



SIERRA CLUB

FOUNDED 1892

CAHABA GROUP GREATER BIRMINGHAM AREA

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AN OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB, THE CAHABA GROUP, GREATER BIRMINGHAM AREA, ALABAMA

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paulperret@e-es.cc

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Dauntless defender of the Environment...
Superhero Paul Perret!!!

Au Revoir, Paul

"OK, I can do the administrative stuff, but don't make me talk to the media." Paul Perret, upon accepting the chairmanship of the Cahaba Group, Jan. 2002.

This month, the Cahaba Group says goodbye to Paul Perret, our chairman for the past 3 years. Paul is not leaving Sierra or even the Cahaba Group, however. He's taking on more responsibilities on the Executive Committee of the state chapter.

I still laugh when I recall Paul's initial reticence to talk to the media. In our naïveté, the ex-comm assumed that only a few written statements from the chairman would be necessary to promote programs and address issues. However, shortly after he took office, Paul agreed that the Cahaba Group had to have a presence at Jefferson County Commission meetings to voice our opposition to the Supersewer.

(Continued on page 2)

General Interest Mtg. January 18th Start the New Year off with something different!

Our January meeting will be held in conjunction with a benefit concert by Falling Mountain recording artist Andrew McKnight, at the Moonlight Music Café in Vestavia Hills. An environmental engineer turned full-time artist, Andrew is known for his rich warm voice and standout acoustic guitar playing. His songs and stories reflect rural America and an environmental consciousness. Andrew lives near the Shenandoah Valley in northern Virginia. Get all the latest news and check out his music at...

www.shenandoahacoustics.com/andrew

Andrew is kicking off his new tour with this concert, so please come, bring your friends and tell your neighbors. **Proceeds benefit the Inner City Outings program, which Andrew has been supporting throughout his recording career.**

Directions: Moonlight Music Café
632 Montgomery Hwy., Vestavia
(near Stein Mart)
meeting: 6:30 p.m. — concert: 7:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$10 in advance through the website

www.moonlightmusiccafe.com

They will also be \$10 at the Sierra Club meeting. Tickets at the door will be \$12. Cash and credit cards only; no checks.

And who knows, maybe the newsletter editor will by a couple rounds of beer. It wouldn't be the first time!



(Continued from page 1)

A Big Stink

You probably don't need a reminder, but the Supersewer was a 7-ft sewer pipe inside a 12-diameter tunnel that was going to criss-cross under the Cahaba River in at least 14 places. The stated purpose of the supersewer was, variously, to fix the problem of "widespread septic tank failures" in the Cahaba Heights/Mtn Brook/Irondale area (later proven to be false) and to facilitate "economic development."

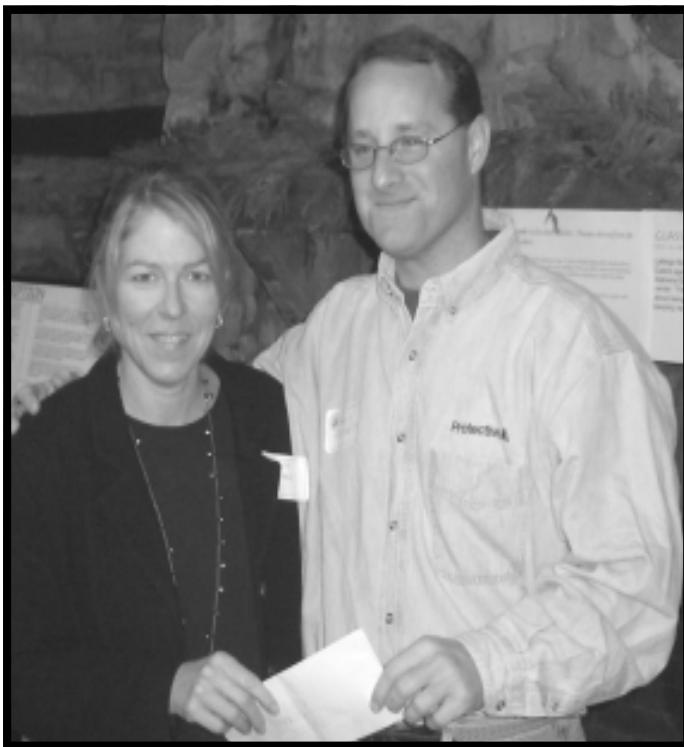
To make a very long story very short, Paul's appearances at County Commission, and his comments to the media helped put the Supersewer story on the front pages and helped stop the project.

