

SHOW ME YOUR MUSSEL –

Citizen Involvement and Education in Strategic Habitat Units of the Greater Mobile River Basin

The Alabama Clean Water Partnership (ACWP), in cooperation with the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the Alabama Aquatic Biodiversity Center of the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Geological Survey of Alabama, and the Mobile River Basin Coalition has recently initiated efforts to provide strategic management opportunities for imperiled species in the greater Mobile River Basin.

The neutral framework of the ACWP, linking individuals, companies, organizations and governing bodies to educate the public and put stream restoration projects on the ground to protect and preserve water resources and aquatic ecosystems, will provide the critical networking function for the development of Strategic Habitat Unit (SHU) Action Plans, necessary to protect and restore the 26 designated river and stream segments (units) in the Mobile River Basin - critical habitat for 11 freshwater mussel species under the Endangered Species Act. In addition to the listed mussels, these units also contain a major proportion of the basin's endemic aquatic fauna, including other imperiled mussels, fishes, snails, and crayfish.

Join us as we discuss the MUSSEL necessary for the development of SHU Action Plans and the formation of cooperative partnerships of local landowners, local and county governments, local businesses and farmers, state and federal agencies, environmental organizations, and watershed partnerships. SHU Action Plans may include:

- a. Education components such as distributing assessment data to partners and providing GIS data and access to appropriate landowners, agencies, and watershed organizations, development of SHU-specific species and habitat information, and establishing and culturing links between action agencies and partners.
- b. Identification of stream habitat protection needs and methods, such as landowner conservation agreements or land purchase.
- c. Implement strategies to eliminate polluted runoff sources and reduce pollutant loads through best management practice (BMP) implementation.
- d. Riparian improvement and physical restoration of degraded stream reaches.
- e. Restoration of biodiversity through augmentation of reduced species populations and/or re-introduction of extirpated species.

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