



Cahaba
River
Society

What Does It Take to Save the Cahaba?

REPORT TO OUR PARTNERS ~ JUNE 2011



Photo by Beth Young

A message from CRS Executive Director Beth Stewart:

We are so deeply grateful for the generous support we have received this past year. This report outlines what the Cahaba River Society has been able to achieve with the community's investment and with many partners.

Our Board and staff hope you will see that our energy and commitment to our mission ~ **to restore and protect the Cahaba River watershed and its rich diversity of life** ~ meet the level of your commitment and love for the Cahaba and your concern for the future of our drinking water and communities.

Here at CRS, we have the long-term experience and we've built the skills to know what it takes to save the Cahaba – and we continue to need your support to make it happen.

It takes **education** to build knowledge and commitment to act. It takes **collaboration** with many partners to achieve real and lasting **stewardship** so vital to the Cahaba. Most importantly, it takes **integrity** to build the trust and relationships that yield collaboration. These are the values at the foundation of our work.

VALUES

Your Cahaba River Society has had a very productive year. Policies and partnerships for clean, healthy waters are stronger in Alabama as a result.

CRS is stronger, too, with more members, new events bringing us together and to the River, and growing relationships with people who have the river's future in their hands.

Our strategies are working, and we will make even more progress in 2011-12. Your support will help us be effective at the level the River's challenges require. Your faith and confidence in us will lift us to meet those challenges.

Thank you!



CRS is proud to report that
River Network, Inc. honored Beth as a
2011 National River Hero
At River Rally in Charleston, SC on June 6.

What does it take to save the Cahaba?

It takes new, proven ways of designing and building development.

Living With the Cahaba - We love having a natural, beautiful and life-filled Cahaba flowing close to our homes for easy recreational access. But this is also the River's great challenge – the Cahaba winds through growing communities, even interstate interchanges. The Cahaba's banks are collapsing, our groundwater and drinking water sources are starved of water during dry weather, our creeks and river run brown during rains, our properties flood – outcomes of conventional development and stormwater design.

It is urgent to transform the way our communities grow, with Low Impact Development that treats rain as a blessing and resource, instead of turning it into polluted, flooding stormwater. At CRS, we believe it is possible – and essential - to have economically successful communities without these unintended and unsustainable side effects. What are we doing about these urgent challenges for the river and our drinking water?

✓ CRS has the leading education program in the region to **advocate river-saving, cost-saving ways to plan, design and build growth**. We are a resource for the people who shape our communities and the impact development has on water. We have brought our Low Impact Development presentation to over 650 people in development and local government - engineers, architects, landscape architects, building managers, contractors, planning staff, and elected officials. Your 2011-12 support will help us show more developers and city/county officials how LID can cost-effectively meet EPA stormwater standards and protect our water resources.

✓ We **work collaboratively with local governments and developers** on challenging projects, to prove that better development design can restore the Cahaba and also be successful for the developer and the community. Our involvement with **The Shops of Grand River** outlet mall on the Cahaba in 2010 proved that mud runoff can be controlled under the most difficult conditions with the right design, team, and commitment from the developers, Daniel Corporation and US Steel. These are vitally-important relationships, since Grand River aims to encompass 6,000 acres along the Cahaba.

✓ We **celebrate successes**. Our 2011 Conservation Development Awards, dubbed "The Cahabies" by The Birmingham News, honored 26 development-related firms and government agencies for 4 successful, high profile projects. With your support, CRS can be part of more success stories in 2011-12, proving that Low Impact Development is achievable to protect the Cahaba and our drinking water.

WATER-SMART DEVELOPMENT

COLLABORATION



The Cahaba wraps around the massive Shops of Grand River site at the Leeds I-20 exit. Excellent stormwater practices protected the river during construction & earned the project a "Cahaby" award from CRS.

