

# Overview of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

## **ADCNR Goals**

The Department's major goal is to promote the statewide stewardship and enjoyment of Alabama's natural resources and to ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy these resources.

Edward Poolos

Deputy Commissioner

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

# Overview of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

- Marine Resources Division
- State Lands Division
- State Parks Division
- Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division

# Marine Resources Division

**Division Director:** **Scott Bannon**

*Offices include the main office on Dauphin Island & the Claude Peteet Mariculture Center (CPMC) in Gulf Shores*

**Oversight of:**

- Saltwater recreational and commercial fishing
- Management and research of marine resources in the saltwater area of Alabama
- Enforcement of regulations related to oystering, crabbing, fishing, gill netting, shrimping, seafood dealers and processors, and restaurants' use of seafood
- The Claude Peteet Mariculture Center, which consists of a 23,000 sq. ft. hatchery facility and 35 ponds that are used for research and production of shrimp and fish
- Represents Alabama on federal fisheries issues on Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council
- Manages the largest artificial reef program in the country
- Shellfish Aquaculture Review Board
- Provides boating access in Coastal Alabama

# State Lands Division

**Division Director:** **Patti Powell McCurdy**

**Oversight of:**

- Management of trust lands owned by certain state agencies, including Education and Mental Health, for purposes of revenue generation through activities such as timber harvesting and various leases for oil and gas exploration, coal mining, farming, hunting, commercial uses, etc.
- Administration of the Forever Wild Land Trust program, including evaluating willing seller tract nominations, implementing decisions of its 15-member Board of Trustees as to tract acquisition, and managing existing tracts for multi-purpose public recreational access and habitat conservation
- Administration of state oil and gas leasing program for benefit of the Alabama Trust Fund and various state agencies including Corrections, Historical Commission and Mental Health
- Implementation of the Land Sales and Leasing Act, which requires specific appraisal, public notice, and bid procedures applicable to most state agencies seeking to sell or lease interests in their land
- Coastal resource management including primary support for state's Natural Resource Damages program, RESTORE Act duties, and NFWF coordination related to the DWH oil spill
- Facilities dedicated to conservation and land stewardship such as 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center, Weeks Bay National Estuarine Reserve, M. Barnett Lawley Field Trial Area, and Wehle Nature Center

# State Parks Division

Division Director: **Greg Lein**

- Created in 1939, Currently 19 parks in 18 counties
- The 19 parks collectively have ~47,000 Acres
- Five resort parks with lodge, restaurant, and meeting facilities (soon to be six)
- Ten Parks with modern cottages or historic cabins
- 18 of the parks have modern campgrounds
- Two parks with cave tours
- 24/7 365 Days a Year
- North AL- Joe Wheeler, Lake Guntersville, Monte Sano, Cathedral Caverns, Desoto, Bucks Pocket, Rickwood Caverns

# State Parks Division

- 2,300 modern campsites
- 220 cabins, cottages and chalets
- 343 Resort Hotel Rooms
- 4 Golf Courses
- 200+ miles of recreational trails
- Thousands of acres of adjacent public waters
- \$30-40 Million program creates a \$700 Million annual Economic Impact
- ~650 employees

# New Gulf State Park Lodge and Conference Center



# New Gulf State Park Lodge and Conference Center

## Highlights

- Hilton Property
- Beachfront location and 6,150 acres of Gulf State Park's pristine coastal ecosystems
- 350 visitor rooms
- 40,000 sq. ft. of event space including 12,160 sq. ft. ballroom with 7,100 sq. ft. terrace
- Gulf-front infinity pool, 24-hour fitness center, 28 mi. of hiking and biking trails, 900-acre freshwater fishing lake

# New Gulf State Park Lodge and Conference Center Project

- Dune Restoration
- Interpretive Center
- Learning Campus
- Trail Enhancements
- Pedestrian Bridges

# Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries Division

Division Director: **Chuck Sykes**

The administrative branch of WFF manages three sections: Enforcement, Fisheries, and Wildlife.

