From the Gulf of Mexico to the Tennessee River, our water, lands, and air play a vital role in our state.

Alabama’s natural resources support a healthy environment, strong communities, and a thriving economy.

Conservation Alabama Foundation believes our state should be a place where water is safe and used efficiently, where our sporting traditions are honored and wildlife is abundant, where land is conserved so that every Alabamian can enjoy it, where energy needs are met affordably, reliably, and cleanly, and where transportation and infrastructure projects are prioritized wisely. We believe our government should be ethical, efficient, and transparent, and our state agencies should be adequately funded.

We support environmental laws and policies that protect Alabamians’ rights to clean air, safe water, and healthy lands that are accessible for all communities.

This policy guide is designed to provide you with a look at what we have identified as the most important conservation issues. While this guide is produced by Conservation Alabama Foundation, the information presented has been gathered from our partner organizations and subject matter experts from around the state. We are grateful for their assistance in creating these policy briefs on critical conservation issues.

We want to be a resource for you. We know that legislative sessions move quickly, and you have many important issues to consider. We also know that Alabamians value their natural resources and want to see them protected with smart, effective policy. By working together this legislative session and beyond, we can make a positive difference that will last generations.
We must be good stewards of the natural resources that support Alabama.

Forestry, agriculture, and outdoor recreation are critical economic drivers in Alabama. These sectors have a combined economic impact of more than $80 billion and generate over 700,000 jobs for Alabama workers.

$70.4 billion
Forestry & Agriculture Economic Impact

$3.6 billion
Hunting, Fishing, & Wildlife Watching Economic Impact

$10.4 billion
Other Outdoor Recreation Economic Impact
When plastic pollution enters our environment, it negatively impacts our state’s natural beauty and damages the health and safety of our natural resources.

During the 2019 legislative session, a bill was introduced to end local communities’ authority to exercise their own judgement and limit unsightly and dangerous plastic waste. This bill was defeated because voters and municipalities spoke out against the one-size-fits-all ban that would have taken away their ability to solve local problems in the best way they see fit.
· The average family takes home **1,500 plastic bags per year** and only recycles 1% of those bags.

· Cities spend precious resources **cleaning up plastic litter** that blows out of landfills and washes from streets and parking lots into rivers and lakes, adding to the plastic pollution load in the Gulf of Mexico.

· As part of their stormwater permits from ADEM, cities are required to limit litter pollution in waterways and should have the flexibility to **meet that requirement in the most cost-effective way**.

· Chemicals leaching out of plastic disrupt fetal and childhood development and **increase the risk for certain cancers**.

· Fish eat plastic pollution, transferring it up to the food chain and **impacting fisheries and human health**.

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We oppose any further attempts to prevent local communities from making their own laws to address plastic pollution.

We support communities proactively reducing single-use plastics.

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**ISSUE EXPERTS**

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The Forever Wild Land Trust is a vital program that helps make Alabama’s beautiful outdoor spaces open and accessible to everyone for hunting, fishing, birding, and hiking. First passed in 1992 to permanently conserve public lands in our state, the Forever Wild Land Trust was renewed for another twenty years in 2012 with 75% of the vote.
We oppose any further threats to Forever Wild.

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Cuts to our core agency operations threaten our state’s ability to manage our land and water assets to support public recreation and private sector growth.

For our state lands to remain healthy and accessible now and for future generations of hunters, foresters, and hikers, we must provide appropriate funding for their management and maintenance. We must work to ensure our public lands and forests are not at risk due to urban growth and development, invasive species, and wildfires.

We support a state budget that recognizes the value of the agencies that protect our land and water and gives them the necessary tools to do their jobs.

**ISSUE EXPERTS**

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<th>The Nature Conservancy</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mitch Reid</td>
<td>Stefanie Francisco</td>
<td>Cindy Lowry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director of External Affairs</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:mitchell.reid@tnc.org">mitchell.reid@tnc.org</a></td>
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For many Alabamians, fishing in local rivers is more than a hobby; it’s how they feed their families. Every major river in Alabama has at least one advisory alerting people to potential dangers from consuming the fish they catch because of pollution in that river. Unfortunately, it can be difficult to find information about these advisories and how to safely consume the fish in our rivers and streams.

We support Fishermen’s Right to Know legislation, which would give fishermen easy access to fish consumption advisories through permanent signs, better outreach, information issued along with fishing licenses, and/or signs at discharge pipes.

ISSUE EXPERTS

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Alabama does not have a water management plan, which puts our state at a distinct disadvantage when negotiating with Georgia and Florida for the right to our water resources. Alabama is experiencing more intense rains and deeper droughts, threatening urban, suburban, and rural areas alike with drinking water supply degradation, flooding, infrastructure damage, and crop losses. Four out of five Alabama voters support the creation of a statewide water plan, and state agencies have been working for years on its development. While there is currently a roadmap for the water plan process, it will not protect our resources effectively as written.

Alabama has more than 132,000 miles of rivers and streams, and is one of the most biodiverse states in our country. Alabamians depend on water that is safe for drinking, fishing, and swimming. Water is also essential for the successful production of crops and livestock and is used to manufacture many products.
We support the creation of a strong water plan that protects our water resources and goes beyond simply compiling the existing regulations into one document.

We support a water plan that includes information on how much water should be flowing in our streams and rivers and ensures protection for our water during droughts.

**ISSUE EXPERTS**

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Coal ash is the toxic waste that is left behind when coal is burned. It contains mercury, arsenic, lead, and other contaminants and is extremely hazardous to people and wildlife.

Coal ash is stored in primitive, unlined pits right next to waterways, behind dams that often leak and are susceptible to failure.

Alabama has more than 20 active and inactive coal ash ponds at 9 sites sitting in unlined, leaking pits directly adjacent to our rivers and reservoirs. These pits contain over 100 million cubic yards of coal ash.

At every coal ash pit in Alabama, groundwater contamination has been found.

The data on contamination comes directly from the 2018 Annual Groundwater Monitoring and Corrective Action Report from the relevant utility: Alabama Power Company, Power South, or TVA.
We support legislation that acknowledges the risk that coal ash poses for our environment, our communities, and our economy and requires it be disposed of in a way that protects Alabamians, our water, and our communities.

**ISSUE EXPERTS**

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In parts of our state, the sewer systems have not been adequately expanded or maintained to accommodate recent population growth. In other parts of our state, there are no effective sewer systems, leading to public health crises like the reemergence of hookworm, a parasite thought to be eradicated in the United States. Everyone in Alabama should have access to safe water and sewer facilities.

We support the addition of state funds to the current State Revolving Loan Fund to increase the money available for sewer infrastructure, as well as the creation of a grant program that prioritizes repairs for low-income communities.
In Alabama, numerous barriers exist to promoting solar energy and creating jobs in this growing sector.

We support bills that would allow Alabamians fair access to the solar energy marketplace and would encourage local, renewable energy development in our state.

**ISSUE EXPERTS**

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