What does it take to save the Cahaba? **It takes more effective state and local government stormwater programs,** to finally bring full Clean Water Act protections to our communities. We've been working on this strategically with many partners for years, and the next 2 years will be the time to achieve lasting, significant change.

IMPLEMENT THE CLEAN WATER ACT

- ✓ We are **strengthening federal, state and local requirements and programs for improved stormwater management and practices.** CRS works with groups in the Alabama Stormwater Partnership, a southeast regional coalition, and a national coalition. **We won a major victory** this past year - EPA objected to the Alabama Department of Environmental Management's weak proposed rules governing stormwater programs for 60 small cities and counties - **the first time EPA has ever taken this step nationwide.** ADEM improved the permit and adopted reasonable and achievable standards for Alabama.
- ✓ **Attacks on Cleaner Water** - Resistant development interests are fighting against these long-overdue water quality gains. They appealed the permit and aim to weaken requirements that our cities and counties must review the developer's storm water plans, inspect construction sites, strengthen enforcement for bad actors, and improve stormwater design to reduce flooding, recharge our groundwater, and protect drinking water. **Help us defend these water source gains** - CRS and partners have intervened in their appeal. The outcome will set precedent for the next step - improving stormwater programs in our Cahaba watershed communities.
- ✓ With your support, CRS can continue to help lead our AL Stormwater Partners, with expert help from regional and national organizations, to make sure the permits ADEM is drafting for large cities and counties - **including Cahaba watershed communities - and for the AL Department of Transportation** will protect our rivers and drinking water and promote sustainable growth.

PARTNERS

As a result of years of work by CRS and partners, the **upper Cahaba watershed cities and counties will be substantially improving their stormwater programs** over the next 2 years to meet EPA's higher bar, with better construction stormwater programs and new programs for post-

construction to curb the long-term pollution, flooding, and dewatering impacts of paving and roofs - our opportunity for Low Impact Development to become standard practice!

EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT

- ✓ CRS will be a resource in 2011-12 to **help local governments craft practical, cost-effective model ordinances** that safeguard our rivers and drinking water and also support community growth goals. We will help **build knowledge and skills of our cities and counties with trainings** to support creation of effective local programs for Low Impact Development.

What does it take to save the Cahaba? **It takes river education, both for adults and for youth** – our future leaders. CRS specializes in taking people into the River for hands-on experiences that not only give them deeper knowledge about how rivers work, the challenges they face, and the solutions, but also the personal connection that builds commitment for stewardship.

RIVER-BASED EDUCATION

✓ CRS's **Shane Hulsey CLEAN Program** took 1,419 students and teachers into the Cahaba for stream walks and canoe trips this past year. We've **served over 23,000 students since 1996**. CLEAN provides a hands-on science curriculum in great demand by teachers year after year. We also led student & church volunteers in 7 restoration projects and river clean-ups. For many youth CLEAN is their first experience on a natural waterway, a fun, safe, exciting experience that can encourage kids to spend more time in healthful outdoor activities, enjoying Alabama's water resources.



✓ In 2010-11 CRS found **new ways to involve many more youth** in CLEAN. We increased summer trips for civic, church, and scouting groups, held our first week-long summer camp, and partnered with The Keystone Center and AL School of Fine Arts to host a Youth Policy Summit, where students researched scientific information, worked with diverse stakeholder groups, and crafted policy recommendations for local and state leaders. In spring 2011 strong outreach and new partnerships helped us bring more inner city youth on river trips and take classroom programs to 486 urban students and teachers to introduce them to CLEAN. This year you can help us bring many more students to the Cahaba and support Youth Policy Summit 2011!

✓ In addition to our regular schedule of canoe trips for the community, we schedule **special decision-maker trips with people from government, business, civic and faith groups**. In 2010 we took the entire development team for Shops of Grand River on a canoe trip past their project while under construction, helping them see and enjoy first-hand the results of their commitment to protect the beautiful Cahaba.

