

# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Making Ripple Effects for 26 Years



freshwater  
LAND TRUST









## DEAR FRESHWATER LAND TRUST COMMUNITY,

I hope you had a safe and healthy end to the year and a happy start to this new year. In 2022, Freshwater Land Trust followed up its 25th anniversary with a year full of exciting accomplishments, which I am excited to share in our 2022 Annual Report! We made considerable progress toward our mission of conserving land and improving water quality throughout Central Alabama and connecting trails in Jefferson County.

We added several new properties to our conservation portfolio, including our largest acquisition to-date, an almost 1,200-acre conservation easement on Hatchet Creek in Coosa County. We are now conserving almost 10,000 acres of property in nine counties. Additionally, we opened the Moon River Canoe Launch and parking lot in Irondale to allow safe public access to the Cahaba River. This is the second canoe launch we have added to our properties in support of the Cahaba Blueway Initiative. We undertook an extensive stream bank stabilization project in Pinson that enhances habitat for the endangered Vermilion Darter in Turkey Creek. As part of Project Litter Gitter, we installed a 12th trash collection device in our local waterways and, by December, reached an unbelievable milestone of 20,000 pounds of trash collected since the project's December 2019 inception.

We hosted a spring BioBlitz on one of our Village Creek properties, documenting an incredible 188 species of plants, animals and fungi living there. Our annual Endangered Species Tour in the fall gave participants the opportunity to visit six unique sites where endangered darter species reside and also to see these beautiful fish. Land Aid, our annual summer concert fundraiser, was our most successful ever, featuring two national headliners, The Sam Bush Band and Greensky Bluegrass.

Our Red Rock Trail System® gained new signage and two additional urban miles on the ground, with the completion of the Hugh Kaul Trail connecting Railroad Park through Avondale to Continental Gin. Our 10,000-square-foot “I ❤️ Birmingham” mural and the stunning Sunrise Rotary Plaza, both along the Hugh Kaul Trail, were completed in time for the World Games. These enhancements and additions to the trail system further bolster our goal of connecting all Jefferson County residents to a trail or greenspace within a mile of their home.

We continue to strive to make our area a beautiful place to live, work, visit, and recreate. Get outside and enjoy and appreciate the great outdoors!



*Executive Director*

# SUSTAINING THROUGH THE SEASONS

## JANUARY

### **Freshwater Land Trust achieves milestone of 8,000 acres conserved**

FLT reached the milestone of conserving over 8,000 acres of land in Central Alabama. We are so grateful to all the landowners, board members, donors, and partners who made this possible.

## FEBRUARY

### **FLT and partners stabilize Turkey Creek bank for endangered Vermilion Darters**

On February 8, FLT, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and others completed a bank restoration project on Turkey Creek. A section of the creek was rerouted and stabilized to mitigate significant erosion damage.

## MARCH

### **Litter gitter relocated to Buck Creek in Alabaster**

On March 11, Project Litter Gitter partners installed a “litter gitter” device in Buck Creek near Buck Creek Park in Alabaster, Alabama. It is the first litter gitter in Shelby County.

## SPRING

## APRIL

### **Freshwater Land Trust celebrates Earth Day with Hugh Kaul Trail ribbon cutting and groundbreaking**

On Earth Day, FLT hosted a ribbon cutting for the newly-completed Hugh Kaul Trail's initial segment, formerly known as the Jones Valley Trail Extension. FLT also announced the groundbreaking for the next segment of the Hugh Kaul Trail, formerly known as the Continental Gin Connector.





# SUMMER

## MAY

### **Village Creek BioBlitz nets 188 species**

On May 14-15, FLT held a BioBlitz at one of our Village Creek properties in Adamsville. Participants were challenged to find and identify as many species as possible in 24 hours. A total of 188 species were documented here, most of which were non-woody plants, trees and shrubs, invertebrates, and fungi. This biodiverse property is notable as the southernmost known location for the eastern hemlock tree.