**The Enforcement Section:** Oversees a usual staff of 133 (currently 115) Conservation Enforcement Officers (CEOs) statewide. The section enforces hunting and freshwater fishing laws/regulations as well as laws/regulations regarding commercial use of wildlife resources and the prohibited import/possession of restricted wildlife species. Additionally, the section conducts various wildlife resource educational/outreach efforts, investigates hunting accidents, and assists in emergency disaster relief efforts when needed.

**The Wildlife Section:** Manages the wildlife resources of the State. The Section facilitates public hunting opportunities through its Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and provides public hunting programs like youth dove hunts and the hunting trail for the physically disabled as well as Hunter Education Certification Programs. It also gives private lands resource assistance through a Technical Assistance Group and manages Alabama's Non-game Wildlife Program, focusing on the conservation and restoration of the imperiled species throughout the State. Additionally, the section conducts and works with other entities on numerous wildlife research and survey projects to better manage the State's wildlife resources.

**The Fisheries Section:** Works to protect, conserve and enhance freshwater aquatic wildlife resources, with a focus on fish, mussels, snails, and crayfish. The section includes the Aquatic Biodiversity Culture Center and three sport fish hatcheries. It gives technical assistance to NGOs, federal agencies, and private citizens. It conducts sport fish management in rivers and reservoirs. The Fisheries Section manages contract and in-house research, the State lakes program, the boating access program, habitat enhancement, endangered species conservation and restoration, and non-game protection. It also handles river and stream assessment and provides aquatic education for various public needs. The section participates in state water policy needs on behalf of the Department.

# DCNR FACTS:

- DCNR IS NOT A GENERAL FUND AGENCY
- Operating funds are generated by user-group fees, permits, licenses, etc.
- Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Recreation has a \$3 billion economic impact on our state.
- Parks usage and related activities has a \$400+ million economic impact on our state.
- ALABAMA CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES FOUNDATION  
501(c)3 NON-PROFIT – NO TAX DOLLARS



# Explore Forever Wild

Alabama's Land Acquisition Program

[alabamaforeverwild.com](http://alabamaforeverwild.com)



# Forever Wild Land Trust

- Voted in as Alabama Constitutional Amendment 543 in 1992
- Passed by the highest margin for any state land acquisition program at that time (83%)
- Program Life: 1992-2012 (20 years)
- Program Reauthorized through the passing of Amendment 1 during the Nov. 6<sup>th</sup> 2012 General Election (75%)
- Extends Program Life to 2032



# Forever Wild Land Trust

- No tax dollars
  - All funds are from royalties from oil and gas leases
  - 0.11% of state's budget
- Willing sellers only
  - No powers of eminent domain
- Available for public use