Seeing Red

Remember the state's plan to turn the **Red Trail** at Oak Mtn State Park into an **automobile route**? I can't print Paul's initial reaction to that news, but suffice it to say that he took that bull by the horns, too. This time his dog Bear shared top billing with him in media coverage. Now, thanks to the clarion call from the Cahaba Group, not only is the Red Trail still a hiker/biker-only trail, but the State Parks Authority and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources are working with the recently re-grouped Friends of Oak Mtn, with **Beth Johns** as the Cahaba Group representative.

North, East, West, South

During his tenure in office, Paul extended a hand to groups across the state: From the Shoals area to Gulf Shores, from Anniston to Tuscaloosa, Paul lent his support to efforts to save the TVA walking trail, prevent the incineration of chemical weapons, and raise awareness about CAFOs (Concentrated Animal Farming Operations), among other issues. And, yes, these stories made the NEWS.



Beth Johns presents a parting gift to Paul at the December General Interest / Holiday gathering in much deserved recognition of a job well done! Congratulations!!!

Economics and the Environment

As a financial planner, Paul recognizes that most environmental threats are also economic insults to the average taxpayer (or ratepayer). He points to skyrocketing sewer rates as one example of "economic development" that John Q. Citizen cannot afford. Therefore, he often meets with faith-based and civic groups

to share his message: "*No public dollars should be used to promote private development that threatens a public resource.*" In the Birmingham area, some of those public resources include the Cahaba River and many other area streams that are being degraded from sprawling development. We know that Paul takes that philosophy with him to his new post in the Alabama Chapter of Sierra Club and that he'll be doing his level best to promote the state's natural treasures and opportunities for outdoors activities while bird-dogging those projects that would threaten Alabama's environment.

We'll be Watching

I have a feeling that, even if we don't see Paul at every monthly meeting of the Cahaba Group, we will be seeing him around. So, it's not really "Goodbye," Paul. With apologies to the old song, it's more like, "We'll be seeing you in all the old familiar places—in the news!"

Sierra Club's continuing fight to Reform the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM)...Maggie Wade Johnson

Have you made a New Year's resolution to do your part to Save the Earth? If not, here is your chance!

As a member of the Alabama Sierra club, you are a member of the ADEM Reform Coalition, ARC. Congratulations, you have been a big part of the significant changes that are taking place in ADEM, the Alabama Department of Environmental Management. But you can do more!

On October 19, 2004, Jim Warr was fired as the director of ADEM with a 4-3 vote by the Environmental Management Commission (EMC) that oversees the agency. Warr has long been known to remind folks that "managing" the environment was not the same as "protecting" it. Well, the EMC decided that they are ready to see more of our future protected.

There are forces around Alabama that are working hard to keep ADEM as it has too often been, a rubber stamp agency for permitting industry and pollution in the state. As soon as Warr was fired, Alabama Farmers Federation (ALFA) and the Alabama Forestry Association began challenging the qualifications of two of the Environmental Management Commissioners, Scott Phillips and Patrick Byington, who voted to remove him.

These dark forces want to stay in control of ADEM and mean to play as dirty as they must to accomplish this goal. By pursuing their own narrow self-interest, ALFA and its allies are anti-Alabama. They seem to ignore that fact that we are all connected. If you pollute one plot of land or allow chemicals such as PCBs to escape into one water source, you are affecting us all. Pollution does not respect property boundaries.