### **Moon River Canoe Launch and parking lot opens in Irondale**

On May 3, FLT and partners hosted a ribbon cutting for the newly completed Moon River Canoe Launch and parking lot in Irondale, along with Irondale Mayor James Stewart and other city representatives. The ribbon cutting was covered live on WBRC FOX6's Good Day Alabama with Jeh Jeh Pruitt.

### **250+ acres conserved in Locust Fork watershed**

In early May, FLT acquired a 259.6-acre conservation easement on a property in Blount County.

## JULY

### **Twelfth litter gitter in greater Birmingham area sponsored by Wells Fargo**

On July 26, FLT, Wells Fargo, Black Warrior Riverkeeper, and other Project Litter Gitter partners installed the twelfth litter gitter device in Central Alabama. It was placed in a Valley Creek tributary near the headwaters of Valley Creek.

### **"I ♥ Birmingham" mural and Sunrise Rotary Plaza completed**

The approximately 10,000-square foot mural is located on the Lee-Rodgers Tire Company building on the Hugh Kaul Trail and was completed alongside the nearby Sunrise Rotary Plaza, which features the sculpture "Inception" by local artist DeeDee Morrison.

## AUGUST

### **Land Aid fundraiser is best one yet**

FLT's junior board, board, staff, and supporters had a blast at this year's Land Aid fundraising concert featuring national headliners The Sam Bush Band and Greensky Bluegrass, which happened on August 26 at Avondale Brewing Company.

### **Hugh Kaul Trail finished**

FLT opened the final segment of the Hugh Kaul Trail, which links 41st Street in Avondale to the historic Continental Gin complex, home to Cahaba Brewing Company. The Hugh Kaul Trail is now two miles long and connects to the Rotary Trail.

### **FLT hires new staff**

In August, FLT added three new members to the team.



## SEPTEMBER

### **Endangered Species Tour is huge success**

On September 30, Freshwater Land Trust and the Alabama Forestry Foundation hosted an all-day endangered species tour, highlighting six sites throughout Jefferson County where endangered darters reside.

## NOVEMBER

### **Benches placed along Enon Ridge and High Ore Line trails**

Five new benches and signage were installed along the Enon Ridge and High Ore Line Trails, adding to the trails' amenities.

## WINTER



## FALL



## DECEMBER

### **Annual Corporate Breakfast features Commissioner Blankenship**

FLT hosted its 15th annual Corporate Partners for Conservation Breakfast at Cahaba Brewing Company on December 9. Commissioner Chris Blankenship with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and Forever Wild was the breakfast's guest speaker.

### **Freshwater Land Trust and partners enhance streambank restoration at Turkey Creek**

Additional stabilizing efforts were implemented downstream of the reconstruction work completed at Turkey Creek earlier this year.

### **Freshwater Land Trust increases acreage**

FLT added 1,500 acres to January's milestone by year-end, reaching almost 10,000 acres conserved across Central Alabama. This increase was due in large part to the acquisition of a 1,128-acre conservation easement along Hatchet Creek in Coosa County.



# IMPACT

1,407

## NEW ACRES CONSERVED

Bettering habitats  
and ecosystems

9,501

## TOTAL ACRES CONSERVED

Improving land,  
waterways, and  
forests

127

## MILES OF TRAIL IN 2022

Encouraging our  
community to get  
outside

213

## VOLUNTEERS

Caring for our  
trails and  
greenspaces

4,110

## POUNDS OF LITTER REMOVED FROM LOCAL WATERWAYS

Creating cleaner  
waterways

538

## VOLUNTEER HOURS SERVED

Restoring habitats  
and removing litter

1

## NEW COUNTY

Expanding our  
conservation  
footprint

1.5

## MILES OF URBAN TRAIL EXPANSION

Working to  
complete more  
trails

9.5

## MILES OF TRAIL ADOPTED

Partnering with  
Adopt-a-Trail  
volunteers

# STEWARDSHIP

In 2022, Freshwater Land Trust focused on restoration, rehabilitation, and discovery through stewardship projects and conservation efforts.

