

WASHINGTON - The House of Representatives passed legislation Wednesday night that includes an additional \$3 million requested by U.S. Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-AL) to purchase land in the Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge in Bibb County.

"This wildlife refuge will help us preserve this beautiful place for ourselves, our children and our children's children," said Bachus. "The refuge will safeguard the area's fragile beauty, but also allow managed access for the public. We want thousands of families, wildlife watchers, recreationists and students to come here each year - because we can't save the Cahaba unless more people know about it and come to love it. It is here for us to enjoy - responsibly."

In October 2000, legislation that Bachus introduced to create the Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge was signed into law. Last year, he secured \$2.5 million for initial purchases of property that are part of the 3,500 acre refuge.

When completed, the refuge will allow for public access for hiking, canoeing and nature education to areas that are currently closed to the public because they are on private land. The refuge will include an education center where students and the general public can learn about the Cahaba's unique environmental diversity, said Bachus.

The Cahaba River is the longest free-flowing river in Alabama and is recognized nationally for its biodiversity. It is home to 64 rare species of plants and animals, 131 species of fish and harbors the largest population in the world of the shoals lily, known locally as the Cahaba Lily.

The area of the river within the wildlife refuge contains the greatest concentration of fish diversity of any river of its size in North America. The 3 ½ -mile stretch of the Cahaba boasts more freshwater fish than the entire state of California and has been identified by Nature Conservancy scientists as the place with the highest concentration of biological diversity in the Cahaba River.