

A scenic view of the Cahaba River with a rocky waterfall and dense forest in the background. The river flows over several large, dark rocks, creating a series of small cascades. The water is clear and reflects the surrounding greenery. The background is filled with lush, dense forest, and the overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

# CAHABA ISLANDS & FOREST PRESERVE

362 ACRES — 1 3/4 MILES  
ALONG THE CAHABA RIVER



The Cahaba River is the longest free flowing river in the south - the waters are unusually rich with snails, mussels, crawfish and fish as well as the famous Cahaba lily. © Beth Maynor Finch 2002



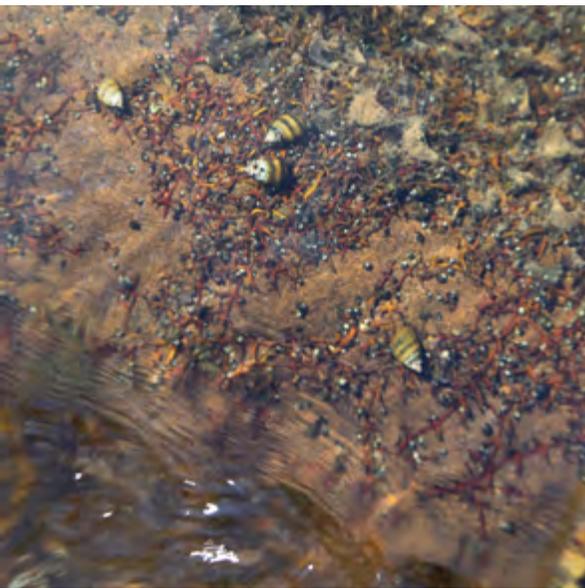
Photographs taken in this stretch of the river in 2005 for *Headwaters, A Journey on Alabama Rivers*. © Beth Maynor Finch



The Cahaba Islands tract protects all the features that make the Cahaba River famous - Cahaba lilies, snails, mussels, crayfish, fish, deep water and riffles, rich hardwood forests, tall bluffs, pristine streams, otters, deer, turtles, turkey, beaver, salamanders. It lies within the acquisition boundaries of the Cahaba National Wildlife Refuge.



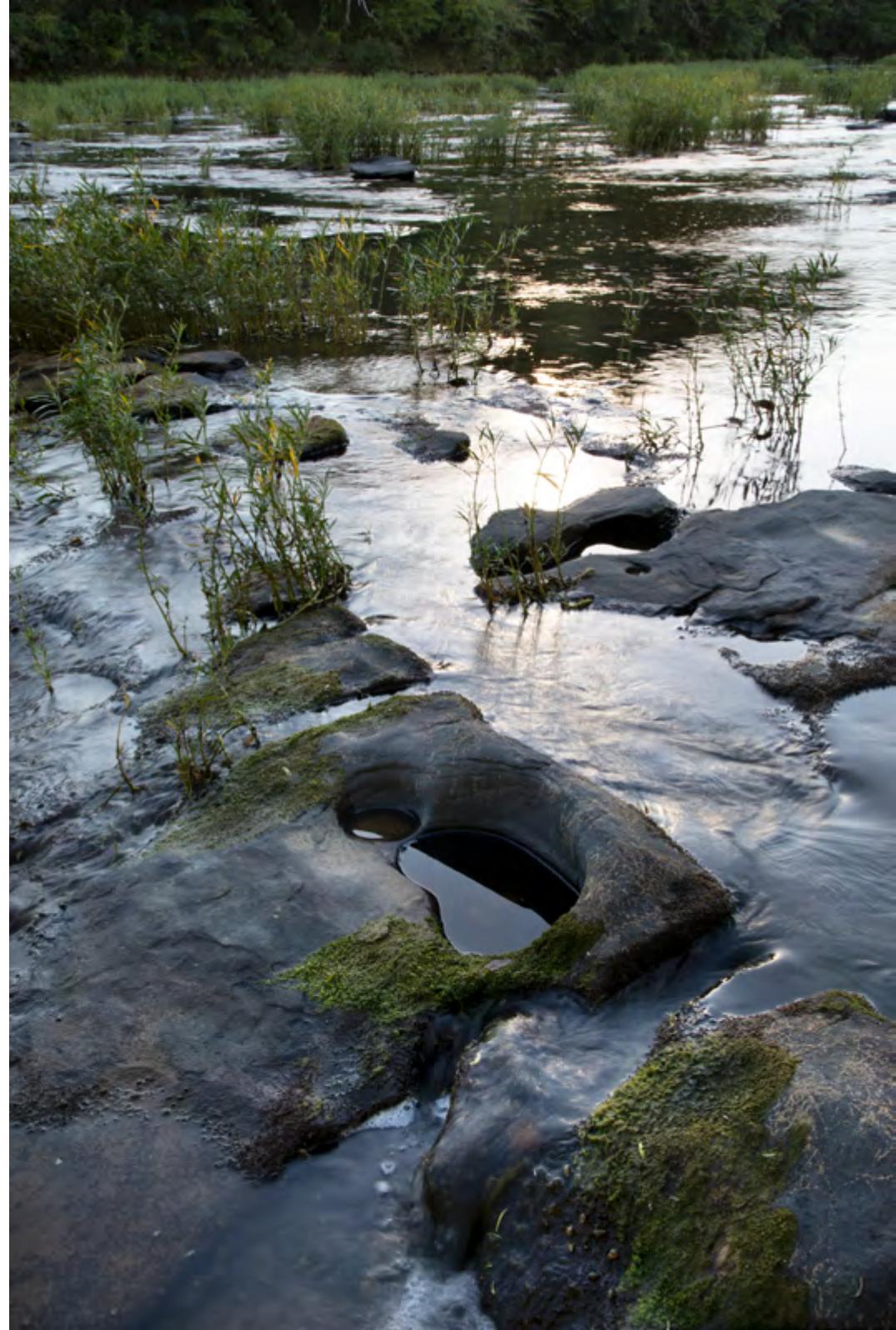
This property is one of the highlights of the canoe trail stretching almost a hundred miles from Birmingham to the Alabama River at the historic site of Old Cahawba.



