

# OUR IMPACT IN 2023

*Protecting And Restoring  
The Cahaba River Watershed And Its  
Rich Diversity Of Human and Wild Life*



## **Wa•ter•shed**

/wôdər SHed/ noun

an area that separates waters flowing to different rivers, basins, or seas.

## **Peo•ple•shed**

/pěpəl SHed/ noun

the people whose lives impact and are impacted by a river, even if they live outside the watershed.

**Cahaba River Society inspires river stewardship, restores the river, and builds our impact through 3 programs.**

### **River Sustainability**

Restoring the Cahaba River by advocating for clean water biodiversity, green infrastructure, and natural flows.

### **Environmental Education**

Providing hands-on environmental education in the Cahaba River watershed.

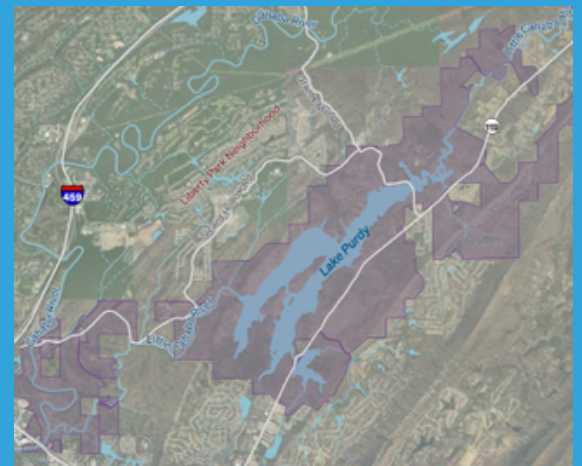
### **Volunteer Stewardship**

Mobilizing the Cahaba River's peopleshed to restore and preserve the watershed.

## **Historic Land and Drinking Water Protection Secured**

Cahaba River Society, Cahaba Riverkeeper, and Southern Environmental Law Center secured a legal agreement to protect 7,000 acres of forested land around the Birmingham area's primary drinking water source. This 75-year agreement is the largest single land protection in the history of the Birmingham metropolitan area, and it will protect the health and wallets of our diverse people for generations. Learn more at [cahabariversociety.org/BWWB-land-protection](https://cahabariversociety.org/BWWB-land-protection).

We have the right to perform regular inspections and enforce protections to ensure the Birmingham Water Works Board complies with the terms of this agreement. Our capacity to play this role is made possible by your generous support - please donate to the Tricia Sheets Legacy Fund!



The purple area shows the area protected in the largest single land protection in the history of the Birmingham metro area.

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# Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion

**Embodying our diverse peoples to advance water and nature equity and achieve our mission.**

We believe that all people have the right to clean, healthy water, education, and the healing power of nature.

**These equity values are influencing goals and metrics across all CRS programs.**

Our peoples is 46% people of color. To protect and restore the Cahaba, we must engage, serve, and be led by this diverse population.

## EDI 2023 Highlights

The EDI Committee of Board, staff, and community leaders initiated a plan of action priorities, including:

- Guiding Board recruitment to increase diversity
- Deepening equity action across programs
- Updating our people and culture values
- Reviving Young Professionals of the Cahaba River Society (YPCRS) to increase the diversity of our leadership- towards launch in early 2024.

## 2023 Milestones

To read more about these milestones, visit [cahabariversociety.org/2023-impact](https://cahabariversociety.org/2023-impact).

### La'Tanya Scott Featured at International Peace Conference

Education Director La'Tanya Scott served as a panelist at Birmingham's International Peace Conference.

### First Cahaba Inspired Art Exhibition Held

CRS partnered with Arts Trussville to host the first-ever Cahaba Inspired Art Exhibition. The exhibition brought artists and the community together to celebrate art inspired by the Cahaba River.

### BioBlitz Citizen Science Logs 300 Species

Cahaba BioBlitz is an exciting citizen science and public education event. The 2nd annual event was held on April 15, 2023, at Shelby County's Cahaba River Park. BioBlitz brought 150 participants and scientists from 7 states and 12 organizations, including universities, state agencies, civic groups, and nonprofit partners. In just 7 hours, they logged 675 observations and 300 species!

This event documents biodiversity at different Cahaba-related locations annually during Earth Month.

### Beth Stewart Wins Alabama Women of Conservation Award

Executive Director Beth Stewart became just the 2nd person to receive the Alabama Women of Conservation Award from The Nature Conservancy. The award celebrates those who effect change on behalf of environmental conservation and inspire others to follow suit.

### River Ramble Returns

Over 60 trail runners came together for our 13th Cahaba River Ramble at the Cahaba River Park in Shelby County. Runners enjoyed a gorgeous new trail race along the Cahaba and had the opportunity to stay and become a part of our BioBlitz event!

### 14th Annual Fry-Down A Success

The 2023 Fry-Down raised almost \$70,000 for our efforts to restore and protect the Cahaba River. 10 community and corporate teams cooked over 400 pounds of catfish for more than 800 attendees.