## ENHANCING MOON RIVER CANOE LAUNCH



FLT and partners hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Moon River Canoe Launch and parking lot. The addition of the parking lot at the site ensured direct and safe access to the Cahaba River via a trail leading from the lot down to the existing canoe launch.

The addition of the parking area officially qualified the site to be added to the Cahaba Blueway Initiative's list of access points.

## STABILIZATION OF TURKEY CREEK

Freshwater Land Trust collaborated with partners in order to complete an in-stream restoration project. The project focused on the reconstruction of Turkey Creek stream banks to mitigate erosion-related issues. Early in the year, a section of the stream was rerouted to its original channel and had its banks reshaped. Vegetative debris was placed in the stream and its banks to serve as a buffer and slow the water's velocity.

In the fall, additional repairs were made downstream of the initial work to further stabilize the bank. These efforts help to protect and restore endangered Vermilion Darter habitat.





# CONSERVATION

Freshwater Land Trust actively seeks to conserve as much of Central Alabama's natural beauty as possible. In 2022, FLT took major strides towards this goal.



## JEFFERSON COUNTY LAND

In the course of five months, FLT obtained three fee simple properties in Jefferson County. In addition to a 1.5-acre parcel gained in January, two properties along the Cahaba River watershed totaling 14.5 acres were added by May. These properties help conserve habitat for several federally-protected mollusk species.

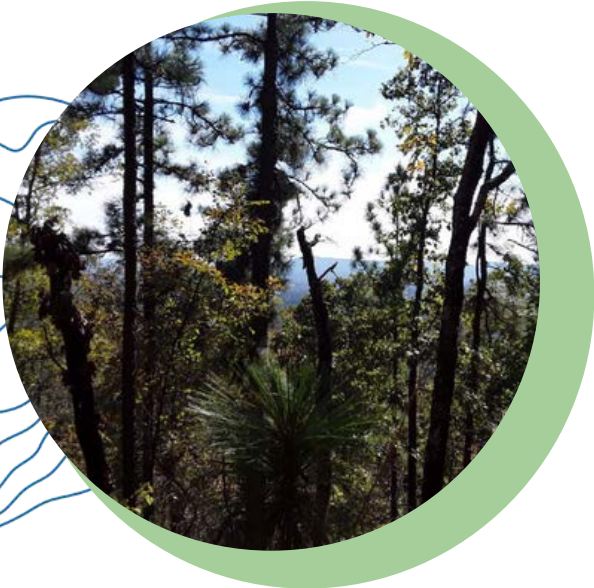
## BLOUNT COUNTY LAND

In May, Freshwater Land Trust acquired a 260-acre conservation easement on the Locust Fork. The Locust Fork River is designated critical habitat for six mussel species, as well as the rare Black Warrior Waterdog.



## COOSA COUNTY LAND

In December, Freshwater Land Trust added a 1,128-acre conservation easement on Hatchet Creek. This acquisition ensures the protection of longleaf pines, a large shoal of Cahaba lilies, and the habitat for nine federally-protected mussel species.



# PROJECT LITTER GITTER

Project Litter Gitter is a water conservation effort located in the Greater Birmingham Metro Area that was implemented in December 2020 to collect litter out of urban streams and creeks. Litter gitter devices collect trash from stormwater runoff and prevent it from continuing further downstream. In 2022, the initiative reached new heights with an increase in the number of active devices and the pounds of trash collected from local waterways over the past three years.



## 12 litter gitters in both Jefferson and Shelby counties

These devices are creating a cleaner future for Central Alabama's waterways.

## New litter gitter unit installed in July

Wells Fargo sponsored a new Birmingham litter gitter in Valley Creek in July 2022.



## 4,110.51 pounds of litter removed from waterways in 2022

We had over a 3,000-pound increase in trash removed in the year 2022.

## 10 tons of trash collected over three years

We have collected over 20,000 pounds, which is roughly equivalent to the weight of 1.5 million Styrofoam coffee cups.





# PATHWAYS FORWARD

Freshwater Land Trust works to create trails throughout Jefferson County. In 2022, significant headway was made in expanding the Red Rock Trail System®.