The health of a river is in the quality of the water and river bed, and both are excellent here.

“The river frontage is exceptional, and may represent some of the best shoal habitat along this portion of the Cahaba. In-stream habitat includes extensive acreage of river-scour meadows, in river shallows and on low-lying semi-forested islands.

Large family groups of otters in this section of the river are conspicuous, and indicate the river here is likely rich in fish, crayfish and mollusks that otters depend on.” -- Bill Finch







An old road recently reopened travels along the river on the southwest part of the property past the islands. The trees in this section are quite large and diverse with a rich understory.

“The white oak component of many forests is unusually high. The appearance of relatively uncommon species such as kingnut hickory (*Carya lacinosa*) indicates that broadleaf diversity needs a closer inspection.” -- Bill Finch



In April of 2011, when tornados cut huge swaths through Alabama, one cut a trail through the peninsula on the property's west side, offering an opportunity for restoration of bottom-land habitats.

“Vigorous regeneration of native cane (*Arundinaria gigantea*) in bottoms, particularly in areas impacted by the recent tornado, offer an unusually good opportunity to promote restoration of the native canebrake ecosystem to extensive areas along the river front and in the bottoms.” -- Bill Finch



A rich palette of tree and shrub species, including oaks, maples, hickories, magnolias, gums, shortleaf and Virginia pines, dogwoods, blueberries, azaleas, hydrangeas, mock orange, and mountain laurel, cover the steep slopes above the river.



The well maintained interior roads offer a glimpse of the mixed pine and hardwood forests that cover most of the property. Most land along the Cahaba Valley has been hammered pretty hard with mining, fracking and timber harvest over the years. This tract has been cut, but it has been many decades. This forest still has all the pieces and is not over-run with invasives. The topography is rolling to steep with vegetation responding in kind.

Along the steep hills and high bluffs overlooking almost two miles of river frontage, slopes support a mature forest of diverse hardwoods typical of natural cove forests. On moister north- and east-facing slopes, white oak species (*Quercus alba*, *Q. michauxii*) predominate, along with typical Appalachian cove species like basswood, white ash and hickories. On somewhat drier and south facing slopes, red oaks species (*Quercus rubra*, *Q. falcata* and others) predominate, along with a variety of pines and other hardwood species.

