



Alabama Aquatic Biodiversity Center recognized by regional peers

Center given 2020 SEAFWA Directors' Special Recognition Award

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. - Oct. 28, 2020 – The Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA) bestowed a Special Recognition Award upon the Alabama Aquatic Biodiversity Center (AABC) during their 74th annual meeting, held virtually Oct. 26-28. AABC is the largest state non-game recovery program of its kind in the nation. Its mission is to promote the conservation and restoration of rare freshwater species in Alabama waters and, in turn, restore cleaner water in the state's waterways.

“Many species of mollusks, like the spiny river snail, are either extinct or missing from state waters,” SEAFWA President Paul Johansen said. “While most of the public may be unaware of the importance of such species, the AABC works tirelessly to restore them and ensure clean water for generations to come.”

Alabama has the greatest number of freshwater species of mollusks and fish in the U.S. However, over the past 80 years, the state has lost more than 67 species to extinction, and more than 54 species have been listed as threatened or endangered. AABC targets Mobile River Basin species, the most endangered groups in the state.

The AABC is located near the City of Marion in rural Perry County, Alabama. The Center is a complex that sits on 36 acres of property near the Cahaba River and adjacent to the Marion State Fish Hatchery. Five full-time employees are currently employed at the AABC. The Program Supervisor is Dr. Paul Johnson, former Director of the Tennessee Aquarium Research Institute, who joined the program in October 2005.

“Aquatic habitat and species recovery go hand-in-hand with Alabama’s water quality,” said Chris Blankenship, ADCNR Commissioner. “The work that Dr. Paul Johnson and his staff at the AABC are doing is helping to improve the quality of life for all Alabamians. We are very proud of their efforts.”

The Association’s special recognition awards are bestowed upon individuals, groups, or programs who, in the state agency directors’ opinions, have served the association and made outstanding contributions toward wildlife and fisheries conservation, outdoor recreational engagement, and the natural resources professional community.

The Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA) is an organization whose members are the state agencies with primary responsibility for management and protection of the fish and wildlife resources in 15 states, Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands. Member states are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.