## Construction starts on Five Mile Creek Greenway extension

Preparations were made for the next two miles of the Five Mile Creek Greenway in Brookside. Ground was cleared and levelled for the addition, which will be covered with gravel and extend this trail to over eight total miles.

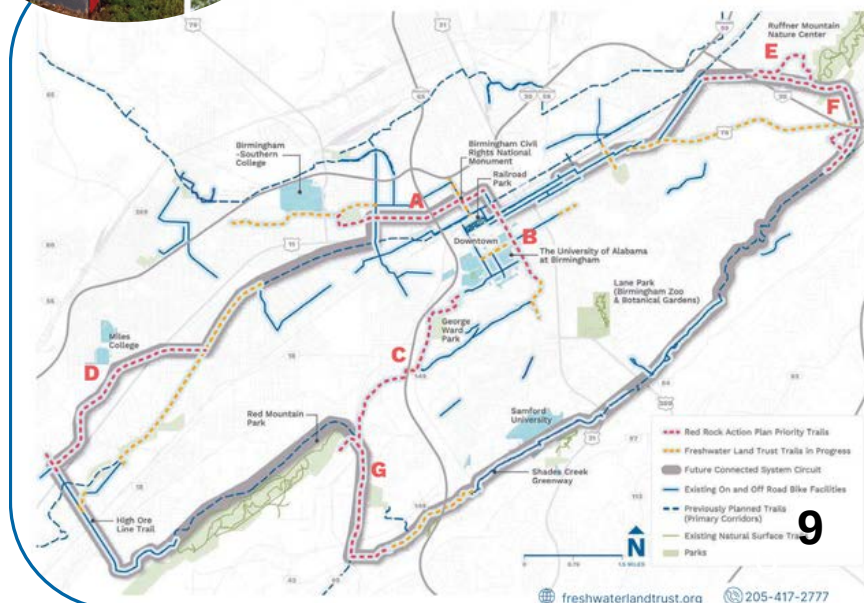


## Red Rock Action Plan completed and implementation underway

The new Action Plan lays out a 36-mile planned trail loop around the Greater Birmingham Metro Area. It identifies seven priority trail projects that will connect Birmingham to Fairfield, Irondale, and Homewood.

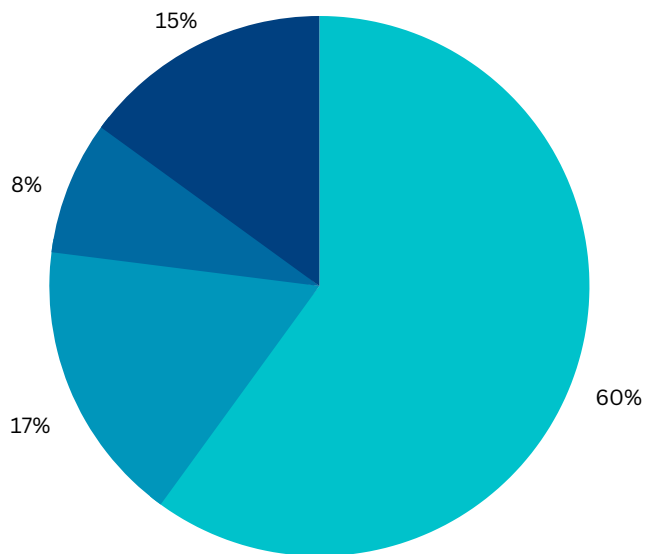
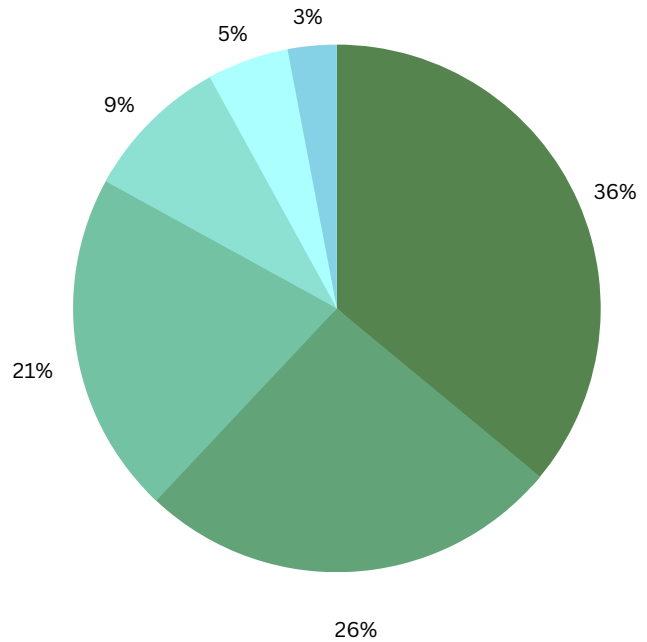
## Installation of new signage for Red Rock Trail System® begins