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PHOTO BY BEAU GUSTAFSON

CRS hosted a canoe trip in May to show the need for Low Impact Development stormwater practices. On board were EPA's director for water programs in the Southeast, Daniel Corporation's lead on Shops of Grand River, and folks we've worked with from ADEM, ALDOT development firms, SWMA/Jeff. Co. Dept of Health, Jefferson County Commission, Friends of Shades Creek, and Hoover.

What does it take to save the Cahaba? **It takes vigilance, accountability, and restoration of past damage.**

RESTORE HABITATS

Where the Cahaba and surrounding lands have been damaged, CRS works with partners to restore streambanks and habitats. We assist with aquatic wildlife restoration monitoring, to evaluate whether restoration projects work well to bring back river life.

- ✓ CRS promotes the **Cahaba Mitigation Bank**, created by Goodwyn Mills & Cawood, to link developers with restoration projects that need funding. We supported a Mitigation Bank project, the **Perry County Oxbow Swamp Restoration** headed by the US Forest Service. The completed project was not fully successful and needs more work.
- ✓ Biodiversity monitoring by The Nature Conservancy, CRS and partners has proven **substantial rebound of fish, mussels and snails** after removal of the Marvel Slab lowhead dam from the River. CRS advised student "before and after" monitoring of a Shades Creek restoration project by Samford University and assisted with **"Biodiversity Blitz"** monitoring of life in the river by Hoover and Hewitt-Trussville High School students, which **won a national award** and funding for next year.



When CRS finds water pollution in the Cahaba watershed, or gets a call from concerned citizens affected by pollution, we work with responsible parties and citizens to encourage voluntary cleanup and pursue enforcement when required.

CLEAN UP POLLUTION

- ✓ CRS worked with EPA, our co-plaintiff in the Jefferson County sewer consent decree, to spur improved reporting of sewer overflows by the County and ensure the system has been repaired to **protect public health and water quality from raw sewage**. Improved reporting by the County showed that large sewage overflows are still occurring in some parts of the system.
- ✓ CRS worked with ADEM to permanently clean up a repeat permit violation, a nasty **green illegal discharge** from a car wash into Shades Creek, which already is degraded by turbidity and nutrients. The **car wash installed a permanent fix** – a wastewater reuse system – and stopped using phosphates.
- ✓ CRS worked with property owners and ADEM to **improve construction practices** at two polluting construction sites. A church hired a more skilled construction manager and will dredge sediment from a lake and restock fish. A residential builder installed better stormwater controls at a subdivision.
- ✓ When Cahaba supporter Melinda Mathews brought forward concerns about potential **pharmaceutical impacts** on River life and drinking water, CRS brought together knowledgeable people from health fields to explore the issue and plan a response.

What does it take to save the Cahaba? ***It takes building trust and communication*** with people whose decisions impact the River's future - exploring our common values, listening to each other's perspectives, and seeking mutual solutions.

COMMUNICATE BUILD TRUST

That's the **values-based model for Interfaith Environmental Initiative of Alabama** (IEIA), which CRS helped found. IEIA is a community-based network connecting leadership of faith, science, business, environment, energy and water providers, education, and the arts, to learn together and encourage and inspire informed choices for care of Creation. Together we are advancing water and energy efficiency.

Saving water has a triple impact to save households, businesses, and institutions money through lower water, sewer, and energy bills. Saving water also saves energy, reduces carbon output, and calms climate change. **At least 13% of total U.S. energy use goes to pump, treat, and heat water and sewage** for our homes, businesses, and

SAVE WATER, ENERGY, & MONEY

industries. More efficient use of drinking water will stretch our region's existing water supplies to meet growth needs at least cost. Our water providers could delay and perhaps downsize expensive projects, such as the Birmingham Water Board's planned \$380 million water supply expansion intake on the Black Warrior River. And if we are more water efficient, we can better serve essential needs during droughts.

