

U.S. Southeast Rivers and Streams

Safeguarding America's richest
source of freshwater

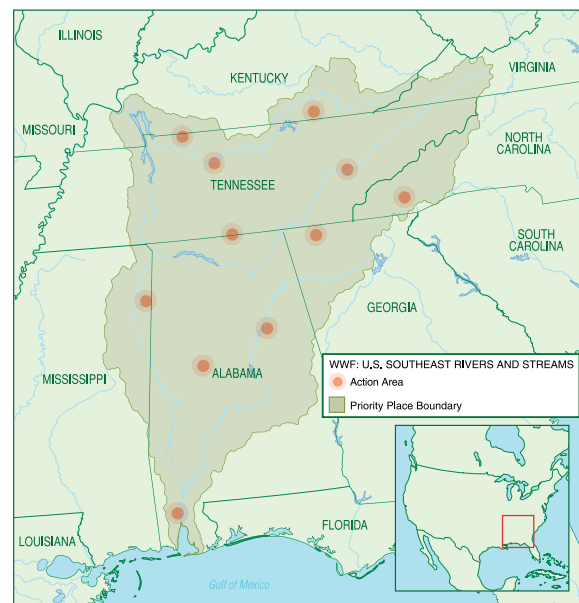




Our vision: Protect and restore the ecological health of the region's rivers and streams to safeguard natural processes, conserve native species and reach a balance between the needs of people and nature.

What makes the U.S. Southeast Rivers and Streams extraordinary

From its clear, cool streams in the southern Appalachians to its brackish marshes along the Gulf Coast, the network of rivers and streams in the southeastern United States is an ecological gem right in our own backyard.



With the highest number of endemic freshwater fauna in North America, these freshwater systems are some of the richest and most diverse of their kind in the world.

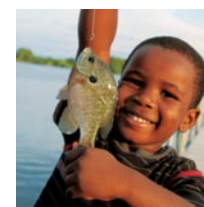
It is a land of contrasts where flourishing cities like Nashville, Birmingham and Mobile border some of the country's poorest counties. The region's land is held primarily by private owners, with farms and pine plantations covering much of the landscape.



The place. The region is geologically complex, inspiring diverse freshwater habitats and wildlife. Its three vast river basins—the Cumberland, Mobile and Tennessee—drain portions of Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and Mississippi.



The species. The rivers of the Southeast are among the world's richest river ecosystems: they support more than 250 species of crayfish and 275 species of mussels, and about half of the freshwater species in the United States, including darters, basses, sunfishes and sturgeons. In just one river—Tennessee's Duck River—there are more fish species per mile than any other river in North America.



The people. These rivers and streams are the centerpiece of a way of life steeped in outdoor traditions—from fly fishing to whitewater boating, and from resting on the shady banks to diving from the classic rope swing. For generations people here have relied on the region's water resources for food, drinking water, transportation and solace.

WWF delivers lasting results

Reversing the impacts from centuries of human activity takes time, partnerships and resources. WWF has worked with a variety of partners—including local, state and federal governments, conservation groups, landowners, scientists, and policy experts—toward achieving lasting conservation results in these basins.



Notable Accomplishments

2000s

Halted the construction of a major interstate road project that would have severely impacted aquatic habitats throughout northcentral Tennessee

Created the Southeast Rivers and Streams Support Fund—a grant program that supports advocacy groups in protecting watersheds, funding species research and reintroduction programs, and restoring riparian zones

Successfully advocated that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency fund projects that target at-risk aquatic species on private lands in vital watersheds

Helped enact legislation that contributes to the protection of aquatic fauna—including the Tennessee Water Information Act of 2002, the Interbasin Transfer Act, and a bill that guarantees citizens' right to appeal water pollution permits

Facilitated the removal of the Marvel Slab Dam, reconnecting 190 miles of the Cahaba River and increasing freshwater habitat for mussels, fish and snails



“The freshwater environment of the Southeast is one of the richest and most diverse freshwater systems found anywhere in the world—and it's in our own backyard.”

Dr. Darron Collins
Managing Director, U.S. Southeast Rivers and Streams

WWF is committed to making our vision a reality

Beginning with the arrival of European colonists, and intensifying with widespread agriculture and the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century, human impacts have significantly altered the aquatic habitats of the Southeast. Rapid population growth, construction, road building, agriculture, logging, and dams are serious challenges to the rich natural heritage of this region and the diverse aquatic life that lives in its waters.

We are focused on three areas that present the best opportunities for altering the global forces that challenge the future of this unique place.



Protecting and restoring watersheds

The damming and diversion of free-flowing rivers and streams create habitat fragmentation that removes natural avenues for aquatic species migration, reproduction and adaptation. WWF promotes a model for sustainable development that balances energy use, flood control and irrigation needs with ecological needs. We also work with local and national governments to advocate public policies that provide incentives for sound management of water and land resources.

Reintroducing federally-protected aquatic species

Increased pollution in rivers and streams weakens the natural survival mechanisms of native species that are crucial for evolutionary competition with nonnative, invasive species. WWF collaborates with conservation partners to restore the region's water quality and aquatic habitats so that federally-listed endangered and threatened fish and mussel species can be reintroduced and thrive in the future.

Advocating “smart” economic growth

As human population in the Southeast continues to grow, new infrastructure projects such as the construction of roads, parking lots and home communities are straining the ability of species, habitats and natural resources to thrive. WWF works to implement a model for sustainable housing development that limits soil runoff, pollution and disruptions to the region's natural water balance.

WWF builds strong partnerships

Lasting conservation is achieved by collaborating with a range of extraordinary partners, from governments to local communities and from businesses to generous individual supporters. By leveraging the strengths of our collaborations and supporters, we are able to accomplish our greatest successes.

Alabama Department of Conservation
and Natural Resources
Alabama Rivers Alliance
Cahaba River Society
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
The Coca-Cola Company
Conservation Fisheries, Inc.
Cumberland River Compact

The Nature Conservancy
Nissan North America
Tennessee Conservation Voters
Tennessee Department of Environment
and Conservation
Tennessee Department of Transportation
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Be part of our work

WWF is leading the most important and ambitious conservation effort the world has ever seen.

By 2015, we will conserve 19 of the world's most important natural places and significantly change global forces to protect the future of nature.

Together, with your generous support, we can directly influence the course of conservation.

To learn more, visit worldwildlife.org/SERivers



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