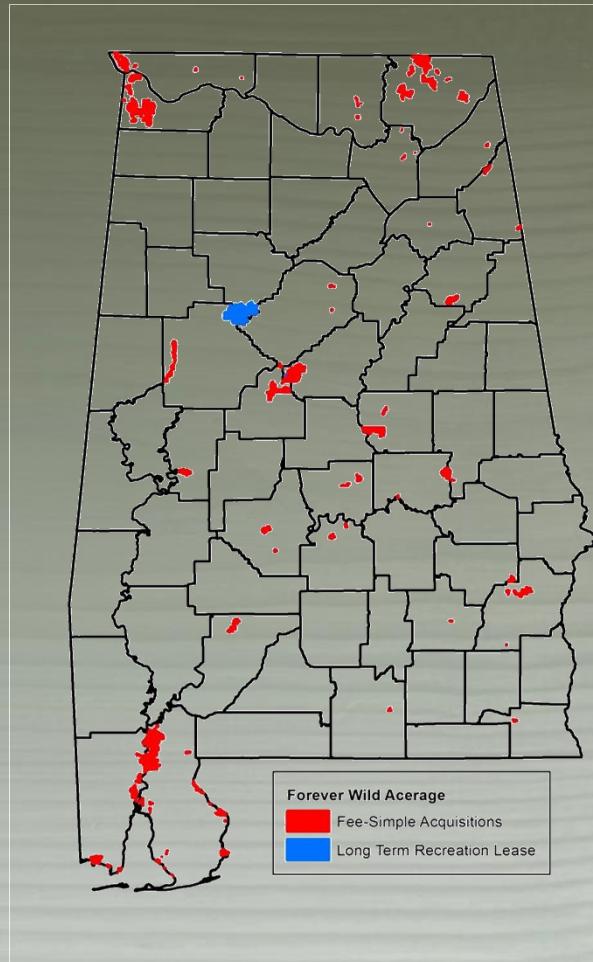
# Forever Wild Land Trust

- State Government program to purchase land for use as:
  - Nature Preserves
  - Recreation Areas
  - State Park Additions
  - Wildlife Management Areas



# Program Summary

- 1992-Present
- 160 tracts acquired
- 30 counties
- 266,000 acres protected
- Equates to 0.8% of AL acreage





# Program Summary

- 227,176 acres or 85% within the Wildlife Management Areas
- 24,331 acres in Nature Preserve/Recreation Areas offer hunting
- 11,805 acres are additions to Historic State Parks and Nature Preserve/Recreation Areas
- 2,715 acres are additions to existing State Parks



# Recreational Trail Stats

<u>Trail Type</u>	<u>Miles-Open</u>	<u>Miles-Planned</u>
Hiking	64	25
Biking	45	56
Horseback Riding	38	
Multi-Use	33	
<u>Canoeing</u>	<u>170</u>	<u>31</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>112</b>



# Turkey Creek Nature Preserve

- Located in Jefferson County near Pinson, AL
- Approximately 510 acres
- Managed cooperatively with the Freshwater Land Trust and Birmingham Southern
- Provides users with educational and recreational opportunities:
  - Hiking, Biking, Fishing,
  - Swimming, Field Trips,
  - Outdoor Environmental Classes
- Turkey Creek is home to three endangered species of fish: the Vermilion Darter (*Etheostoma chermocki*), the Watercress Darter (*Etheostoma nuchale*), and the Rush Darter (*Etheostoma phytophilum*).