What has our governor done to help? Remember he proclaimed during his election that he wanted to make big improvements in the state. Governor Riley has the opportunity now to appoint two new commissioners to the EMC who are willing to support improvements. The terms of Dr. Sanders and Mr. Wainwright expired in September. Gov. Riley has done nothing yet, but ARC is keeping the pressure on.

A big reason for ARC's success is the response of people when they are needed to attend meetings, send letters or make phone calls. There will be more opportunity as we press for fundamental reform of ADEM.

What you can do

Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Say you approve of the firing of Jim Warr, that ADEM is broken and needs fundamental reform, and that the new Director of ADEM has a mandate to change the agency so that it will protect the environment and the health of the people of Alabama.

Write Governor Riley and tell him you are disappointed in him because he is taking so long to appoint two new qualified people

to the Environmental Management Commission. This would also be good subject matter for a letter to the editor.

Gov. Bob Riley
State Capitol
600 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

Look for the opportunity to contribute to the Pat Byington Defense Fund. Stay abreast of the current news about ADEM and be ready to respond. If you'd like updates sent to you via email or more information on this topic, please contact Maggie Wade

maggiewade100@hotmail.com

Super Sewer...Keith Johns

Remember the SuperSewer? Well, it could be back if you don't take action PRONTO!

What:

Proposed Jefferson Co. purchase of Birmingham Water Works sewer lines. Sale would result in a river crossing to connect the lines to the Supersewer! No matter what the method of linking the sewer lines to the supersewer tunnel, the result will be the same—sprawling development in the heart of the Cahaba watershed that would profit three large land-owners: Drummond Co., U.S. Steel, and Stonegate Realty. Two connection methods are proposed. Both BAD!!

18-24" tunnel under the Cahaba
16" (or larger) pipe under the old Hwy 280 bridge

When:

Deadline for public comment is Dec. 31, 2004!

Why:

If you don't comment, the County will have a handy excuse to say that the public endorses this idea. Your objections are urgently needed!!

Who:

Send comments to Mr. C.B. Howard at either

cbhoward@esaengineering.com

or to

ESA
3500 Collonade Pkwy
Ste 500
Birmingham, AL 35243

IMPORTANT!!! Copy your letter to both the **Birmingham News** and **Birmingham Post-Herald** if at all possible, and any other media outlets that you can.

Birmingham News:

editor@bhamnews.com
tscarritt@bhamnews.com

Post-Herald:

jwillis@postherald.com
mailbox@postherald.com

NOTE: Do not send attachments to the media. Put your comments into the body of an e-mail.

Senator Shelby Steps up to the plate for Alabama Wild Places!... (E-Mail Forward from Vince Meleski, Program Dir., Wild South and Bama Environmental News)

Usually we are asking you to write comments about some proposal that is negatively effecting National Forests or the environment. Here is an opportunity to write something positive. Senator Richard Shelby has done many good things for the Alabama environment in the last year. The report below from the Bama Environmental News lists the contributions he has made.

On the issues of providing funding for protection, environmental education, and land acquisition, he has done a very good job. Please let him know that you appreciate the good work he is doing. Let him know you are a Wild South member (Sierra Club Member). We need to get some positive feelings from people we frequently don't share similar opinions with. We need to let him know we appreciate good efforts.

Sen. Richard Shelby Secures Environmental Funding - Alabama Republican Senator Richard Shelby plays a vital leadership role in securing federal funding for a myriad of local and state environmental projects and programs. Here are some of the projects that were listed on the Senator's press releases and website <http://shelby.senate.gov/> this past week.

Isabel and Wiley Hill Conservation Education Center - \$450,000 - A joint environmental education program through the Alabama Department of Conservation and the Alabama Wildlife Federation. The monies support AWF's new conservation education center.

Alabama National Forest - \$1.9 Million - Funding to purchase land from willing sellers within the National Forest boundaries, to protect and preserve wildlife and natural resources.

Ruffner Mountain - \$500,000 - Establish a nature center facility and expand educational opportunities.

Cahaba National Wildlife Refuge - \$500,000 - Funding to help expand one of Alabama's newest and ecologically important wildlife refuges.

