



## State Highlights in Conservation: Alabama

### Profile of State Program(s)

#### **Alabama Forever Wild Land Trust Program:**

Voters established the Forever Wild program in 1992 and reauthorized it in 2012. The program has purchased lands for general recreation, nature preserves, additions to wildlife management areas and state parks. To date, the program has secured more than 248,000 acres of land in Alabama for public use, including more than 186,000 in permanent ownership. The remainder of the land is long-term recreational lease. Forever Wild lands are managed by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources through the State Lands, State Parks, and Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries divisions.

### Substantial State Investment

Beginning in 1992, funding for the purchase of land for conservation, recreation, and wildlife management has come from the Forever Wild Land Trust program. Funding is generated by the interest earned from offshore natural gas royalties, which are deposited into the Alabama Trust Fund. The Forever Wild Land trust receives 10 percent of this interest, with a maximum of \$15 million per year. The Forever Wild Land Trust was established by a voter-approved constitutional amendment in 1992 with 84 percent support. In 2012, voters extended the constitutional amendment to fund the program for another 20 years, through 2032, with 75 percent support. In November 2016, Alabama voters approved a constitutional amendment with nearly 80 percent support to prohibit reallocating state park funds for other uses. This came in response to allocations from the state parks budget to the general fund, which resulted in the close of five state parks and limited hours at other parks. About 87

percent of the state parks budget comes from guest fees. Alabama voters approved a bond measure in 1998 to authorize the issuance of \$110 million in bonds for state park maintenance.

### Local Financing Enabled

Land acquisition by counties and municipalities is generally accomplished through capital improvement budgets with money allocated from the general fund. While the Alabama Constitution imposes limitations on local taxes, creating a dedicated funding source through sales taxes, property taxes, and/or general obligation bonds is possible. Municipalities and counties have the authority to issue bonds for land acquisition including land for parks. Governing bodies of municipalities and counties have the discretion to hold an election for the approval of a bond measure, so a public vote is not necessarily required. Counties and municipalities do not need state legislative approval to issue general obligation bonds if they have sufficient revenue to pay the debt service and their property tax rates are within the established limits. If the jurisdiction does not have sufficient revenue to pay the debt service, then it could look to increase the sales tax or property tax. Though no specific instances of bonds for land acquisition could be found, more and more cities have been creating parks for open space and recreation, likely through capital improvement budgets.

### Local Programs Included

No local conservation finance measures have been approved by voters in Alabama. For more information, visit [www.landvote.org](http://www.landvote.org).

## Federal Partnerships

Federal agencies and programs that have conserved land in Alabama include:

- U.S. Department of Defense – Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Section 6 Grant
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – State Wildlife Grant Program
- U.S. Forest Service – Forest Legacy Program (FLP)
- U.S. Forest Service – Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP)
- U.S. National Park Service – Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service – Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service – Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)



The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

### The Conservation Almanac

A comprehensive database of land conservation and public conservation funding in America, the Conservation Almanac provides a context for assessing impacts of conservation and the growing conservation finance movement. The Almanac offers information on public dollars spent and acres conserved, details on local, state, and federal conservation programs, and geospatial mapping of conserved land.

Almanac data collection efforts focus on land conserved using public dollars; contributions funded by private and non-governmental organizations are not tracked comprehensively. Federal data is complete from 1998-2017. State and local data is complete from 1998-2015. In the tables and charts below, acres are allocated to each program proportionate to the size of the contributions to each acquisition. For example, if an acquisition had two contributions, and each program contributed equal dollar amounts, each program receives 50% of the acres. If you have questions or want to provide updated information, please contact Jessica Welch at [jessica.welch@tpl.org](mailto:jessica.welch@tpl.org).