Trailhead kiosks and blazes marking quarter-mile increments were installed on the Hugh Kaul and Rotary Trails. The branding for the new signs was designed by Robert Finkel, Chair of the Graphic Design Program at Auburn University's School of Industrial and Graphic Design. The kiosks and blazes will continue to be installed on trails in the six current RRTS corridors to guide and inform trail users.

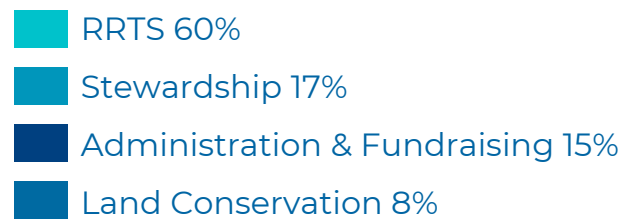


# FINANCES

Income \$2,118,353



Expenses \$2,743,074





# GET INVOLVED

## DONATE

When you give to Freshwater Land Trust, you invest directly in Central Alabama, in the water you drink, in the trails that connect us, and in the woods, rivers, and parks you love. Freshwater Land Trust is a 501(c)(3), so your contribution is tax deductible. Contributions can be sent by check to P.O. Box 337, Birmingham, Alabama, 35201, by credit or debit card via a secure online form, by initiating a transfer of stock, or by planned giving.

## FRESHWATER FANS

Freshwater Fans are individuals who want to give back to nature with the goal in mind of a greener, cleaner, and more accessible world. As a Freshwater Fan, you provide critical support for conservation and outdoor recreation throughout Central Alabama. Individuals who give from \$25 to \$1,000+ in a calendar year automatically become a Freshwater Fan for one year and can opt-in to receive benefits.



## VOLUNTEER

Freshwater Land Trust offers different volunteer options to get involved, such as Adopt-a-Trail, group service days, and cleanups with partner organizations.

## EVENTS

You can subscribe to our e-newsletter to stay up to date on all events offered! Events include charity bingo nights, giveback socials, running and walking groups, guided hikes, and river cleanups.



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Outreach & Communications Coordinator

## **Katie Holmes**

Outreach & Communications Coordinator

## **Sam McCoy**

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# DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are foundational values of Freshwater Land Trust and primary drivers of our work in the community and our workplace culture. A central tenet of our mission is to provide outdoor spaces and recreational opportunities to everyone in our geographical footprint, regardless of their location, income level, neighborhood demographics, or physical ability. As a result, our work helps grow the collective consciousness for protecting and enjoying the natural environment and strengthen social bonds between diverse populations. We intentionally seek work in marginalized communities in order to help build a more inclusive community in the Greater Birmingham and Central Alabama area.

As an organization, FLT believes that each of our employees brings unique and special skills, perspectives, and experiences to the table, and we strive to maintain a culture that allows our employees to thrive, succeed, and contribute to Freshwater Land Trust's mission to their fullest potential. FLT provides equal employment opportunity to all individuals and does not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, or bullying based on race, color, religion, gender, sex, pregnancy, national origin, marital status, citizenship, age, disability, veteran or military status, genetic makeup, sexual orientation or any other legally-protected characteristic.





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