# Turkey Creek Nature Preserve



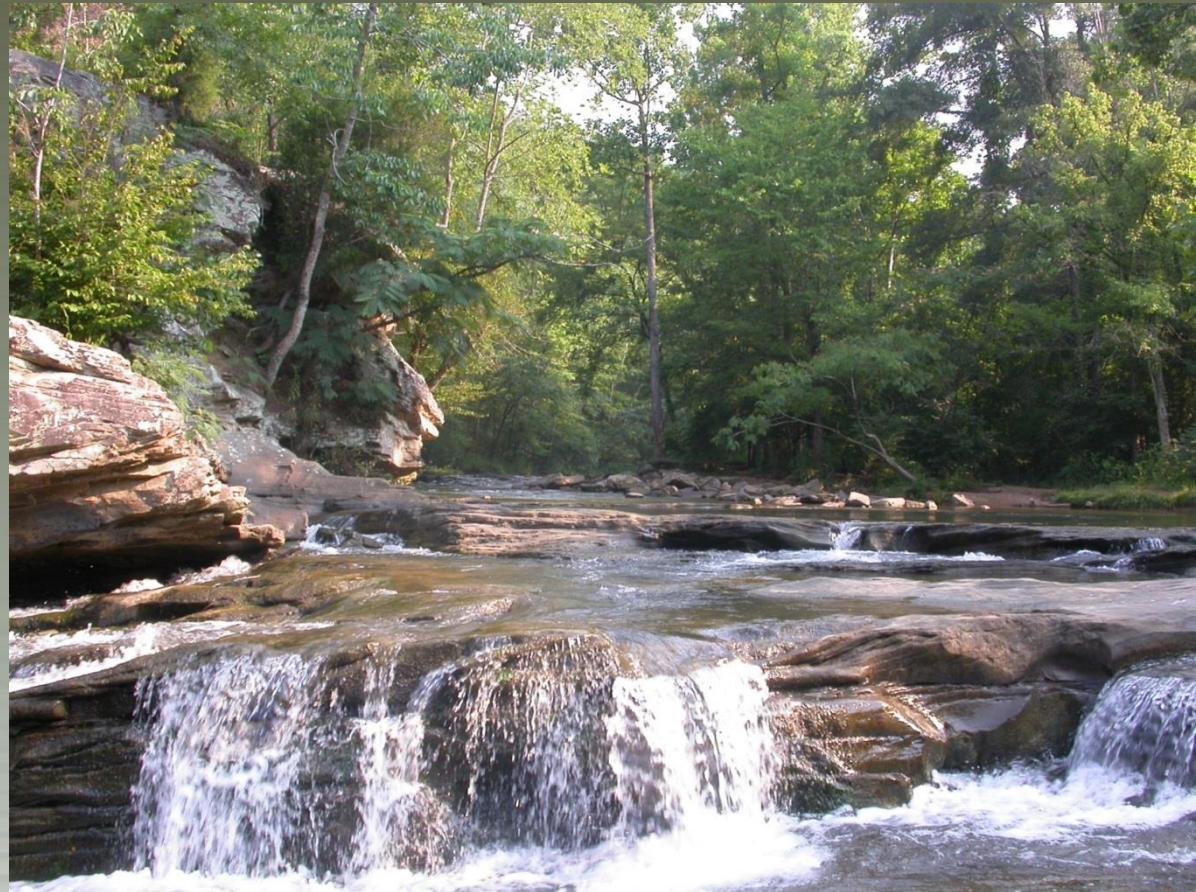
Watercress Darter



Vermillion Darter



Rush Darter



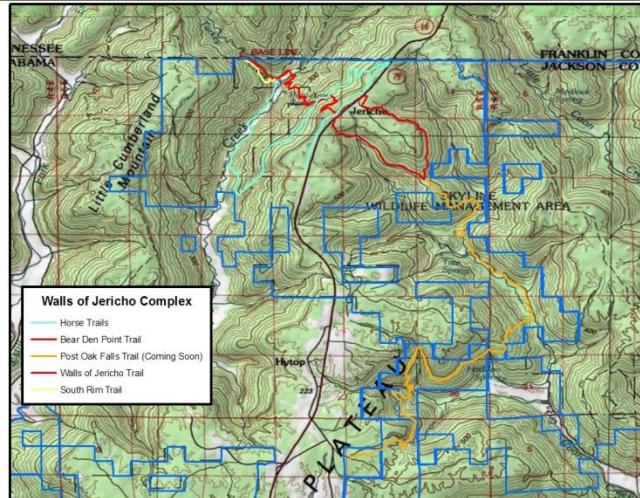


# Walls of Jericho

- Located in Jackson County near Scottsboro, AL
- Over 21,000 acres
- Serves as part of the James D. Martin Skyline WMA
- Managed cooperatively by the State Lands Division and Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division
- Provides users with recreational opportunities:
  - Hunting, Hiking, Horseback Riding, Fishing, Camping, Birdwatching, and Wildlife Viewing
- Offers 10.7 miles of hiking trail and 12 miles of horseback riding trail.



# Walls of Jericho



[alabamaforeverwild.com](http://alabamaforeverwild.com)