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge - \$250,000 - Funding to develop a "Wildlife Drive" so visitors can enjoy the 34,000 acre refuge.

Mobile Tensaw Delta - \$1.2 Million - Funding will support the acquisition of 10,000 acres of pristine forest lands in the Mobile Tensaw Delta. This will compliment the already 54,000 acres that have already been secured.

Center for Estuarine Research at the University of South Alabama - \$1 Million - Funding to support the ongoing research activities related to the ecology of coastal lands and landscapes.

Auburn University Mobile Delta Initiative - Funding to establish the Mobile Delta Initiative, which will allow for the development of plans for sustainable use of the Delta for such economically important activities such as eco-tourism and sport fishing.

Cumberland Mountains - \$1.2 Million - These funds will be used to help protect land in the Southern Cumberland Plateau in Jackson and Madison counties.

Please write and Thank Senator Shelby today!

OFFICE OF SEN. RICHARD SHELBY
1800 5th Avenue North
321 Federal Building
Birmingham, Alabama 35203

Day Hike Pisgah Gorge (Rock Hop)

SUN 1/2 * CALL 205-515-5243 (CELL)
OR DAYTIME 205-838-1100

Pisgah Gorge is described by many as the most scenic place in Alabama. It is also a very difficult place to hike. The Gorge is very deep and narrow and is formed by two creeks that originate on the top of Sand Mountain and drop to the Tennessee River over a short distance. The two large waterfalls at the start are very scenic, and foretell of the hike ahead. The ability to scramble over huge boulders is a must. Leader approval is required. Trip Leader, Audrey Alverson Cell 205-515-5243 Day 838-100

ExCom Meeting

MON 1/10 * CALL 205-795-2043

Executive Committee meeting at the Sierra Club SE Office at 6:30 pm. All members welcome and encouraged to attend and participate. Call 205-795-2043.

ICO Team Meeting

TUE 1/11 * CALL 205-970-6500

The ICO team will meet at 6:30 p.m. at Alabama Outdoors. Anyone who is interested in working in natural areas with young people is welcome to attend. We are also (*always*) looking for people interested in helping raise funds for our program, even if they do not wish to go on outings. Please join us at our meeting or contact Margo Rebar at 205-970-6500 or e-mail

mrebar@earthlink.net

Paddle and Overnight on the Blackwater River (2nd Annual)

FRI 1/14 THRU MON 1/18 * CALL 205-481-0004

The Blackwater River (located in the Florida Panhandle) is an ideal winter float. The river has a good current to help make paddling easy, but no rapids, (Class 1 or less) to reduce the likelihood of capsizing. Large sand bars at almost every turn make for excellent campsites and the cool weather and short daylight will make the campfire all that much better. Very good river access points offer a lot of flexibility to allow for late arrivals or early departure for "day trippers".

Participants provide their own boats, gear and camping equipment. (Rental canoes may be an option). Although you will need some warm layers, quick drying clothes (not cotton) and a warm sleeping bag, don't let concerns about cold weather keep you away from this trip. We will have the river pretty much to ourselves. Given the additional requirements of a cool weather, cold water and being an overnight outing, this would not be a good trip for inexperienced paddlers or first time campers without an

experienced partner. Although I have never seen an alligator on numerous trips to this river, pets should be kept under close control, their safety is your responsibility. For the good of all, participants must call trip leader to discuss their experience and equipment prior to joining this outing. Trip leaders Del Kelso 205-481-0004 and Mike Cowan.

delkelso@fastmail.fm

OR

mjcowan@bellsouth.net

Note: This is a joint outing with the Birmingham Canoe Club

Little River Canyon From Falls to Upper 2 hike

SAT 1/22 * CALL 205-854-7090

A strenuous off trail 4 mile hike from Little River Falls to Upper 2 trail. Stream crossings may be necessary. Negotiation of deadfall, briars, and uneven ground necessary. Meet at Cracker Barrel in Trussville at 8 am. Trip leader Jim Temple 205-854-7090.