[www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org)

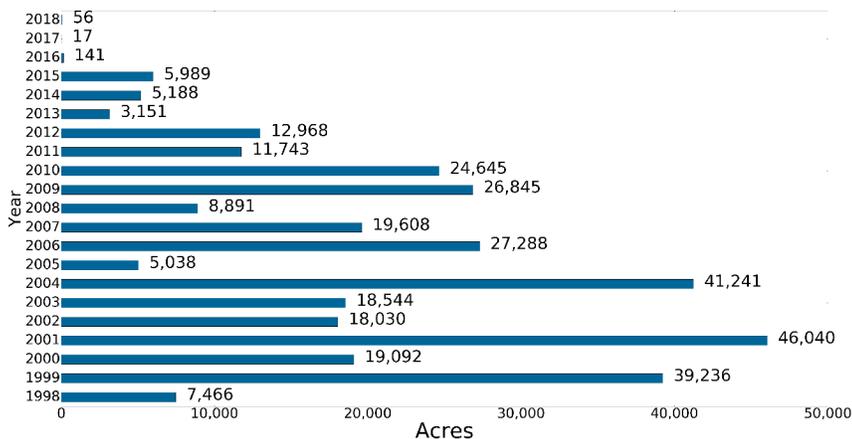
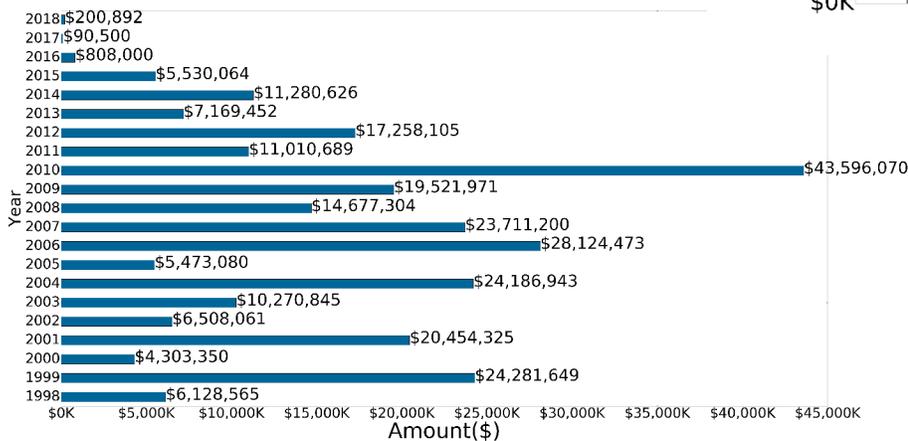
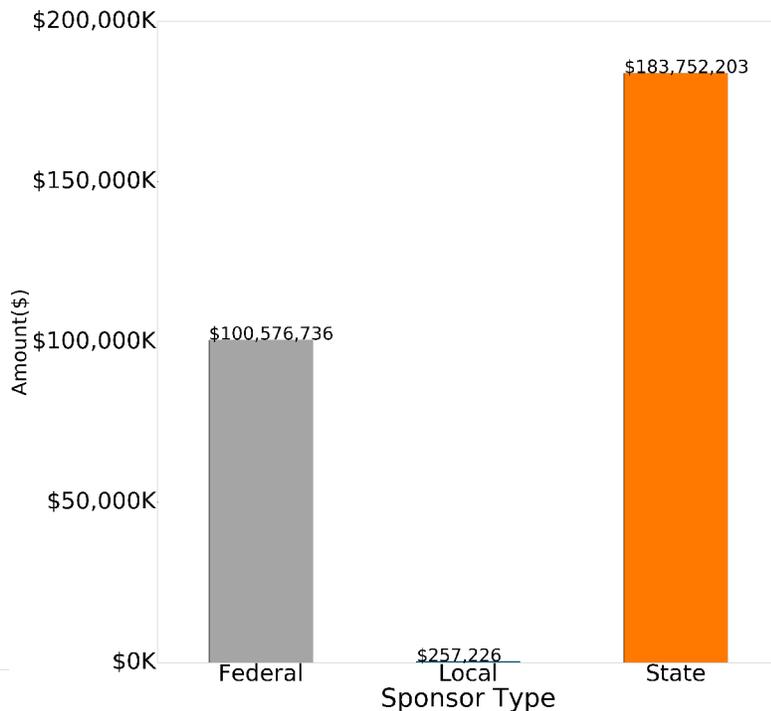
[www.conservationalmnac.org](http://www.conservationalmnac.org)

# State Conservation Report Alabama



CONSERVATION ALMANAC  
Tracking Investments in Protected Lands

November 20, 2020



The data in the Conservation Almanac track the impacts of public spending on land conservation. Created by The Trust for Public Land, the Conservation Almanac brings those data together along with state policy profiles, current conservation finance news, and an interactive map, to provide a powerful online tool.