



Alabama Rivers Alliance 2018

ANNUAL REPORT

Alabama Rivers Alliance is a statewide network of groups working to protect and restore all of Alabama's water resources through building partnerships, empowering citizens, and advocating for sound water policy and its enforcement.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



2018 was a year of abundance in more ways than one for Alabama's rivers. We received an abundance of rain throughout the year allowing rivers and streams to purge some of their pollutants and move tons of rocks and dirt downstream to settle in new surroundings.

We, at the Alabama Rivers Alliance, also saw an abundance of activity around river protection and advocacy in 2018. From re-invigorated efforts from the state to develop an Alabama Water Plan to precedent-setting legal victories for endangered species on the Coosa River – our work in partnership with Alabama's powerful river advocacy community exceeded expectations on many fronts! It was a banner year for celebrating successes!

We started the year with anxiety but excitement as we took on a brand new program, the Southern Exposure Film Fellowship program, and we welcomed two new staff members. Curt Chaffin filled the Policy Director position vacated in 2017 and Martin Taylor joined us as Development Director, a new position for the organization. They hit the ground running early and are making a big difference at our organization already.

Unfortunately, 2018 also brought with it an abundance of problems for our waterways. In March, it was made public that all of Alabama's coal fired power plants contain coal ash pits that are contaminating groundwater. Meanwhile, the federal government continued to roll back much needed protections for water, including repealing many of the coal ash protections passed in 2015.

Luckily, the Alabama Rivers Alliance, along with a strong network of partner groups, was up to the challenge! Working together through coalitions and collaborative efforts, we responded to action alerts, wrote public comments, attended events, rallies and meetings, presented to governing bodies, lobbied our elected officials and we truly made a difference!

Protecting clean water takes many resources, both human and financial, especially in a state like Alabama where the problems are as plentiful as the waters and the biodiversity they are threatening.

This report highlights some of the exciting work and outcomes led by the Alabama Rivers Alliance in 2018. I know our many partner groups have equally important successes they are sharing with you through their newsletters and annual reports. Please take the time to read about the successes and challenges from all of us working to protect Alabama's waterways.

Thank you for your continued support of the Alabama Rivers Alliance and we encourage you to support your local watershed group as well. If you need help identifying who they are, you can always ask us!



Curt Chaffin, Policy Director



Martin Taylor, Development Director

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

In June, the Alabama Rivers Alliance welcomed five bright and emerging filmmakers from across the country to Alabama to live, work and play as they created five short documentaries on coal ash, Alabama's need for a water plan, local farming, individual activism, and the Cahaba Beach Road project. The talented film fellows were housed in Birmingham and they traveled throughout the state working with our partners and community members to produce five engaging films as part of the Southern Exposure Film fellowship program. The office was full and teaming with energy during these six short weeks! We already can't wait for the next class of awesome filmmakers to fall in love with Alabama!

The films have been screened all across the state - 18 separate screenings so far! - and will soon be available in public libraries and beyond. If you're interested in bringing the Southern Exposure films to your community, please contact Kelly Marshall at kmarshall@alabamarivers.org.



BREAKING NEWS!

THREE of the Southern Exposure films, *Ashes to Ashes*, *The Accidental Environmentalist: Catherine Flowers* and *If They Build It, What Will Come?* were selected among hundreds of entries into the national Wild & Scenic Film Festival and will be screened to thousands of attendees at their festival in January 2019, as well as to thousands more across the country as part of their On Tour program!

The films have also been accepted to: Big Muddy Film Festival (Illinois) Los Angeles CineFest, Colorado Environmental Film Festival and many more to come in 2019!

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POLICY PIECES

For nearly 10 years, the Alabama Rivers Alliance has led a robust advocacy campaign for a strong statewide water plan to protect our water supplies and wildlife. After receiving significant public backlash at the beginning of 2018 for her efforts to seemingly end the progress towards a water plan, Governor Ivey re-addressed the issue by directing the Alabama Water Resources Commission and Office of Water Resources to create a “roadmap” to produce a water plan. Alabama Rivers Alliance staff attended more than a dozen of the Commission’s meetings in 2018, regularly presenting comments and sending written memoranda. In late November, the Commission approved a road map and a list of appendices; several key changes were made to produce a stronger document over the course of the year.



After the document was published, more than 30 organizations and 300 individuals —led by Alabama Rivers Alliance—wrote a letter to the Commission and Governor Ivey urging them to create a scientific, protective Alabama Water Plan. We look forward to more action towards a water plan in 2019.



Water policy was also a hot button issue in the Alabama Legislature in 2018. Our bill, The Alabama Water Conservation and Security Act (H.B. 416), sought commonsense changes to the state’s water management regime.

After receiving bipartisan support, citizens sent more than 1,000 emails to the House Agriculture Committee in support of the bill. Multiple organizations and individuals supported the bill at a public hearing, but ultimately the Legislative session ended before further action could be taken.