Newsletter Mailing Party & Potluck

THU 1/27, 6:30 PM * CALL 205-871-1981

Potluck supper at Dick Echols' home, 4032 Montevallo Road. Bring a dish and plan to make new friends and visit old ones. 6:30 pm. Dick Echols, 205-871-1981.

Parking Note: Please park on Glencoe Drive across Montevallo Road from Dick's house. Please do not park in Dick's driveway. This will avoid "driveway accidents."

Walls of Jericho Day Hike

SAT 1/29 * CALL 256-287-1652

This will be the Cahaba Group's 1st visit to "the Walls" in about 20 years. In the 70's, the "Walls" was a premier destination for hikers and nature lovers throughout Alabama and the adjacent states. This changed when a timber company bought a large tract of land that included the "Walls" and restricted access to the area. About 6 months ago Forever Wild bought 12,510 acres of land for public use in North Jackson County that includes the "Walls". This will be a 6+ mile moderate hike on a trail built by Forever Wild. There will be 2 creek crossings, so bring some shoes for wading shoes if you want dry feet. This is one of the more unique areas that we have visited. There will be an optional dinner after the hike. Meet at Golden Rule BBQ on Highway 79 at 8:00 am. Please arrive ready for the trip in that the winter days are short and we will have about a 2+ hour drive to the trail head. Trip leader, Joe Copeland 256-287-1652

Day Hike to Parker Branch and Hubbard Creek in Sipsey Wilderness

SUN 2/6 CALL 854-7090

A strenuous off trail 5 mile out and back hike from 201/202 trailhead to Parker/Hubbard confluence. Stream crossings may be necessary. Negotiation of deadfall, briars, and uneven ground necessary. Meet at Golden Rule BBQ, Hwy 79 at 8 am. Trip leader Jim Temple 854-7090



Camp McDowell Environmental Center, a Treasure for Alabama...Maggie Wade Johnson

Our children are the greatest jewels in the crown of Alabama. They are our future. It is the responsibility of each of us who value our Earth and its resources to educate young people about the environment. Camp McDowell Environmental Center (CMEC), located near Jasper, Alabama, does just this. School groups visit for 3 -5 days to explore and learn.

CMEC's classrooms are the forests, streams and canyons of our 900 acres that adjoin the Bankhead National Forest. The ecosystem is one so unique that it is the home of the first wilderness area designated by the US east of the Mississippi River.

CMEC offers over 20 classes in environmental education. These classes, such as Native Americans and the Earth, Pond and Stream, Forest Critters, Value of a Tree, and Woods Walk, are all taught in the great outdoors. In the Down to Earth class, the children learn about energy and conservation. Alabama's major source of electrical energy is coal and CMEC is in a coal rich area of the state. The students get to see reclaimed mines and learn about alternative sources of energy.

When darkness arrives at CMEC, the fun and learning does not stop. There are evening classes such as Night Hikes, Invention Convention and Big Screen, the astronomy class. Many students from inner city areas have never seen the night sky in all its glory. The exclamations of awe are overwhelming!

The quality CMEC staff is the major reason for its success. They are enthusiastic, experienced teacher naturalists with degrees ranging from Natural Resource Conservation to Biology. They teach children to look at the world in a different way. Instead of videogames and television, CMEC demonstrates to the leaders of tomorrow a hands-on, experiential approach to learning that can alter their perspective of the Earth and the connections we have with it.

To learn more about Camp McDowell Environmental Center or to arrange a visit for a school, please contact Maggie Wade Johnston at 205-387-1806 or by email at

maggie@campmcdowell.com

The Camp McDowell website is;

www.campmcdowell.com

Outings Notes

In the interest of facilitating the logistics of some outings, it is customary that participants make carpooling arrangements. The Sierra Club does not have insurance for carpooling arrangements and assumes no liability for them. Carpooling, ride sharing, or anything similar, is strictly a private arrangement among the participants. Participants assume the risks associated with this travel.

Anyone is welcome on outings, but if you make repeated trips, please join the Club. (See details in this newsletter.) Join us for optional dinner if you'd like. Check difficulty rating and children/age requirements. Questions? Contact trip leader.