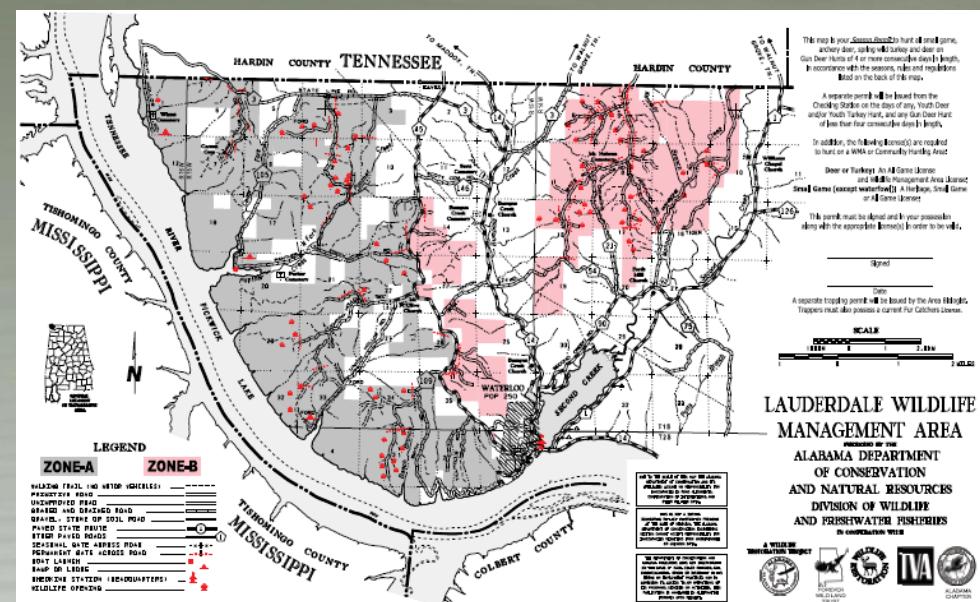
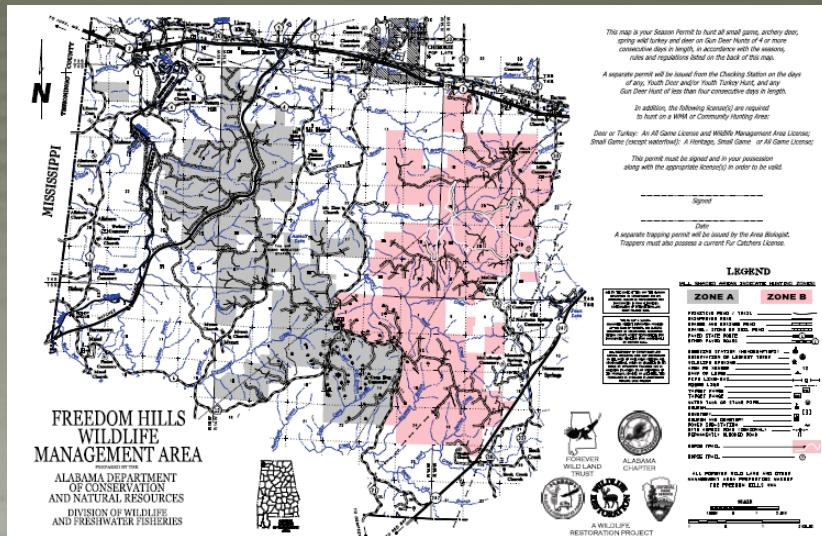


# Lauderdale and Freedom Hills WMA

- Located in Lauderdale and Colbert County
- Approximately 38,000 acres
- Managed cooperatively by the State Lands Division and the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division as a Wildlife Management Area
- Provides users with recreational opportunities: Hunting, Hiking, Horseback Riding, Fishing, Camping, Birdwatching
- 14 miles of trail



# Lauderdale and Freedom Hills WMA



[alabamaforeverwild.com](http://alabamaforeverwild.com)



# Shoal Creek Nature Preserve

- Located in Lauderdale County near Florence, AL
- Approximately 298 acres
- Serves as a nature preserve and recreation area
- Provides users with recreational opportunities: Hunting, Hiking, Fishing, Camping, Birdwatching, Biking
- Provides 4.3 mile of hiking/biking trail and 2 miles of horseback riding trail



# Shoal Creek Nature Preserve



[alabamaforeverwild.com](http://alabamaforeverwild.com)

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# Chronic Wasting Disease





# What is CWD?

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- CWD is one of a family of diseases known as **Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSE)**.
- Results from an infectious agent termed a **prion**. Prions are made of protein material that becomes misfolded in such a way that it becomes infectious, negatively affecting other proteins.
- Affects members of the Family **Cervidae** (deer), including reindeer, moose, elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer etc. Is contagious and always fatal.
- Infection can occur through animal-to-animal contact, through saliva, blood, semen, feces, infected carcass parts, and through environments contaminated by those infected materials.
- There is no known vaccine to prevent it or avenue to cure it at this time.



