



**Alabama Rivers Alliance**  
*Water Is Life*

Dear friends,

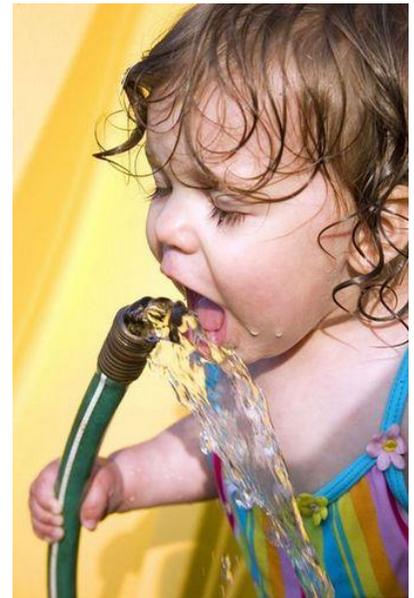
**I am more concerned than ever about the safety of Alabama's water.** The news of contaminated drinking water, industrial pollution spills, and fish kills is becoming too commonplace these days. As government becomes increasingly divided in determining its role and budgets continue to tighten, essential government duties -- like protecting water and public health --begin to weaken and become less reliable.

**It is times like these that citizens must take an even greater active role in watchdogging our rivers and holding polluters and government leaders accountable!**

It seems to take a major crisis these days to garner attention for any number of important issues that are facing our nation. Be it health care, gun sense, infrastructure needs, or drinking water, we don't seem to be able to have a meaningful conversation until people die and even that isn't usually enough to breakthrough the political gridlock to solve our problems.

*Waiting until there are lives lost to figure out what to do to create a safer, healthier, higher quality of life for all citizens is **no way to govern.***

There are people suffering all across the nation from poor health conditions, over burden of exposure to pollution, lack of basic needs such as food and shelter, and from many other issues. These crises do not present themselves in the form of acute deaths. These are slow, chronic problems that are plaguing our communities and our nation and they are not uncontrollable acts of nature or God. They are situations created by the choices **we** make, the society we have all been a part of creating, and the laws we allow to be passed (or not enforced).



**Please support your statewide network of river watchdogs TODAY and the Alabama Rivers Alliance will send HALF of your donation to the Tennessee Riverkeeper to support their work holding 3M accountable for polluting drinking water in North Alabama.**

As a supporter of the Alabama Rivers Alliance, you already know the importance of getting involved in what's happening to your rivers and your water sources. You know that having a strong statewide network of local river watchdog groups helps identify problems when they happen to our waterways. You understand that bringing those local problems to light helps open up opportunities to solve systemic problems at the state and federal level. **You also understand that someone must be ready to capitalize on that momentum when it happens and that's where the Alabama Rivers Alliance comes in.**

When the Water Wars between Georgia, Florida and Alabama flared up again and forced Governor Bentley to pay attention to Alabama's lack of water planning, **the Alabama Rivers Alliance was there.** We had built and nurtured those relationships and we laid the groundwork to have a seat at the table with other powerful influencers to develop a comprehensive, sustainable water plan for Alabama.

**Please show your support for our unique model of leveraging both state and local advocacy to #DefendRivers across Alabama!**



In recent months, Americans have been faced with news article after news article alerting us of water crises that we expect to see only coming out of developing countries. From Flint, Michigan to North Alabama, the safety of our drinking water is coming into question. Not to mention the miles of rivers and streams that are legally being contaminated with toxic pollution every day. According to the United States Geologic Survey, more than 65% of the public water supply in the United States comes from surface water, such as rivers, streams, and lakes. When we allow pollution to be dumped in large amounts into our waterways -- or worse -- don't properly update and enforce water pollution laws, we are potentially contaminating someone's drinking water somewhere.

