

# Alabama Scenic River Trail – Extension's Key Roles

**J. Thomas Chesnutt**  
**ECDI – Alabama Cooperative Extension System**  
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# Alabama Scenic River Trail



# Leverage: something out of nothing

- Eighteen percent of water in America that flows into an ocean flows through Alabama.

[Alabamaencyclopedia.org](http://Alabamaencyclopedia.org)





# What it is - Originally

- 631 miles in length
- The longest river trail in a single state
- Included stretches of 7 rivers, 2 creeks, and 1 bay
- Passes through or borders 19 of Alabama's 67 counties
- Begins where Coosa River enters Alabama from Georgia and ends at Fort Morgan of "damn the torpedoes and full speed ahead" fame



# What it is - Currently

- Over 4600 miles with sprawling flatwater, to whitewater, through bluff country to river delta and salt water
- Almost 50 rivers and creeks
- It's the closest thing we have to a National Park
- Didn't build it but packaged it for use: established access, campsites, portages, fuel points, guidebooks, and events



# What it is – Coming Soon

Designation as a

## **National River Trails System**



# What it is – Coming Soon

## National River Trails System

- A distinctive national network of exemplary water trails that are cooperatively supported and maintained.
- Established to protect and restore America's rivers, shorelines, and waterways and conserve natural areas along waterways, increase access to outdoor recreation on shorelines and waterways.



# Why it is

- It's a way to reconnect communities with their rivers
- It's a way to bring tourism to life in the forgotten reaches of our rivers



# ASRT Important to Tourism

## Economic Impact of Water Based Recreation Paddling (AL, MS, TN, KY)

- 9% of population
- \$616 million spent on trips
- \$197 million spent on taxes
- 9,571 jobs

2006 “The Active Outdoor Recreation Economy”, conducted study by the Outdoor Industry Foundation ([www.outdoorindustryfoundation.org](http://www.outdoorindustryfoundation.org))



# Background

- The Alabama Scenic River Trail came into existence mainly through the efforts of Anniston Rotarian Fred Couch and friends
- The first meeting was held in January, 2007
- National Recreation Trail status achieved in June 2008—at the same time as the opening



# Obstacles

- 6 dams without locks in upper portion of Trail
- Lack of designated campsites
- Lack of fuel in lower stretches of Trail
- Mixed user type interactions – paddle versus power



# Partners

- Alabama Power Company
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- Alabama Tourism Department
- Ala Dept of Conservation & Natural Resources
- RC&D Councils
- National Park Service
- Alabama Cooperative Extension System
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Boy Scouts of America



# Making it possible

- We worked with Alabama Power to establish portages around their dams



# Making it possible

- We worked with USACE to understand how the locks could be used, and tailored our approach to support their policy
- We are still working with everyone we can to identify campsites and assets along the Trail



