitat. We partner with **volunteers from businesses such as Amerex, Regions Bank, Milo's Tea, Coca-Cola Bottling Company United, and Wells Fargo Bank,** and with groups such as Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Freshwater Land Trust, Alabama School of Fine Arts, and Little Garden Club. **Contact Gordon Black at clean@cahabariversociety.org to schedule a volunteer river restoration project.**



ASEA students annually dig privet out of the riverside forest in Irondale

Protect Our Drinking Water - Protect Cahaba Lands

The Cahaba is a main drinking water source for the 600,000+ customers of the Birmingham Water Works Board (BWVB) and currently sole source for "over the mountain" suburban residents. BWVB is the largest conservation landholder in the upper Cahaba watershed, with about 4,000 acres of lands bought with rate-payer funds that protect Lake Purdy, the Cahaba River and Little Cahaba River - areas that are under development pressure. **Over the years there have been sales or threats of sales of BWVB lands for private development, sometimes related to corruption.** These public lands must be permanently protected, now. CRS is a partner in **three initiatives** to protect our drinking water source lands.

Stop the New Cahaba Beach Road and Bridge

CRS almost always takes a collaborative approach to development proposals; this is the first project in 15 years that we've believed should not move forward, since the Supersewer. CRS and a coalition of landowners, Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC), and Cahaba Riverkeeper (CRK) are opposing Shelby County's proposal to build a cut-through road / bridge from Highway 280 across the Little Cahaba River. See www.savethecahaba.org to learn more.

In exchange for no real improvement to Highway 280 traffic, the project would take Water Board lands, damage the forests that protect our drinking water, increase potential for pollution and hazardous materials spills near the drinking water intakes, spur development of this sensitive area, increase drinking water costs, and damage our most important CLEAN environmental education site.

Last fall CRS undertook an intensive media blast and education effort in news outlets, at events, and online to inform the public and Birmingham leaders about this threat to drinking water, such as the above Op Ed in The Birmingham Times. We greatly increased public knowledge of the issue, and there was a large opposition turnout at ALDOT's official public hearing in October. We convinced Birmingham Mayor Woodfin to publicly oppose the project. We are reaching out and educating to invite more groups to express their concerns, and aim for ALDOT's environmental study to conclude that the project should not proceed because the potential negative environmental and financial costs far outweigh the benefits.

Permanently Protect BWWB Lands with Strong Conservation Easements

Cahaba River Society, SELC and CRK are seeking permanent conservation easements on all BWWB Cahaba watershed lands. Under a 2001 court settlement with the Alabama Attorney General (AL AG), the BWWB was supposed to place conservation easements over their Cahaba and Lake Purdy lands, which they delayed for 16 years. Last October, under pressure from citizens and the Birmingham City Council, the BWWB finally acted.

However, they adopted weak deed restrictions that sunset in 33 years, could allow development, can be amended by agreement of only the BWWB and AL AG, do not have a non-political, independent land trust overseeing the easements, and do not meet requirements of the settlement agreement or state law. In 2016 the BWWB voted to sell 116 acres of these lands for private development – land that should have been permanently protected. We have asked the BWWB to work with us to voluntarily strengthen the land protections, and we will take action as necessary to ensure it.

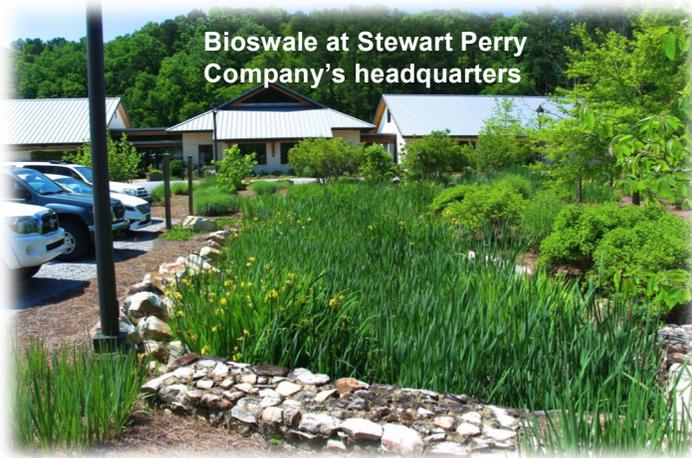
Zone Birmingham Open Space Lands for Conservation

CRS is serving on a new stakeholder group to help the City of Birmingham draft greenspace conservation zoning for the BWWB lands, parks, and those owned by the Freshwater Land Trust along rivers and creeks. This is an opportunity for CRS to bring our collaborative skills, understanding of the dynamics of development, and expertise in drafting protective city codes to a complex stakeholder process. The City also intends to explore the potential for codes that protect stream buffers and steep slopes.



Create New Municipal Programs for Water-Protective Development

CRS has won a major success to improve management of urban runoff, the top threat to our drinking water and the River's freshwater life! Because of our work, cities in the upper watershed have adopted **improved stormwater codes and practices for new development**, towards achieving ADEM's goal to **reduce mud pollution in the River by half**. Together with Southern Environmental Law Center and the AL Stormwater Partners, we influenced ADEM permits that now require cities/counties in the upper watershed to encourage green infrastructure (GI) and improve post-construction (long-term) urban runoff management. Many thanks to **The Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham** for a major grant towards these successes!



CRS shaped **new stormwater codes that Birmingham area cities and counties were required to adopt** because of our persistent efforts. We worked closely with **Vestavia Hills, Mountain Brook, Homewood, Irondale, and Trussville** to improve the weak ordinance they first considered. We are on the stakeholder committee that is advising **Birmingham's progressive stormwater and green infrastructure code**.

Your gift will help CRS be a supportive resource as the cities implement these innovative stormwater programs that are essential to restoring the Cahaba. We will also **collaborate in Green Infrastructure training** for city/county officials and development professionals and will **advise the design of major development projects**; we advised 11 private and public projects in 2017 to promote green infrastructure and river-protective design.

Your support will also help an initiative to restore the Cahaba from past urban damage. CRS, ADEM, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), EPA, Jefferson County, and other partners are seeking support among stakeholders for a **green infrastructure retrofit plan** for the upper Cahaba watershed to reduce runoff, pollution, and flooding, create greenspace, and restore water quality and habitat. With this plan in place, Cahaba communities would become eligible for federal and corporate green infrastructure capital project grants, to retrofit older urban areas.

Launch the Cahaba Blueway

The Blueway system will officially launch in 2018-19 with **14 signed river access sites** from Jefferson to Dallas County and a website! The Blueway team also includes UA Center for Economic Development (project coordinator), The Nature Conservancy, Cahaba Riverkeeper and Freshwater Land Trust. Your gift would support our role on the team, building support for Blueway projects and funding and advising **river access design, signage, website information, and marketing**. We are also aiding planning/development of a new ADA-accessible public paddling launch on the flatwater stretch of river above Highway 280.