



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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An environmental success story: Joes Branch in Baldwin County is removed from the Alabama 303(d) List of Impaired Water Bodies

In Alabama's recently released 2020 List of Impaired Water Bodies, the good news is what's missing: Joes Branch. This tributary to D'Olive Creek was first listed in 2008 for siltation based on a 2007 sediment loading analysis by the Geological Survey of Alabama. It has been officially delisted by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management. The D'Olive Watershed Management Plan, published in 2010, recommended comprehensive stream restoration in Joes Branch to slow sedimentation caused by stormwater runoff and stream bank erosion. These sediments threaten the seagrass beds and fisheries habitats of D'Olive and Mobile bays.

The first recommended restoration project of the Plan repaired a deeply incised tributary to Joes Branch along Highway 31 at Westminster Village in Spanish Fort, using "rock step pools" to slow the energy of stormwater flow. Then the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program secured funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund to undertake comprehensive restoration of impacted streams across the rest of the Watershed, including the Joe's Branch, D'Olive Creek, and Tiawasee Creek subwatersheds: Since the sediment delivered by Joe's Branch represented the greatest loads of any water body ever monitored by the GSA, the first order of business focused restoration efforts on Joe's Branch and its tributaries.

The Joe's Branch restoration effort spanned six years, from 2012 until 2018, with restoration of five discrete stream reaches (totaling 4,000 linear feet) and flood plains (totaling 25 acres) and construction or repair of two detention ponds. Post-restoration monitoring of Joes Branch revealed sediment load reductions by a whopping 90-95%. These data were evaluated by ADEM, who published a [Final Delisting Decision for Joe's Branch](#) in April.

The delisting of an impaired water body by ADEM is recognition of a job done well. The MBNEP and its partners, the cities of Daphne and Spanish Fort, the Baldwin County Commission, ADEM, the Alabama Department of Transportation, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service, celebrate this victory, as we monitor other streams for improvements. The NFWF-funded stream restoration efforts will continue with a Weeks Bay Watershed Management Plan-recommended restoration in the Marlow community of the Lower Fish River Watershed soon.

The 2010 D'Olive Watershed Management Plan, the blueprint for this comprehensive stream restoration effort, is currently being updated, and stakeholder input is extremely important to plan development. Plan to attend a Community Engagement Meeting on July 14 at 5:30 PM at the Daphne City Hall (in person or remotely). To provide input and to stay up-to-date on the latest plan development, please take a brief survey that can be found at this link, <https://bit.ly/DOLiveWMPSurvey1>.

The mission of the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program is to promote the wise stewardship of Alabama's estuaries and coast by using the best available science to measure status and trends, to restore ecosystem functions, build local capacity for environmental management and community resilience, and grow the number of citizen stewards across our coast and beyond.

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