# Making it possible

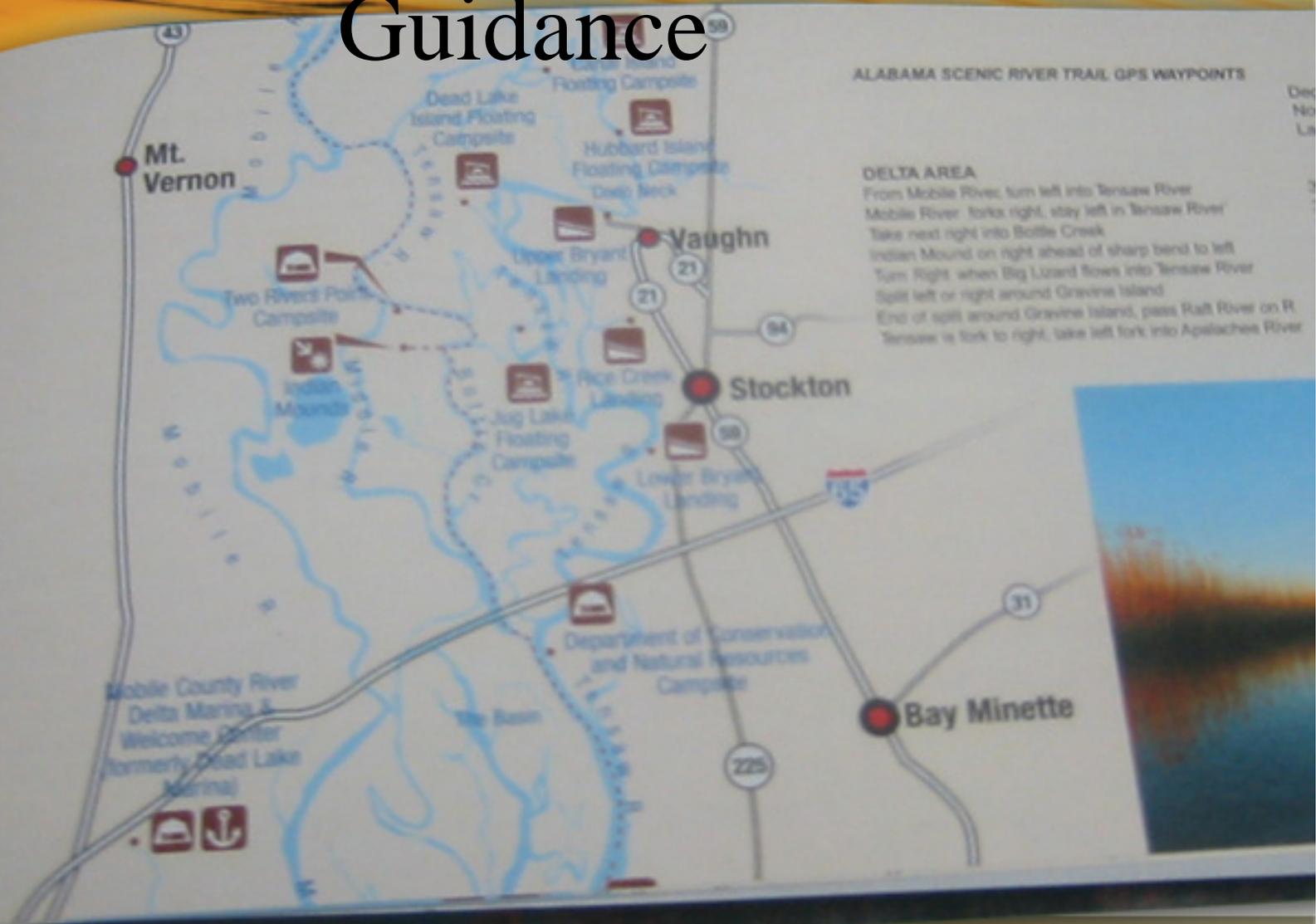
- We didn't just meet—we did it
- We took what we learned and packaged it
- We logged campsites, paddled, visited marinas, took waypoints and invited local officials



# Access via guidebooks



# Guidance



**ALABAMA SCENIC RIVER TRAIL GPS WAYPOINTS**

**DELTA AREA**  
From Mobile River, turn left into Tensaw River  
Mobile River forks right, stay left in Tensaw River  
Take next right into Bottle Creek  
Indian Mound on right ahead of sharp bend to left  
Turn Right when Big Lizard flows into Tensaw River  
Split left or right around Gravine Island  
End of split around Gravine Island, pass Raft River on R  
Tensaw is fork to right, take left fork into Apalachicola River



# Two kinds of access

- Physical—ramps, docks, roads, parking and other improvements
- Mental—maps, guides, descriptions, directions, suggestions
- No point in creating one without the other





**Coffee Slough**

**Lake Guntersville**

**Weiss Lake**

**Weiss Lake**

**Terrapin Creek**

**Cahaba**

**Gees Bend**

**Claiborne**

**Bartram Trail**

**OF THE ALABAMA  
SCENIC RIVER TRAIL**

**Rivers**



# April 2011—Bartram Trail

- Two days
- Visit floating platforms
- Camp at Hubbards Landing



# April 2011—Terrapin



- Three days
- Progressive float



# May 2011—Cahaba Lilies

- Next year, our paddle will coincide with the Lily Festival
- We'll do lower Cahaba if the weather doesn't cooperate



