

BIRMINGHAM – U.S. Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-AL) today announced that a \$682,000 federal grant will help establish a nature preserve in the Turkey Creek watershed in the Pinson Valley community in north Jefferson County.

The grant, awarded from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will be used to purchase 175 acres of the proposed 630 acres of the preserve.

"Conservationists and biologists agree the Turkey Creek watershed is an outstanding example of the rich biological diversity found only in Alabama. The nature preserve will not only help protect the remarkable array of species that live in the Turkey Creek watershed, it will also provide readily accessible educational and recreational opportunities for the public," said Bachus.

Bachus contacted the Fish and Wildlife Service last December expressing his support for the grant funds.

"Commissioner Bettye Fine Collins has been a leader in efforts to protect Turkey Creek, and I commend her for her work. She played a key role in securing this important grant," Bachus said. "In 1999, Commissioner Collins formed the Turkey Creek Watershed Development Committee to advance conservation efforts within the watershed."

Jefferson County Commissioner Bettye Fine Collins said, "We are so very grateful that our grant application for the Turkey Creek Watershed Conservation project has been approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We appreciate so much the efforts of Congressman Bachus on behalf of this project. This grant of \$682,000 will enable us to acquire more land to protect the endangered species, such as the Vermillion Darter."

Wendy Allen, the Executive Director of the Black Warrior-Cahaba Rivers Land Trust, said, "This grant will greatly advance the work of the multiple partners who have strived for many years to establish the Turkey Creek Nature Preserve. The Turkey Creek watershed is steeped in history, rich with biological diversity and blessed with scenic beauty. Funding from this national grant program proves what we have known locally for years, the Turkey Creek is a very special place."

The Turkey Creek watershed contains two fish species listed as endangered by the Fish and Wildlife Service – the Vermillion Darter and the Watercress Darter. A third fish species, the Rush Darter, is being considered for listing.

"It's amazing that the habitat for such rare species of fish is literally in our backyards," said Bachus.