In July, a federal court unanimously ruled in favor of Alabama Rivers Alliance and American Rivers by tossing a harmful license issued to Alabama Power for operation of seven hydroelectric dams on the Coosa River, addressing the longstanding problems the dams have caused for the river for the first time in decades. After arguments from the Southern Environmental Law Center, the court ruled that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission had improperly approved the license to generate electricity at the Coosa dams. The opinion

criticized the dams for its lack of fish passage and harmful dissolved oxygen levels.

Additionally, Alabama Power and FERC officially began relicensing of Harris Dam located near Lineville, Alabama. The first license—approved in 1973—contained little protection for the Tallapoosa River downstream from the facility or local wildlife. The 151-foot-high concrete dam wall and two large electric turbines generate power by releasing water downstream. The Alabama Rivers Alliance and American Rivers filed comments that included over 200 pages of arguments and scientific findings to FERC about the dangers these practices pose, such as water temperature, downstream shortages, and erosion. We will continue to push for better protection, as the final FERC decision will likely not be made until at least 2021.



In early March, groundwater monitoring showed extensive and dangerous pollution at all six active coal ash ponds in Alabama. ADEM responded on the same day, levying a \$250,000 fine on each facility. Alabama Rivers Alliance joined its state partners to challenge these fines, arguing that more remediation was needed. In April, ADEM approved an Alabama Permitting System, which included several “flexibilities” to give facilities more discretion for coal ash storage. That same month also saw the EPA rollback a 2015 rule that required proper storage practices. Alabama Rivers Alliance provided extensive comments at each stage; after publishing action alerts, we helped Alabamians send hundreds of postcards, emails, and electronic comments to the EPA and the Alabama Environmental Management Commission urging them to

protect Alabama’s rivers and streams by rejecting such rollbacks.

In 2019, we will continue to advocate for improvements on each of these fronts. We will also work on other important issues, including infrastructure and responsible development, irrigation, recreation, pollution, and protective waterbody designations. From comments to phone calls to protests to river clean ups, I had the pleasure to work with countless inspirational, everyday Alabamians in 2018—all with the common goal of defending our rivers. With this extraordinary community having our backs, I have no doubt we will continue to make our water policies stronger and more protective.



ALLIANCE BUILDING BY THE NUMBERS

745⁺

attendees at Alliance advocacy and education events, including Alabama Water Rally, #DefendRivers paddle and Wild & Scenic Film Festival screenings

28

opportunities to inform communities about ARA and our programs through tabling events with partner groups

7,818

miles traveled - many carpooled! - attending partner meetings and listening to community members

18

partner groups attending regional meetings to share current work and foster collaborative efforts to defend Alabama's 132,000 miles of rivers and streams

42

meetings with ARA's partner organizations across Alabama in 2018

5

conferences attended to learn new tools for protecting clean water, latest trends in organizing in our communities

2

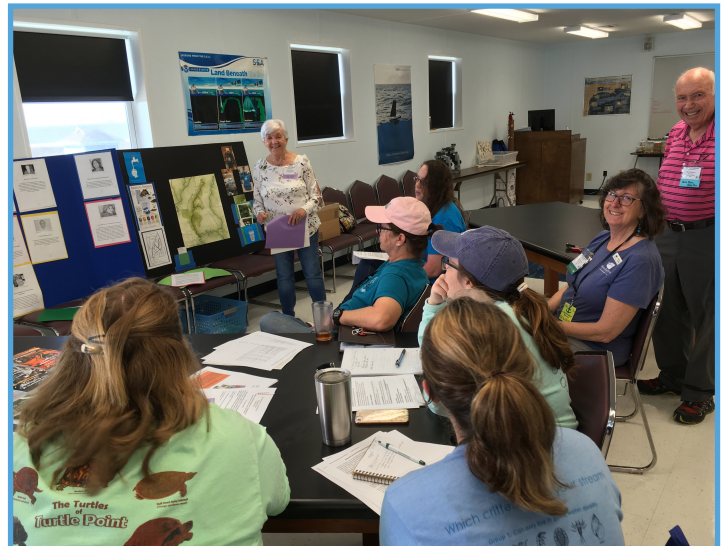
potential new groups forming to protect their local creeks



Junior Board Members La'Tanya Scott, Dawn Lee and Dillon O'Hare at a tabling event