# May 2011—Cahaba Lilies



# May 2011—Cahaba Lilies



# June 2011—Weiss Lake

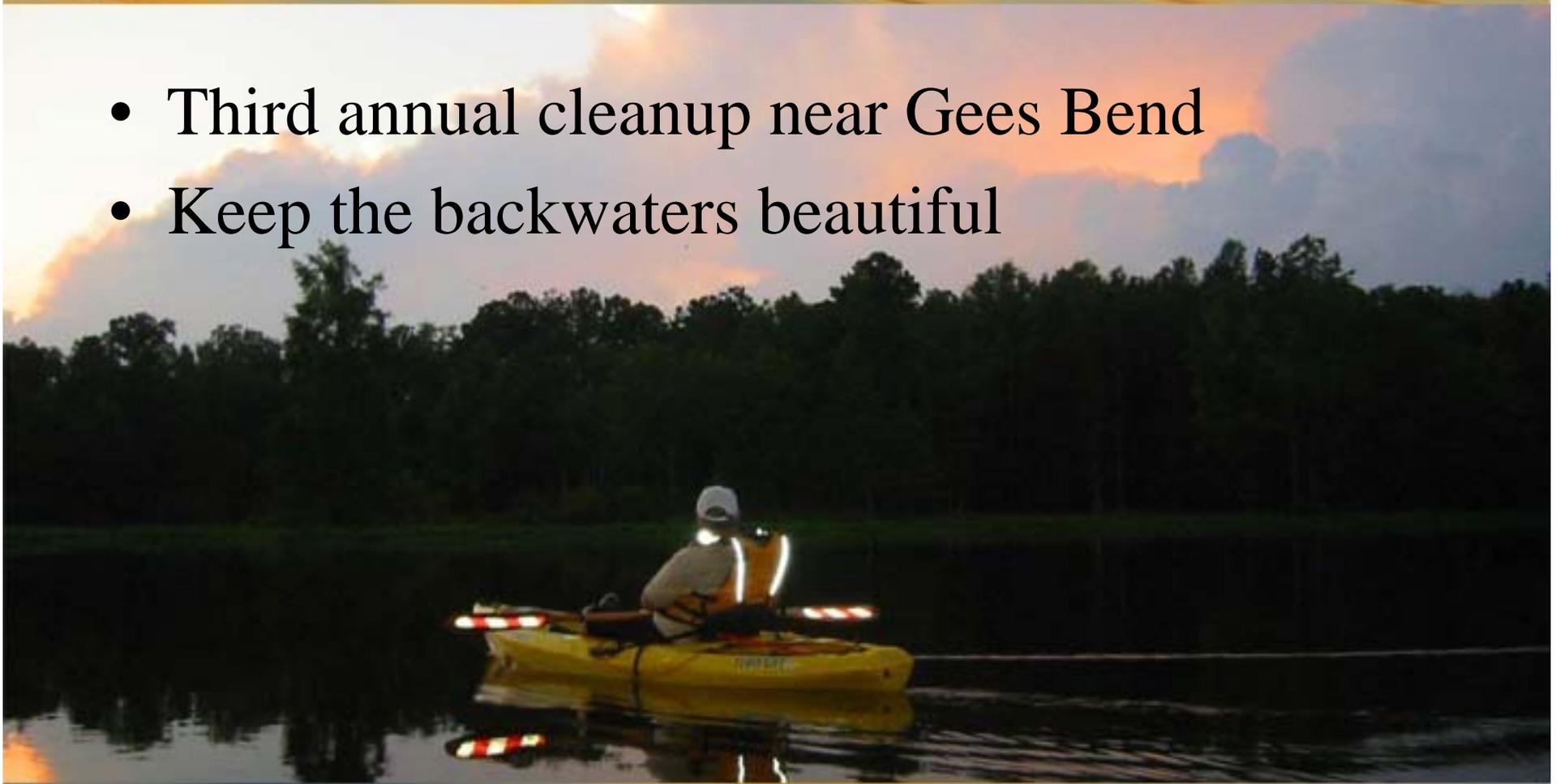


- Three days
- Education and fun



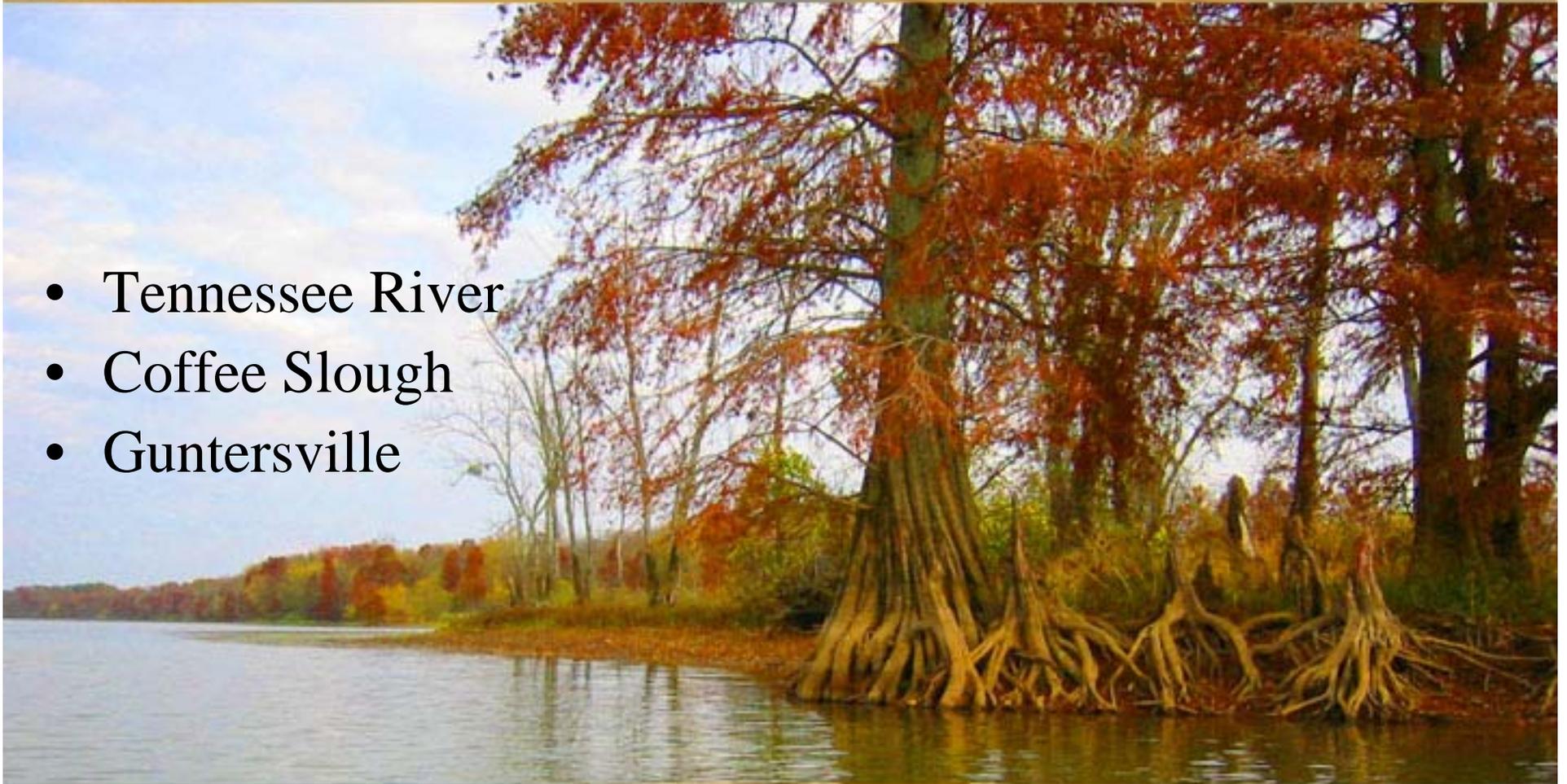
# August 2011—Wilcox

- Third annual cleanup near Gees Bend
- Keep the backwaters beautiful



# September-October 2011

- Tennessee River
- Coffee Slough
- Gunterville



# November 2011—Claiborne

- Naturalist paradise
- Lock through Claiborne Dam
- Camp at Isaac Creek



# November 2011—Claiborne



# November 2011—Claiborne



# Coosa Paddling



# Coosa Whitewater



# Delta



# 2011 Adventure Race



**Terrapin Tri-County**  
**2010 Adventure Race**  
Calhoun · Cherokee · Cleburne Counties of Alabama



# 2011 Adventure Race



- At the confluence of the ASRT, Pinhoti and Chief Ladiga trails
- Paddle, run and bike
- Adventure race



# Trail Achievements

- Salaries in state's 2009-2010-2011 budgets
- Awarded AmeriCorps\*VISTA volunteers
- Grant for two fuel points on the Alabama River
- Worked to help pass Rec Trails Commission and got an appointed seat to the Commission



# Trail Achievements

- Producing the largest paddle events in the state, and bringing them to every corner of the state
- Won the 2009 Governors Award for Tourism in the Alabama Tourism Theme category





# Current Goals

- Developing and focusing on day trips
- Establishing outfitters
- Providing fuel
- Creating campsites
- Education
- New guidebooks



# What's in it for the community?

- Develop assets and access to your river
- Application for grants for improvements
- Develop day and overnight trips
- ASRT promotional engine increases mindshare for your area
- Potential business opportunities
- Potential support



# Extension's Specific Roles

- Member of initial development group
- Membership on task oriented committees
- Developed initial media kits
- Assisted in obtaining grants
- Promotion of ASRT
- Development of spurs
- Involvement of state specialists and county extension coordinators



# Contact Information

J. Thomas Chesnutt

ECDI / Alabama Cooperative Extension System

218 Extension Hall

Auburn University, AL 36849

334-844-3517

[chesnjt@auburn.edu](mailto:chesnjt@auburn.edu)



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