

WASHINGTON – The House Committee on Resources’ Subcommittee on Fisheries and Oceans today held a hearing on Congressman Spencer Bachus’ proposal to expand the Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge by 3,600 acres.

Congressman Bachus testified at the hearing along with Chris Oberholster, Director of Conservation Program for The Nature Conservancy of Alabama. Also testifying were Bill Hartwig, Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and Michael Woodbridge, Assistant Director of Government Affairs for the National Wildlife Refuge Association.

A summation of Congressman Bachus’ testimony is as follows:

“As we study the diversity of the Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge, we are becoming more and more aware of the uniqueness of the land located within the refuge.

“First, it is located at the intersection of three geographic regions: the Upper Coastal Plain, the Cumberland Plateau and the Ridge and Valley. Second, it is in one of the most pristine, remote areas of the Southeast. Third, it is located on the Cahaba, a river with 131 aquatic species - more than any other river in the continental United States.

The river was never damned and flows over the fall line.

Also, the vegetation, unlike most in Alabama, includes large tracts of longleaf pines and hardwoods.

Finally, the soil is exceptionally pure Ketona dolomite with high concentrates of magnesium.

This factor alone attracts five breeding populations of declining Neotropical migratory birds.

“This bill will double the number of protected acres of the Cahaba, all of which will be purchased from willing sellers. Including the land upstream from the original refuge will add to the buffer zone needed to preserve this critical habitat and watershed.

“This proposal provides the fastest route for bringing protection to the pristine acreage currently outside the bounds of the Cahaba Refuge in the shortest amount of time.

“In 2000, I introduced legislation that created the Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge. Through the expedited attentions of the Resources Committee, that bill passed and was signed into law. |

I am hopeful this proposal will enjoy the same consideration and the dream of doubling the size of the Cahaba Refuge will soon be reality.”

###