#DefendRivers paddle on the mighty Alabama River in Montgomery

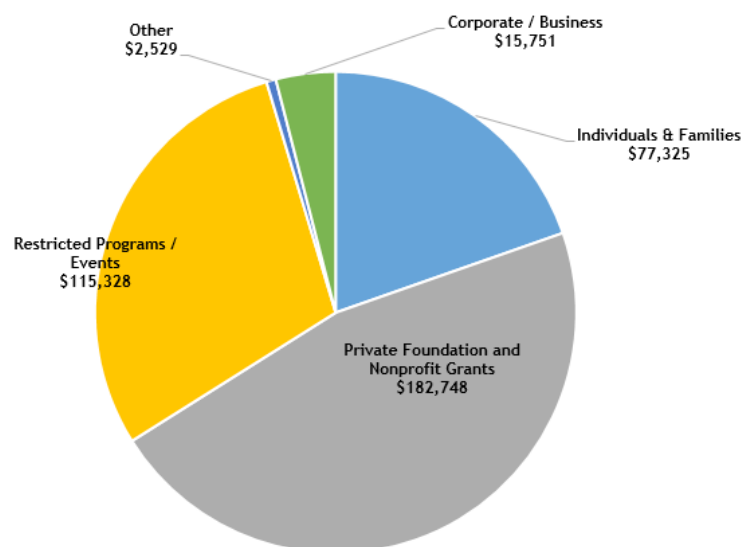


Martha Hunter, alliance coordinator, with partner groups

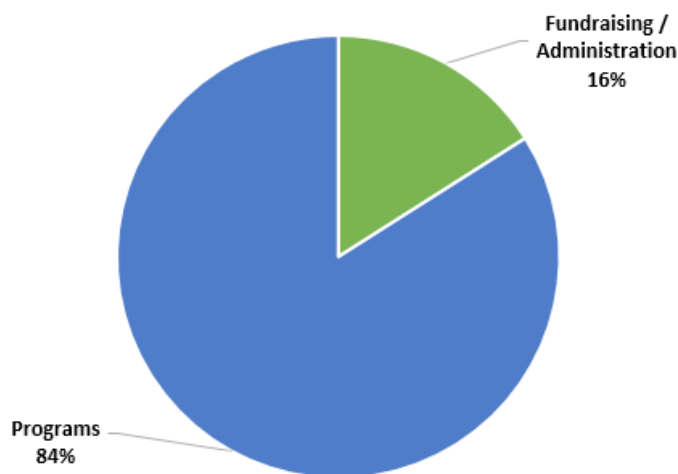
FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The Alabama Rivers Alliance operates an annual budget on the calendar year. Your individual contribution is very important to help us continue to provide essential statewide support to Alabama's growing Alliance of local river advocates and partners. Please consider renewing your membership today!

INCOME 2018



EXPENSES 2018



Detailed financial information available upon request.

WOW! What a year. First and foremost, from all of us at The Alabama Rivers Alliance,

THANK YOU for your support!

Without the generosity of our many donors, old and new, we would not be here reporting such great news. From a vibrant start to the Southern Exposure Film Fellowship to the Coosa Federal re-licensing victory, you are all a part of our success. As we move forward into 2019, please know that we are working even harder to make sure Alabama's rivers are clean and protected.

If you would like to help even more in this effort, please consider joining our monthly donor club. By becoming a monthly donor, you are providing a reliable monthly source of revenue, helping us to focus on our program work and less on fundraising.

Set up your monthly donation at www.alabamarivers.org/donate-now and thank you again for your continued support!

IN ADDITION TO THE MANY GENEROUS INDIVIDUALS WHO MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE, WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING FOUNDATIONS, PARTNERS & BUSINESSES FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF OUR WORK IN 2018:

ABAHAC • Alabama Chapter of the Sierra Club • Alabama Rivers: A Celebration and Challenge • Alabama Waldorf School • American Rivers • Auburn University at Montgomery • Autauga Creek Improvement Committee • Birmingham Mountain Radio • Cahaba Brewing Company • Carolyn King Legacy Trust • Charles Stewart Mott Foundation • Church Street Coffee and Books • Craft Burger • Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham • Creative Montessori School • Curtis & Edith Munson Foundation • Discovering Alabama • EBSCO • ECO three • el barrio • Energy Foundation • Hancock Timber Resources, Inc • Higher Ground Coffee • Hueytown Chiropractic Clinic • The Hugh Kaul Foundation • J. Key Properties • Mrs. Clean Green • The Nature Conservancy of Alabama • Paramount • Patagonia, Inc. • Phase Gym • ROJO • River Network • Ruffner Mountain • Scot Duncan and family • SkyCastle • Slice Birmingham • Southern Environmental Law Center • Stephens Foundation • Strain Foundation • Straight to Ale Brewing Company • This is Alabama • Tropicaleo • Westwind Foundation • Whole Foods Market (Birmingham and Huntsville)

Alabama Water Rally

March 15 - 17, 2019

Camp Beckwith in Fairhope

CLEAN WATER COUNTS:

Exploring the Economic Benefits of Clean Water



Alabama Water Rally is the premier educational, networking and *celebratory* event for Alabamians interested in #CleanWater and in the protection of ALL our waterways.

REGISTRATION OPEN NOW!

www.AlabamaRivers.org



Alabama Rivers Alliance

Water Is Life

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