National Sierra Club Liability Waiver

In order to participate on one of the Sierra Club's outings, you will need to sign a liability waiver. If you would like to read a copy of the waiver prior to the outing, please see <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/> or call 415-977-5630. **Canoe Trips:** All canoe outings are suitable for beginner/ novice canoeists unless otherwise noted in the trip description. Life jackets are required and must be worn. You are responsible for finding your own canoe. Borrow one, paddle with a friend, or rent from Alabama Outdoors, 870-1919, or another outfitter. Bring your picnic lunch and something to drink while on the water. If you have further questions, please call the trip leader.

Directions to Meeting Places

Birmingham Zoo Auditorium—2630 Cahaba Road, near Botanical Gardens.

Golden Rule BBQ, Hwy 79—Right side of Alabama Hwy. 79 (as you're driving away from Birmingham). Past Tarrant City, just past traffic light at intersection of AL Hwy 79 and Sunhill Road. Before Carson Road intersection, near Jefferson State Community College.

Hayden/Corner Park and Ride—Hayden/Corner exit 284 off I-65 North. Turn right off exit ramp, then first right, then enter parking lot on right.

Jack's, Double Springs—On U.S. Hwy. 278 in Double Springs just east of stoplight at intersection of Hwys 278 and AL 33 and AL 195.

Cracker Barrel, Trussville—I-59 North to exit # 141 (Chalkville Road exit). Turn right at end of exit ramp and look for Cracker Barrel Sign to left.

Cracker Barrel, Pelham—I-65 South, exit #248. (Cahaba Valley Rd) Turn right, Cracker Barrel on right.

Oak Mountain State Park—I-65 South from Birmingham to Hwy 119/Cahaba Valley Road exit.. Right off exit ramp, then left at first traffic light. Follow road 2 miles, then left at stop sign. Go 2 miles past the fee gate, then right onto Terrace Drive. Go to park office parking lot between boat parking and beach parking.

Kmart Parking Lot—corner of Crestwood Blvd and Montclair Road. From I-20 East exit 132B, cross Crestwood Blvd, see Kmart on right.

Ruffner Mountain Nature Center—I-20 to Oporto-Madrid exit. Head away from mall area. Go 1.5 miles, then turn right on Rugby Avenue. Go 1 mile, then turn right on 81st Street South Follow signs to the Center.

Shoney's, Oxford—I-20 East to Oxford exit 185. Left at end of ramp on AL 21. Go under interstate and see Shoney's on right.

Sierra Club S.E. Office—1330 21st Way South, near Five Points South, one block south of Highland Police Station. Turn onto 21st Way S. at Temple Beth-El. Go to end of block to last building on right.

At a Glance – Sierra Club Events – January 2005

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1/2 Day Hike Pisgah Gorge	1/3	1/4	1/5	1/6	1/7 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Paddle / Overnight Campout Blackwater River, FL</div>	1/8
1/9	1/10 ExCom Mtg	1/11 ICO Mtg	1/12	1/13	1/14	1/15
1/16	1/17	1/18	1/19	1/20	1/21	1/22 Day Hike Little River Canyon
1/23	1/24	1/25	1/26	1/27 Newsletter Mail- ing	1/28	1/29 Day Hike Walls of Jericho
1/30	1/31	2/1	2/2	2/3	2/4	2/5
2/6 Day Hike Sipsey Wilderness	2/7	2/8	2/9	2/10	2/11	2/12



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SIERRA CLUB/
CAHABA GROUP
1330 21ST WAY
SOUTH, STE 110
BIRMINGHAM, AL
35205

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contacts and more!!
<http://alabama.sierraclub.org/cahaba.html>

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all for \$25 – Renewals Also Welcome

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Address _____

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Email _____

To join or renew your membership, send coupon with a check for \$25 made out to the Sierra Club. Mail to John Walker, 2833 21st Street, Ensley, Birmingham, AL 35208-2217 or call John at 786-0622.

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