



Coosa Riverkeeper President Doug Morrison, Riverkeeper Frank Chitwood and Executive Director Justin Overton at the former site of Goodwin's Mill Dam

# Welcome New Directors!

Meet the newest members of Coosa Riverkeeper's Board of Directors!



This is Chef Chris Harrigan. Chris is the owner and chef of [Stone's Throw Bar & Grill](#), a casual upscale restaurant in the Town of Mt. Laurel. Chris and his wife Leah run Stone's Throw with a passion for local, organic produce and fresh, high-quality foods and beverages.

Chris hosts Cheers to the Coosa benefit dinners for Coosa Riverkeeper at his restaurant. This year he will host a wild game and foraged edibles dinner on March 6th and a fall harvest dinner on November 6th. **Welcome Chris!**

This is Josh Tidwell. Josh owns and operates [Big Wills Outfitters](#), a canoe and kayak rental and shuttle business that takes thousands of people paddling on Big Wills Creek each year. Big Wills Outfitters is located near Gadsden. The creek flows into Lake Neely Henry.

Josh and Big Wills Outfitters are also a major sponsor of the [Coosa Canoe & Kayak Fishing Tournament](#) and will be one of the hosts at the Neely Henry Open this year. Josh is also an impressive fisherman. **Last year Josh won the 2013 Blackjack Lands Angler of the Year** in the Coosa Canoe & Kayak Fishing Tournament. **Welcome Josh!**





# BIG CANOE CREEK IS FREE AT LAST!

For the first time in 130 years Big Canoe Creek, a Coosa River tributary that empties into Lake Neely Henry, is flowing freely. In November 2013, Coosa Riverkeeper and other river conservationists removed Goodwin's Mill Dam, the only dam on Big Canoe Creek.

**"Big Canoe Creek is one of the hotspots of biodiversity in the state"** says U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service expert Eric Spadgenske.

Goodwin's Mill Dam, however, was detrimental to that biodiversity because it blocked fish passage and created a pool of water behind that dam where most of the fish, mussels and snails found in the creek could not thrive. Removing it restored connectivity and habitat.

**Goodwin's Mill Dam was constructed in the 1880s.** It was used as a grist mill by local farmers as far away as Argo to grind corn into meal and wheat into flour. It was abandoned in the 1940s and fell into disrepair over the next six decades. All in all, Goodwin's Mill stood on Big Canoe Creek for around 130 years, a long time in contrast to its swift removal in November 2013.

"In a matter of what really was hours," Paul Freeman, an aquatic ecologist with The Nature Conservancy says, "the dam was deconstructed and **the stream is now flowing through it's natural path with no impediments.**" Big Canoe Creek will improve over the coming years as it returns to its natural state.



A photo of workers rebuilding Goodwin's Mill Dam, likely from the 1920s

## NATIVE SPECIES OF FISH

29

Downstream  
of Dam

16

Upstream  
of Dam



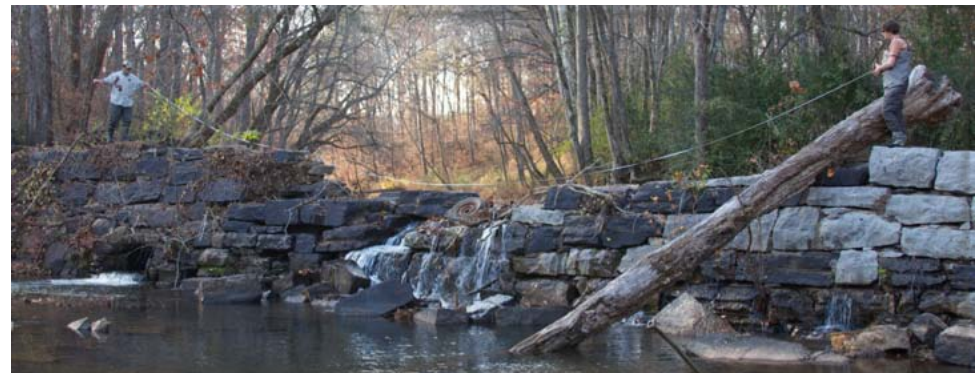
A variety of sunfish collected while sampling of the fish community.

**Fish and mussel surveys showed that removing the dam would benefit the stream.** It would also halt erosion to the landowner's property caused by a breach in the side of the dam. Lastly, it would improve the quality and safety of Big Canoe Creek for recreational paddlers.

On a May 15, 2013 survey, **biologists found 29 native species of fish just downstream of Goodwin's Mill.** Upstream of the dam however, only 16 native species of fish were found. That's because the darters, sunfish and redeye bass in Big Canoe Creek like shallow, flowing water. The same goes for mussels and snails.

Big Canoe Creek is considered Critical Habitat for several federally listed mussels like the southern pocketbook and triangular kidneyshell. **Removing Goodwin's Mill is one step in the right direction to save these threatened and endangered species from extinction.**

"We expect water quality levels to be much better upstream, dissolved oxygen levels are going to be good, and temperatures are going to be better" says Jeff Powell, an aquatic biologist for U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.



Taking measurements of the dam during the planning phase of removal.



