Healthy Watersheds Consortium (HWC)

- Launched in 2015, 6-year partnership, $11 million

- Partnership between:
  - U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities (partnership manager/ program co-funder)
  - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (program co-funder)
  - U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) (program co-funder)

- Goal of the HWC Grant Program: “accelerate strategic protection of healthy, freshwater ecosystems and their watersheds”
Area of Interest – Mobile Bay Watershed

Project Goal

To advance strategic protection of healthy headwater habitats in the Mobile Bay Watershed

- **Partners**: MBNEP, M&N, Alabama Forest Resources Center
- **Key Stakeholders**: Alabama Wildlife Federation

Photo credit: MBNEP
http://www.mobilebaynep.com/the_landscape/watershed_map/
HWC Grant Project Goals

▲ Short-term:
• Develop a *Mobile Basin Habitat Atlas*
• **Conserve 10,000 acres** over 2-year grant period (acquisition, easement, etc.)

▲ Overall:
• Build upon prior successes, watershed assessments and strategic efforts
• Be strategic in conservation rather than opportunistic
HWC Grant Project Goals

▲ Long-term:
  • **Conserve 100,000 acres** via acquisition or easement over the next 5-10 years

▲ Overall:
  • Build upon prior successes, watershed assessments and strategic efforts
  • Be strategic in conservation rather than opportunistic
Data Sources:

- Alabama and Mobile Bay Basin Integrated Assessment of Watershed Health
- Conserving Alabama’s Coastal Habitats: Acquisition and Restoration Priorities of Mobile and Baldwin Counties
- Open Source Databases
- Landscape Conservation Cooperatives
  - Gulf Coastal Plains & Ozarks LCC
Identify:

Hydrologically Connected Catchments
Hydrological Connectivity (HC)

Legend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hydrologic Connectivity Index Scores</th>
<th>0 to 10</th>
<th>10 to 20</th>
<th>20 to 30</th>
<th>30 to 40</th>
<th>40 to 50</th>
<th>50 to 60</th>
<th>60 to 70</th>
<th>70 to 80</th>
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<td>Light Green</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Dark Green</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

High
HC Results
(> 75 index score):

16,714 Catchments
6,492,440.08 Acres
10,144.44 Miles²

Legend

Watershed Connectivity Index Scores

- 75 to 80
- 80 to 85
- 85 to 90
- 90 to 95
- 95 to 100
Identify:

Healthy Habitat Catchments
Habitat Health & Location in AL

Watershed Health Index Score

- 0 to 10
- 10 to 20
- 20 to 30
- 30 to 40
- 40 to 50
- 50 to 60
- 60 to 70
- 70 to 80
- 80 to 90
- 90 to 100

high
Habitat Health \(\geq 50\) & in Alabama 
(HC \(\geq 75\) index score):

7,755 Catchments  
3,062,408 Acres  
4,785 Miles\(^2\)
Priority Headwater Habitats:

Catchments
Priority Headwater Habitats:

Parcels
Priority Parcels
(500 ac +)

~ 800 parcels
totaling over
450,000 ac.
## AFRC Easements Acquired Since Start of Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Property Name</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>2018 Easements</th>
<th>Secondary Objectives</th>
<th>2019 Easements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Post Oak Plantation/ Farm</td>
<td>930.81</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hooks lake/ Phase 1</td>
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<td>Ghost Fleet East</td>
<td>599.26</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ghost Fleet West</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Gusto</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
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<th>Secondary Objectives</th>
<th>2019 Easements</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

**Total Acres Conserved**: 12,062.98
Case Study: Ghost Fleet East Parcel, Baldwin County, AL

- Size: Approximately 600 acres
- Easement acquired in 2018
- High hydrologic connectivity & habitat health
- Adjacent to existing ALFRC and State conserved lands
Summary YEAR 1:

- Compiled parcel and ecological data layers into GIS Database
- Developed a framework & identified priority habitats
- Identified & contacted owners of potential properties for conservation
- Acquired 8 easements in since start of project totaling + 12,000 acres
Next Tasks

▲ Finalize GIS database

▲ Finalize Habitat Atlas Report
Next Tasks

▲ Continue Outreach and Education

▲ Finalize Outreach video

▲ AFRC continue to acquire 100,000 acres for easement
  • Contact willing landholders
  • Educate landholders on easements