# CWD Clinical Symptoms

- **Emaciation**
- **Abnormal Behavior**
- **Poor Coordination**
- **Excessive Drooling,  
Drinking & Urination**
- **Decreased Wariness**
- **Drooping Posture**





# Sources of Exposure

**Two primary sources:**

**1. CWD-Infected Deer**

- **Direct animal contact with an infected deer (alive or carcass) will likely be the initial source of contamination.**



**2. CWD-Infected Environment**

- **As CWD becomes established in an area, the contaminated environment may become the primary route to exposure.**
- **No known methods of mitigating this risk once an area has been contaminated**



# Human Health Concerns

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- **To date, there have been no reported cases of CWD infection in people.**
- **Current research indicates there is a strong species barrier that prevents CWD from being readily transmitted to other animals, but there remains uncertainty.**
- **In areas where CWD is known to be present, Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that hunters strongly consider having those animals tested before eating the meat and not consume any meat from a CWD-positive deer.**

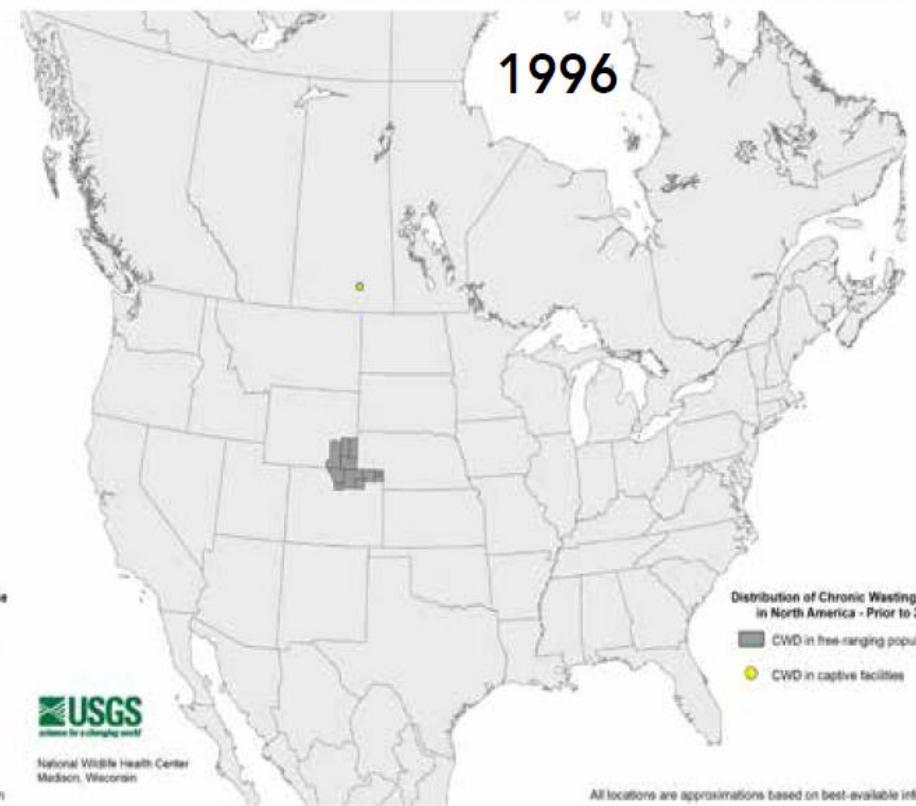


# CWD Occurrence Expansion

CWD emerges in captive mule deer at a research facility in Ft. Collins, CO



CWD detected in game farm elk in SK; confirmed in wildlife in CO, WY

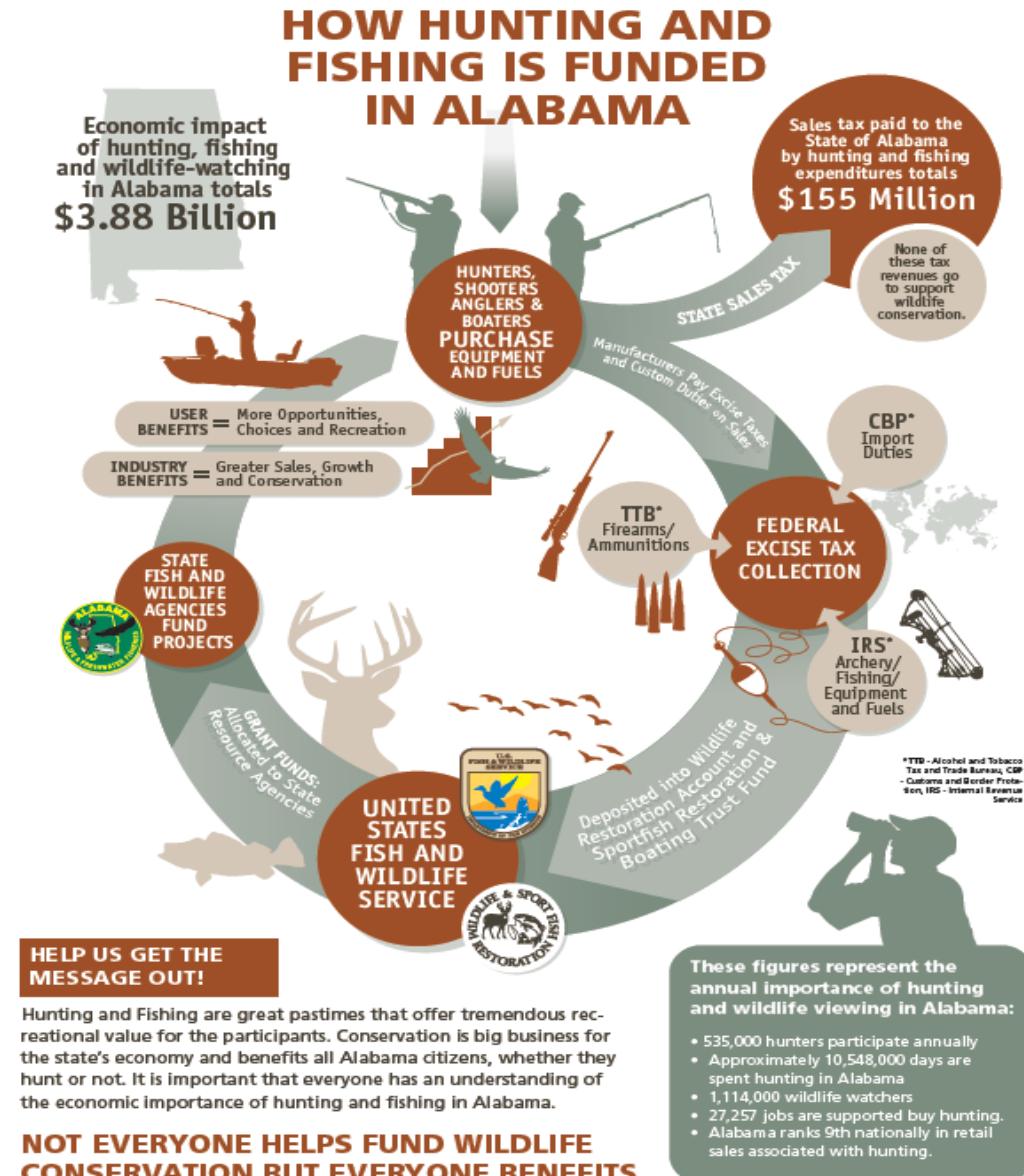






# Potential Impacts of CWD Detection

- Reduced sales of hunting licenses and hunter participation in the infected areas
- Economic Impacts
  - Rural Vendors
  - Land Lease Values
  - Cultural Shift