# TEARING DOWN A DAM(N) WALL

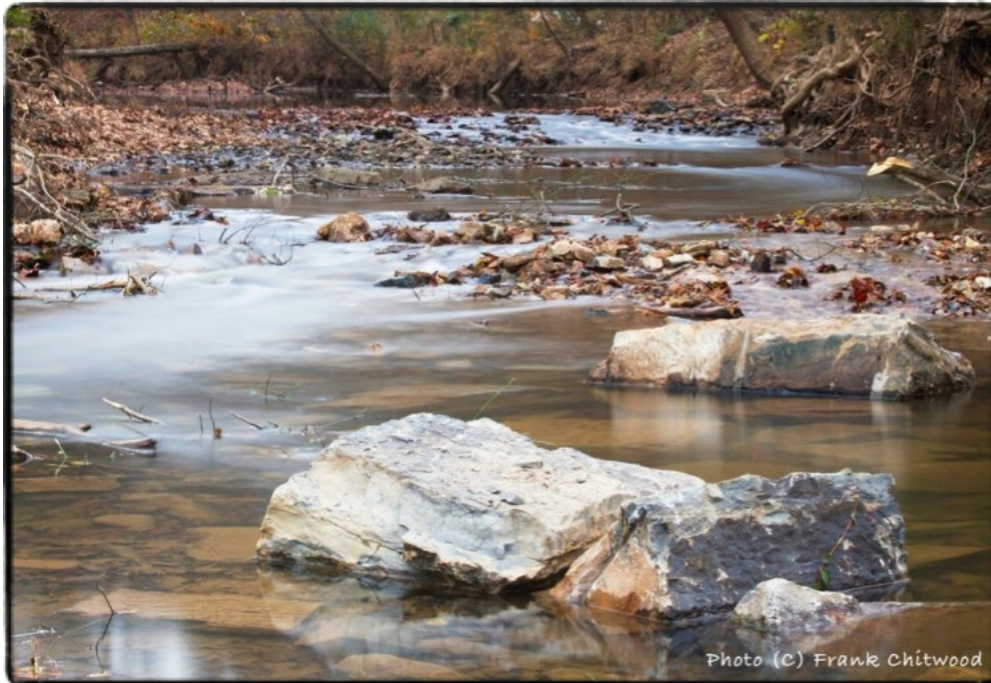
A high level of partnership and collaboration made this project a success in record time. Partners include [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service](#), [The Nature Conservancy](#), [Coosa Riverkeeper](#), [The Friends of Big Canoe Creek](#), [Geological Survey of Alabama](#), [Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources](#) and [Alabama Power](#).

A TYPICAL DAM REMOVAL OF THIS SIZE TAKES THREE YEARS START TO FINISH.

IT TOOK US 12 MONTHS!



*An excavator operated by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service removes stones from the dam and uses them to restore stream bank*



*Photo (c) Frank Chitwood*

*Big Canoe Creek flowing freely for the first time in 130 years!*

On the morning of November 18, 2013, project partners arrived on the scene near Springville and immediately began work. Within three days, the dam was deconstructed and the stream engineered to heal itself to its natural state in the coming decades.

On February 1st 2014, 16 volunteers joined us to plant 250 trees and eradicate privet on the banks of the creek!

A short video titled "[Goodwin's Mill Dam Removal](#)" posted to our YouTube account shows the full story! Go check it out!

Paul Freeman of The Nature Conservancy holds a piece of the grist stone from the dam.





# It Takes You!

The Goodwin's Mill Dam removal was only possible thanks to the hard work of a LOT of people. We want to thank everyone who helped! Here's some group photos of the team! If you'd like to volunteer with us please e-mail us at [volunteer@coosariver.org](mailto:volunteer@coosariver.org)!



The Dam Removal Team is all smiles at the end of three days of work!



The Tree Planting Team in February planted 250 trees in an hour!

## Become a member of **COOSA RIVERKEEPER** today!

using this form or online at [coosariver.org](http://coosariver.org)

**Select a level of membership that matches your commitment:**  
*Your membership is 100% tax-deductible*

- ☐ **\$10-Coldwater Darter:** a vulnerable fish that is found only in the Coosa.
- ☐ **\$25-Blue Shiner:** a threatened fish found on the Little River, Choccolocco and Weogufka Creeks of the Coosa.
- ☐ **\$50-Pygmy Sculpin:** a threatened fish found only in Coldwater Spring.
- ☐ **\$100: Lacy Elimia:** a threatened snail found only in the Cheaha, Emauhee and Wewoka Creeks of the Coosa.
- ☐ **\$250: Southern Clubshell:** an endangered mussel found in the Coosa, Cahaba and Tallapoosa Rivers.
- ☐ **\$500: Green Pitcher Plant:** a critically endangered, carnivorous plant found mostly in Alabama near the Coosa.
- ☐ **\$1,000: Coosa River Spotted Bass:** hands down the meanest fighting bass in the nation.
- ☐ **Other Amount:** \$\_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ **I Can Contribute Goods or Services:** \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ **I'd Like to Volunteer**

### Tell Us About Yourself:

Your name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Your e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Your address: \_\_\_\_\_

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