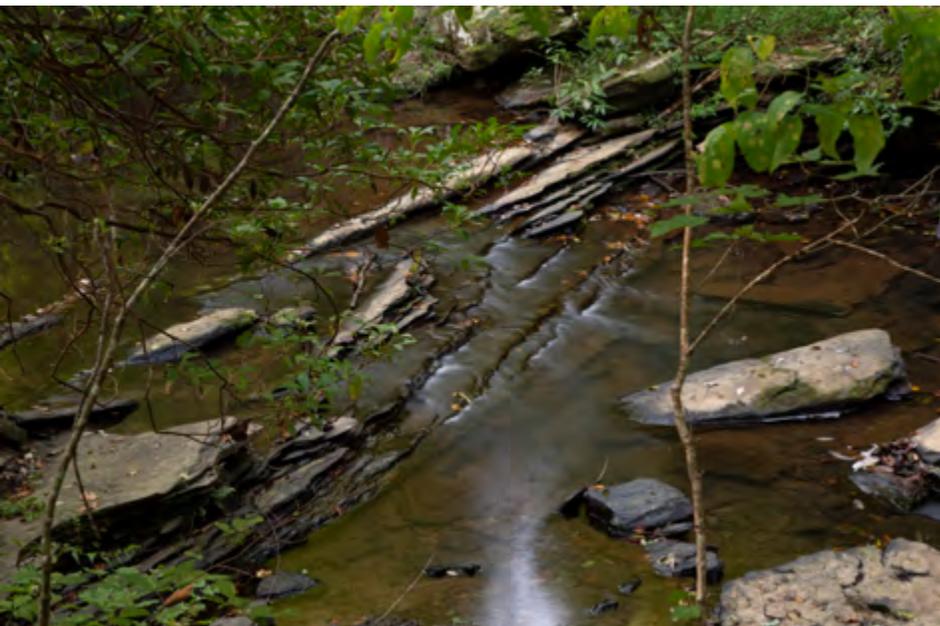


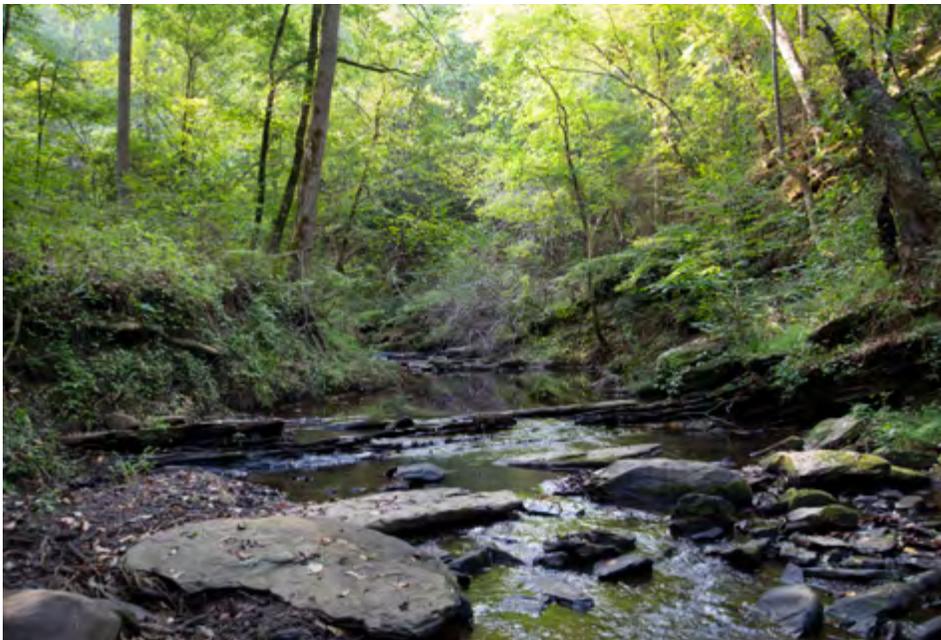
Ridgetops and west-facing slopes are also now mostly dominated by hardwoods and planted and naturally regenerated pine, but reveal multiple relicts of the longleaf pine community – including not only scattered longleaf (*Pinus palustris*) and shortleaf pines (*Pinus echinata*) of various age classes, but also on drier slopes the remnants of the grassland and herbaceous flowering communities that would have once been common here. These areas are in similar condition to many of the remnant pine communities that were present on the National Wildlife Refuge when it was created, and which have now been so successfully restored.