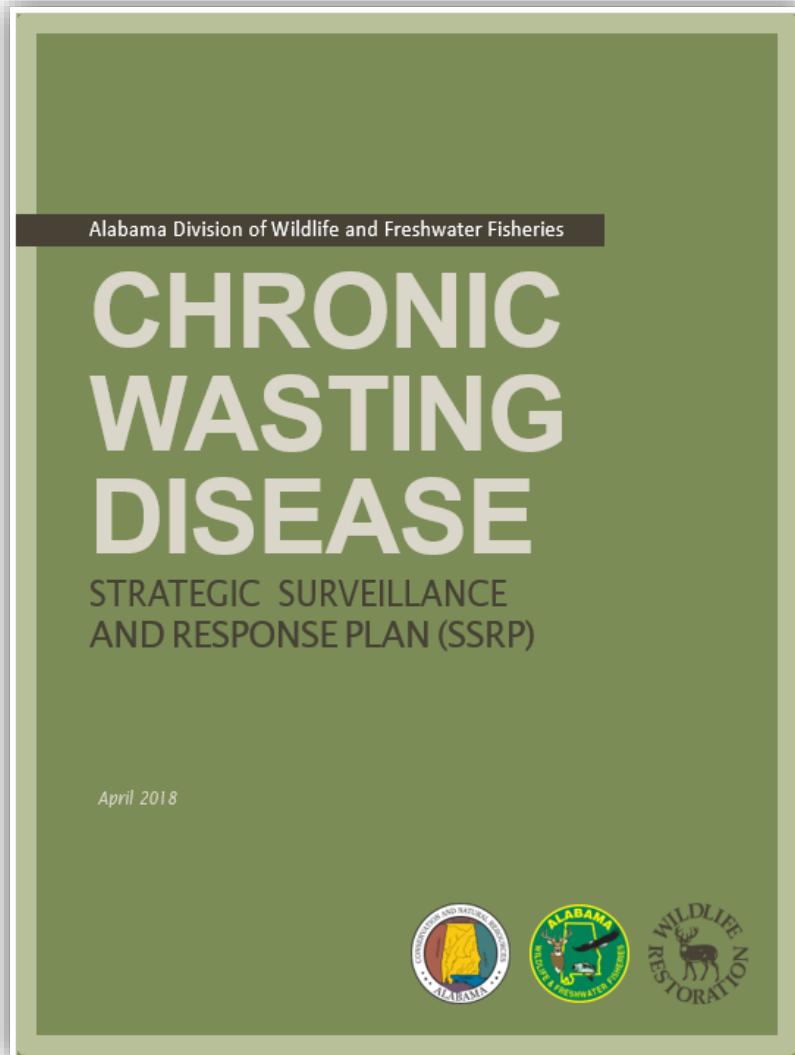
# Laws and Regulatory Actions

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- Movement of live cervids, whole carcasses, and high-risk body parts (e.g., brain, spinal cord, neurological tissues) from infected areas is a well-documented cause of accelerated spread of CWD into uninfected populations.
- DCNR continuously evaluates and takes measures to lessen the likelihood of CWD reaching Alabama by implementing regulatory measures.
  - Ala. Admin. Code Rule 220-2-25 - **Imported Game Birds, Game Animals, and Raw Furs Subject to State Law**
  - Ala. Admin. Code Rule 220-2-26 - **Restrictions on Possession, Sale, Importation and/or release of Certain Animals and Fish**
  - Ala. Admin. Code Rule 220-2-138 - **Licensed Game Breeders**
  - Ala. Admin. Code Rule 220-2-156 - **Release of Captive Raised Cervids**
  - Ala. Admin. Code Rule 220-2-157 - **Definition of Area Regulation.**



# ADCNR Chronic Wasting Disease Strategic Surveillance and Response Plan (SSRP)



- Developed by our staff in 2012 and updated in 2018. Our staff has a tremendous network of professionals who provide updated scientific, regulatory, and policy information to aid in our decisions while crafting the SSRP.
- Environmental Impacts
  - Landfills
  - Incinerators
  - On-site Burial



# How Can You Help?

- Report any suspicious activity concerning live deer transport, carcass importation, or sick or abnormally acting deer
- Contact WFF at:
  - (334)242-3469 M-F 8a.m.-5p.m.
  - after hours 1-800-272-GAME (4263)
  - Email –

**[DCNR.SickDeerReport@dcnr.alabama.gov](mailto:DCNR.SickDeerReport@dcnr.alabama.gov)**



## CONTACT INFORMATION

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