The recent drinking water crisis in North Alabama brings this to the forefront. The Tennessee Riverkeeper, David Whiteside, correctly stated in a recent news article on the situation:

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***If this had been a tornado that came through and knocked out the water supply of all these cities' infrastructure for two or three weeks, then it would be a crisis."***

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People are not dying immediately from this situation, nor will they if they drink the water, but instead there are now tens of thousands of people who must go to sleep at night knowing that they have been exposed to these harmful chemicals at levels that have been deemed hazardous to their health. What are we doing to ensure that we are investing adequate resources and time into preventing this kind of crisis in the future?

**The Alabama Rivers Alliance is at the statehouse every year during the legislative session advocating for a healthy general fund that will support agencies charged with monitoring and protecting our waterways.**

We cannot know everything that is one day going to be discovered or proven unhealthy. However, we can decide to invest in the research needed to understand the effects of all the chemicals and pollutants we are allowing into our water, air and soils. We can decide to invest in vital water infrastructure now, to better treat and deliver clean water to all of our homes.

Environmental organizations, like the Alabama Rivers Alliance and our local partners, have been working for decades to educate the citizens of Alabama and elected officials about environmental laws, such as the Clean Water Act, and the need to ensure they are being implemented and enforced properly and adequately funded. This kind of advocacy largely goes unnoticed or gets chalked up as being “scare tactics by radical environmentalists”. The protection of our waterways is often overlooked by elected officials in the name of jobs and economic development.

## **We must change this way of thinking before it is too late.**

While our local partners, like the Tennessee Riverkeeper, are working hard in their watersheds watchdogging polluters, we at the Alabama Rivers Alliance are working hard to build a stronger relationship with key agencies like the Alabama Department of Environmental Management.

By bringing groups together with agencies and other state leaders, we can gain a better understanding of where common ground can be forged and forward progress can be made to better protect our communities and our waterways. **But we must have both the local efforts and the state efforts to make the change we all want to see.**

At the Alabama Rivers Alliance, we do everything we can to support our local partners both organizationally and with the issues they care about. We share funding where possible, we offer training and expertise, and we seek their input on our statewide priorities.

***Our greatest strength comes from working together.***



**That's why we are giving HALF of the proceeds from this appeal to the Tennessee Riverkeeper. Give today and your gift can support two organizations doing great work to protect and #DefendRivers in Alabama!**

On the heels of the crises in Flint, Michigan and North Alabama, we now know that we cannot sit by passively and assume someone is looking out for the health and safety of our water sources and water infrastructure. We must insist that these chronic problems, which are causing harm to our health, are a crisis and deserve the attention of our local, state and federal leaders.



*Program Director Mitch Reid addressing the Water Committee in Montgomery.*

We **must** advocate for adequate investment in the studies needed to understand the health impacts of what's being dumped into our waterways, as well as investment in adequate infrastructure. We **must** take an active role in staying informed and being engaged whenever a new permit for pollution is developed for the waterways in our communities. We **must** be in dialogue with our local water utilities and officials to know what they are doing to protect us and let them know what we see or smell that concerns us. We **must** vote for lawmakers that understand we can balance the needs of our economy with the needs of our public health and the environment.

Most importantly, we **must** recognize the crucial role we play in solving these problems. Here are three things you can do to help ensure that our water remains safe and that the people making decisions that impact our lives in such a vital way are informed and held accountable:

- ❖ Talk to your local water utility and find out where your water comes from. Ask them what plans they have in place in case of an emergency, such as the one that happened in North Alabama.
- ❖ Talk to your elected officials at all levels and let them know you care about water. Find out what their positions are on protecting our water resources and tell them that creating jobs should not mean sacrificing the health of our water.
- ❖ **Give as generously as you can to the Alabama Rivers Alliance today to help support not only our organization, but the statewide network of watchdogs working to protect your local waterways.**

It should not take people dying, either immediately or slowly, for us to create a society that values something as essential to life as our water. Planning for and investing in the future health of our water resources should be at the top of our list of priorities. Let's stop taking it for granted and waiting for the next crisis to hit to make that shift.

**Let's start the work to #DefendRivers together today!**

*Water is Life,*



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