Some special features of these forests bear further investigation. The presence of tree species rare to uncommon in Alabama, such as the shellbark hickory (*Carya lacinosa*), indicate that the forests here may prove to be unusually rich. Native cane (*Arundinaria gigantea*) communities seem particularly robust along the river frontages, offering an excellent opportunity for restoration that could be a boon to wildlife and riparian stability—particularly in areas where a recent tornado has allowed sunlight to penetrate along the river’s edge. Shrub diversity is also high, and is represented by some unusual species. Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*), for example, is dominant in many areas. Slopes and creeksides support a wide variety of native azaleas, blueberries, hydrangeas, sweetshrubs (*Calycanthus floridanus*), styrax and silverbells (*Styrax* and *Halesia* species), mountain laurels and fringe trees (*Chionanthus virginiana*). Shrub species are particularly rich along Black Creek, which seems to have largely retained its natural hydrology and bottom features. Natural beaver activity encouraged by the landowner has created a series of small pools that help control erosion and support a large and healthy fish population. -- Bill Finch



Black Creek flows through steep canyons on the northern 40 acres of the property. Banks are lined with spring and summer wildflowers and flowering shrubs like mountain laurel, azaleas and mock orange.





“Fairly healthy creek bottoms along Black Creek, with a good diversity of shrubs, trees and wildflowers. Creek bottoms seem to be stabilizing after years of abuse typical of Cahaba tributaries, with evidence of gravel bars and natural pool and riffle formations redeveloping. Healthy activity by beavers likely contributing.”

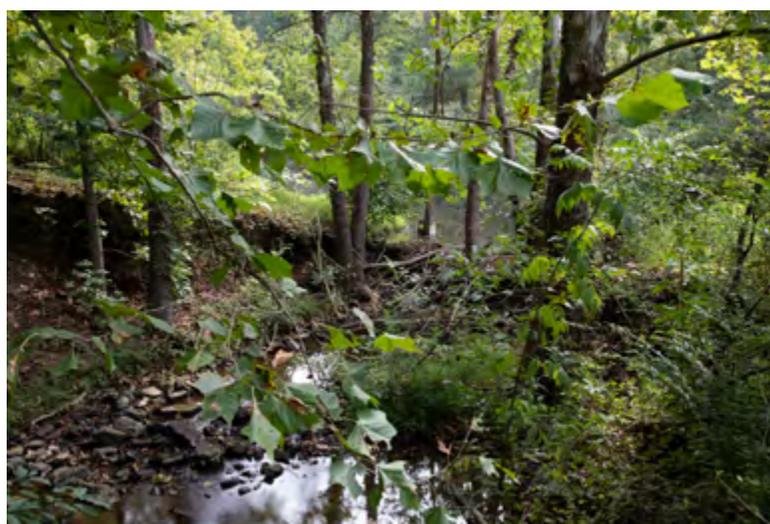
--Bill Finch

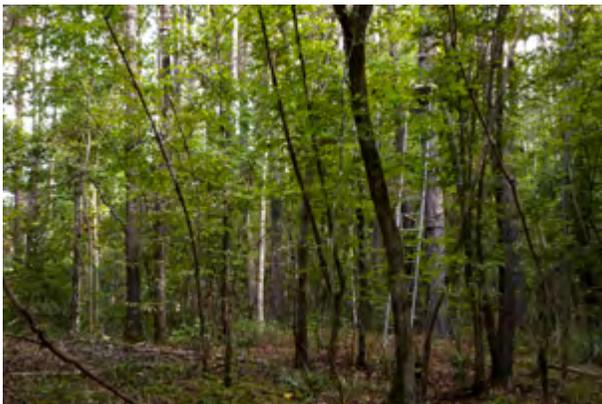


The owner has made very good use of steep old gas lines for green fields and hunting stands, and old mining lands for roads, green fields and pine plantations. It all has a very orderly useful appearance. Transmission lines provide a good view of the terrain.