**SAVE THE DATE:** Our 2024 Fry-Down is scheduled for Sunday, September 29th from noon until 4 pm at Cahaba Brewing.



# River Sustainability

Restoring the Cahaba River by advocating for clean water, biodiversity, green infrastructure, and natural flows.

Our River Sustainability Program is transforming new urban development design and repairing the legacy of failing stormwater practices to:

- Restore the river
- Safeguard the cost, quality, and supply of our drinking water
- Protect our treasure of biodiversity
- Ensure the river's resiliency in the future

Cahaba River Society is also at the table for Hoover and Jefferson County's parks and trails master planning, centering the Cahaba River's restoration and protection.

## Expanding the Talented Team for River Sustainability

We are pleased to announce that Karen Bareford, Ph.D., has joined the Cahaba River Society team. As our River Sustainability Director, she will lead efforts to restore the Cahaba River by advocating for clean water, biodiversity, green infrastructure, and natural flows.

Karen has an extensive background in urban planning and outdoor recreation with more than 20 years of experience engaging partners and stakeholders in planning for natural and water resources in Alabama, Florida, and Texas. Most recently, she led Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium work with NOAA at the University of Alabama.

Learn more at [cahabariversociety.org/introducing-karen-bareford](https://cahabariversociety.org/introducing-karen-bareford).



## River Sustainability Action Highlights

### Design Collaboration

Met with developers, city officials, and residents in Hoover, Liberty Park, and Vestavia Hills to recommend green infrastructure, floodplain, and river buffer solutions.

### Education

Engaged with 120 leaders from local government, development professions, and citizen and environmental groups through stormwater training and watershed stakeholder meetings.

### Water Resource and Recreation Planning

Cahaba River Society is collaborating with The Nature Conservancy to complete the Shades Creek Watershed Plan. We cosponsored a workshop to help key community stakeholders understand opportunities for restoration projects and funding.

### Growth Through Partnership

Partnered with The Nature Conservancy in Alabama to launch The Urban River Restoration Collaborative to work cooperatively with governments, developers, civic groups, and nonprofits in the Cahaba and Locust Fork headwaters of the Birmingham Metro area.

Read more about our accomplishments at [cahabariversociety.org/2023-impact](https://cahabariversociety.org/2023-impact).



**Stormwater runoff causing severe bank erosion in Hoover**

# Shane Hulsey CLEAN Environmental Education Program

Providing hands-on environmental education in the Cahaba River watershed.

Shane Hulsey CLEAN (Children Linking in the Environment Across the Nation) Environmental Education Program is the Cahaba River Society's student-focused education and outreach program. 2023 has been a year of significant progress and expansion, thanks to our supporters and partners.

- Partnered with UAB to begin developing an updated curriculum.
- Created "Know Before You Go," a video to improve our interactions with teachers and students.
- Engaged with new schools and nonprofits in underserved communities so that 48% of students served are people of color, mirroring our peopleshed demographics.
- Exceeded pre-pandemic service levels.
- Served students from the Black Belt and secured new field trip locations near them.

Read more about our accomplishments at [cahabariversociety.org/2023-impact](https://cahabariversociety.org/2023-impact).

## CLEAN 2023 Highlights

**2,010** students served  
**310** teachers served  
**25** canoe trips  
**19** classroom presentations  
**25** stream walks  
**48%** of participants were people of color, matching our peopleshed



## A Funeral Fit For A Fish

Chris had never considered the significance of a river's habitat. In fact, he'd never been to a river before the day he made a profound connection that opened new doors for his future.

To read about Chris and the funeral he led when one little darter departed this life, visit [cahabariversociety.org/fish-funeral](https://cahabariversociety.org/fish-funeral).

## Volunteer Stewardship

Connecting people to the Cahaba through hands-on experiences to inspire care for the river.

### Volunteer Stewardship 2023 Highlights

**35** partner organizations  
**587** volunteers  
**12,208** lbs of trash removed by hand  
**300** lbs of cans and bottles recycled  
**3,814** lbs of tires removed  
**3,400** lbs of invasive species removed



Irondale Riverwalk, before & after kudzu removal.

In 2023 CRS's volunteer mobilization program more than doubled our volunteers and impact, removing **19,722 total lbs** of litter, recycling, tires, and invasive species. Partners included churches, schools, local governments, park and recreation departments, energy providers, news stations, bars and breweries, and more.

### Earth Week River Cleanups Launched

Over 5 days in April, our newest event cleaned up River and lake sites from Trussville to Hoover. Join us for Earth Week Cleanups 2024!

### Kudzu Eradication at Grant's Mill Canoe Launch

The Irondale Riverwalk and launch on the Cahaba were overrun with kudzu. This October, a team of volunteers led by Volunteer of the Year Ginny Brown and CRS used environmentally friendly methods to remove kudzu without herbicide spraying.

Read more about our accomplishments at [cahabariversociety.org/2023-impact](https://cahabariversociety.org/2023-impact).