

Alabama Wildlife Action Plan

From Vision to On-the-Ground Action

Alabama's wildlife action plan puts particular emphasis on the needs of species whose populations are declining due to habitat loss and fragmentation. Other threats to Alabama's land and waterscapes are loss of natural community integrity, impacts from disturbance and exotic species, and lack of adequate protection and/or information. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources intends to work proactively to stop such declines and to minimize the need to protect additional species under the Endangered Species Act.

Working with Partners to Bring Back Wildlife and Natural Areas **Conserving the Aquatic Diversity of Paint Rock River**

The Paint Rock River basin is one of the most biologically diverse watersheds in North America and a high priority area in the Alabama Wildlife Action Plan. Over 30 fish, mussel, and snail species of greatest conservation need historically or currently inhabit the

basin. With support from the Landowner Incentive Program and other federal funds, the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries and The Nature Conservancy are working together to proactively restore stream habitat in the basin. This partnership is making major strides and has already restructured some of the stream bank and replanted native vegetation. Restoring the Paint Rock means cleaner water that benefits people as well as the river's more than 150 species of native fish, mussels, and snails.

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Before the restoration of Paint Rock River/
C. Oberholster, The Nature Conservancy



After the restoration of Paint Rock River/C. Oberholster, The Nature Conservancy

Gathering Information to Take Action Conserving Alabama's Unique Crayfish Diversity

Filling data needs is a high priority in Alabama's wildlife action plan, allowing us to identify and prevent problems before they threaten wildlife and people. Alabama's aquatic diversity is among the richest of any comparably-sized area in the world, including more crayfish species than any other state. As a result of a State Wildlife Grants funded project, Alabama's crayfish database now holds over 4,600 records for 85 species with proper identifications and geographic references. Gathering this important information will allow the Department of Conservation and other partners to focus future conservation efforts on poorly represented species and habitats to conserve these aquatic animals before they become rare and costly to protect.

Protecting Imperiled Land, Water, and Wildlife

Restoring Gopher Tortoises

Gopher tortoise restoration is a high priority conservation action in Alabama's wildlife action plan due to their importance to so many other species and their perilously low numbers. Gopher

tortoise burrows are used by more than 300 other species, including some rare amphibians and reptiles in Alabama. Many local populations of gopher tortoises were decimated or lost entirely during the 20th century due to habitat modification and human collection. The Alabama Department of Conservation has begun a pilot project to reestablish gopher tortoises on the 1,500-acre Wehle Tract owned by the Forever Wild Land Trust. This project will also determine the best methods for future reintroductions, so the most cost-effective and efficient efforts can be undertaken to conserve this reptile for future generations.

Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

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Okaloosa crayfish/Guenter Schuster,
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Gopher tortoise/M. Bailey, Conservation Southeast