- ✓ CRS works with an **unusual spectrum of groups** to promote investment in water efficiency. IEIA's Water Working Group (WWG) also includes **Birmingham Water Works and other water systems, Alabama Power, Alabama Rivers Alliance, McWane, Inc., Alabama Technology Network, innovative water technology businesses, Alabama Environmental Council, Clarus Consulting Group, World Wildlife Fund**, and others.



Coca-Cola Bottling Company United in Birmingham is investing in water efficiency and already saved 7.8 million gallons of water in 2010, in partnership with The Coca-Cola Company's global water-saving goals.

- ✓ In 2010-11 we listened and learned from each other and **collaborated to produce an educational powerpoint that uses local success stories** to make the business and environmental case for water efficiency. In one example, Alabama Power reduced water use in their corporate headquarters by 70%, saving money and 14 million gallons a year - enough water for 100 homes.
- ✓ With your support CRS and WWG members are taking this presentation to our peers in business, government, development, the landscape industry, and institutions such as hospitals, schools and houses of worship, and will **encourage large-volume water users to pursue water efficiency.**

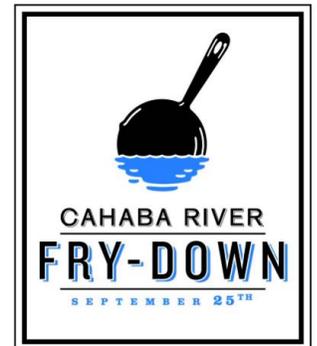
What does it take to save the Cahaba? It takes many partners, friends and supporters in an ever-widening circle, learning about how important the Cahaba is to our lives, enjoying the river's beauty and healthful recreation opportunities, and keeping the Cahaba River Society strong and influential.

MANY FRIENDS & SUPPORTERS

In this tough economy, we are reaching out to more people in all walks of life to build relationships, by adding new events to the successful ones we've held year after year. Call **205-322-5326** and watch our website, www.cahabariversociety.org for news of our popular Annual Meeting in January, our canoe trips throughout the year, the Cahaba River Ramble trail races in May-June, and more. Please come, learn more about CRS, meet the Board and staff, have a great time together, and help restore the Cahaba!



FUN TIMES TOGETHER & ON THE RIVER



- ✓ **Cahaba River Fry-Down** – With the tremendous participation we received in this new event, held on the Cahaba's banks at Trussville Springs in September '10, this is now our main fundraising get-together. Fry-Down brought 700 people to the River for fun, water-smart learning activities for all ages - kids filled the river and 19 organizations helped with education - and built new partnerships (34 sponsors!) to sustain our work. The 6 competition fish fry teams wowed the crowd and our judging team was led by George Sarris of The Fish Market and included Mayors Bell, Melton and Petelos from the largest cities in our watershed. See the list of all of our sponsors and learn more at www.frydown.com – and **join us at the River on Sunday, September 25 for Fry-Down 2011!**
- ✓ Our new **“From the Headwaters” programs** bring in-depth insight on tough issues facing the watershed. Our Board invites you to join them in these enlightening early evening programs with wine, snacks and networking. In 2010-11 we had programs on sustainable rain management and River Ecology 101 from biologist Scot Duncan.
- ✓ We are so deeply appreciative of our friends Richard Joseph Salon Spa & Aveda, Yellow Bicycle Catering Company, Stewart Perry Company, Randy & Mary Harper, ArchitectureWorks, and our Board members who gave **special events to help widen our circle of supporters** and raise funds last year. Let us know if you would like to bring people together for the Cahaba, and watch for fun opportunities in 2011-12! Very special thanks also go Mayo Holloway, Pete Sloss, and Cathy Crenshaw for an **extremely generous and beautiful renovation of our offices** at 2717 7th Avenue S., Suite 205, as well as assistance with rent to help us through the recession.

What does it take to save the Cahaba? Wonderful People Like You!

It is only with your trust, gifts, and volunteer energy that we can achieve so much for the future of the Cahaba and your drinking water. Please join us!

