

A Big Week for News

Dear friends,

With each week that passes it seems there's yet more significant news – and I am not referring to a new President.

Just this week we received some of the biggest news in the history of our chapter. The Army Corps of Engineers has committed to funding a three-year study, up to \$3 million, to examine the feasibility of ecologically reconnecting the Alabama and Cahaba Rivers to the Gulf of Mexico. This is a project our team has been working on for several years, and this funding is coming in a full year earlier than we planned.

This project, I believe, will culminate in the most biologically significant river reconnection project in the history of the United States.

This is not hyperbole. The vast diversity of life in the Cahaba River make it, undeniably, one of the most important freshwater systems in all of North America, if not the World. Reconnecting the Cahaba River to the Alabama River, and thus to Mobile Bay and the Gulf of Mexico, will be an astonishing accomplishment. The movement of life from the Gulf of Mexico up through the Cahaba River has been interrupted since the 1950s. We believe we can change that in a way that will truly benefit human and natural communities throughout Alabama.

We have much work to do. This federal program requires a 50/50 match, so the work begins immediately to raise an additional \$3 million to support this landmark project. The Sybil & White Smith Foundation has helped us begin by designating a portion of their generous grant for the Alabama River project.

There is more to come on this, and you will be hearing updates in the coming months from myself, Jason, and the rest of our team. In the meantime, Jason and I are happy to answer questions. This is an exciting time in our chapter's history, let's get to work.

Mitch Reed, The Nature Conservancy