“Large areas of restorable longleaf, longleaf-shortleaf, and mixed pine-hardwood slopes, with scattered but significant remnants of diverse grassland understory, including numerous species of native warm season grasses, silk grass (*Pityopsis* species) and many other savanna asters, and rare lilies and other species associated with open, fire climax forests. The majority of pine-dominated forests are naturally regenerated.”  
-- Bill Finch

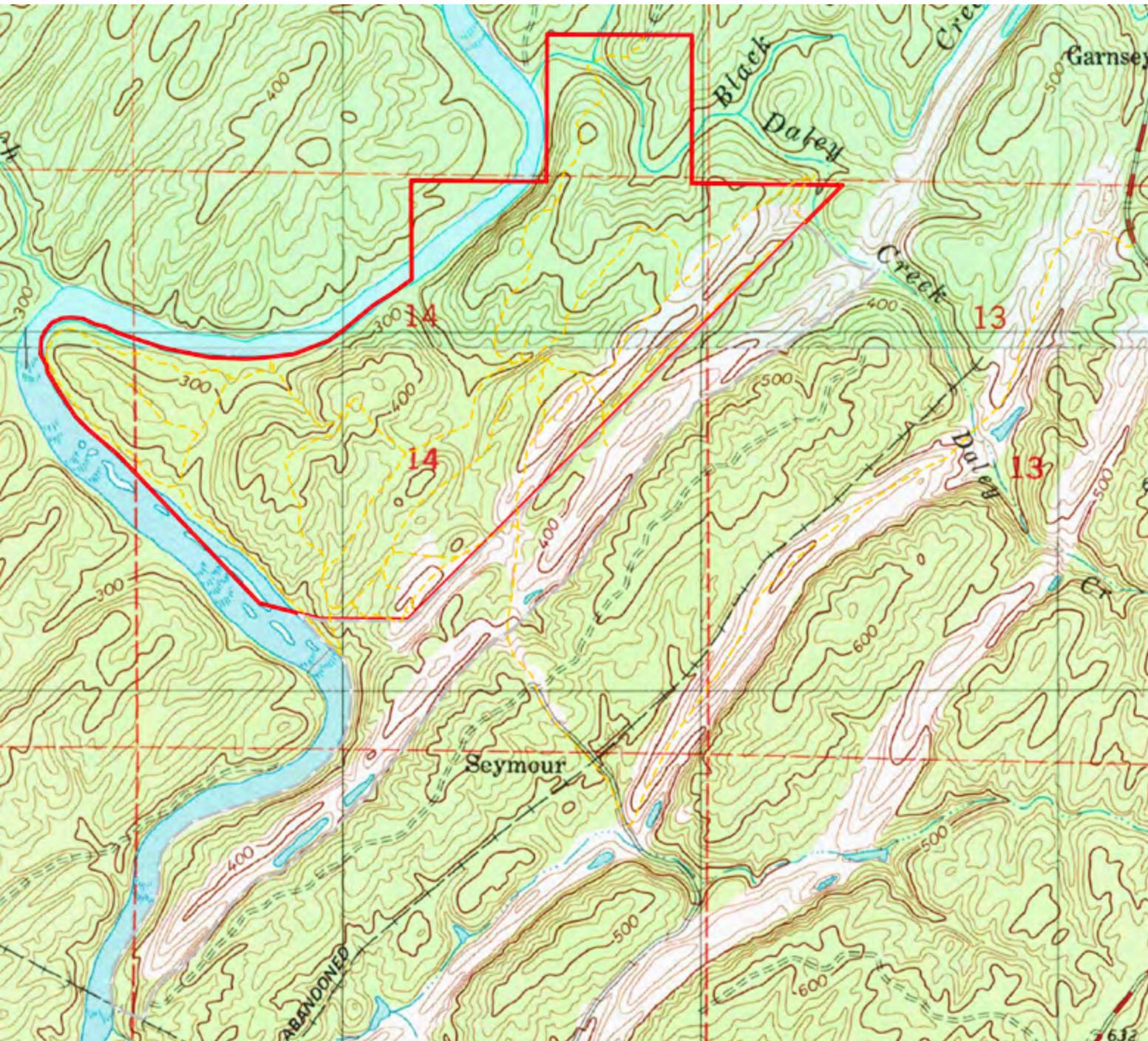








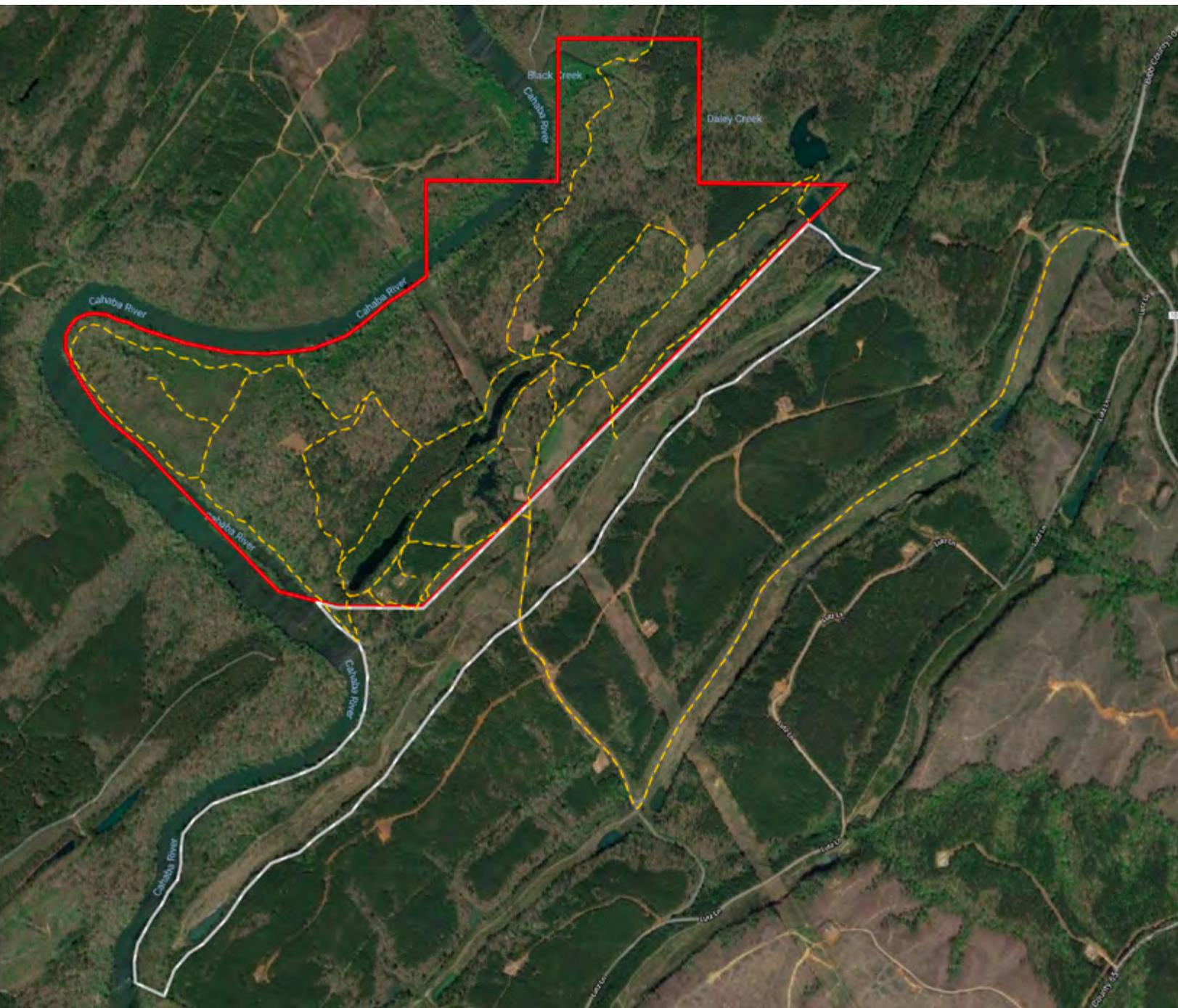
- Power to the camp house.
- Well at the camp house.
- Tractor and implements in good working order and available for purchase.
- Well pad at the entrance of the property.
- Entrance at the road gated and locked at all times.
- Entrance to the property at the 146 acres of leased land.
- Seven green fields and blinds for hunting.
- Other activities are birding, wildflower hikes, fishing, canoeing, hiking and ATV trail riding.



The property is 362 acres with about 7 acres across the river and 1.75 miles of river frontage.

The north boundary along the river is 167 acres owned by the Freshwater Land Trust.

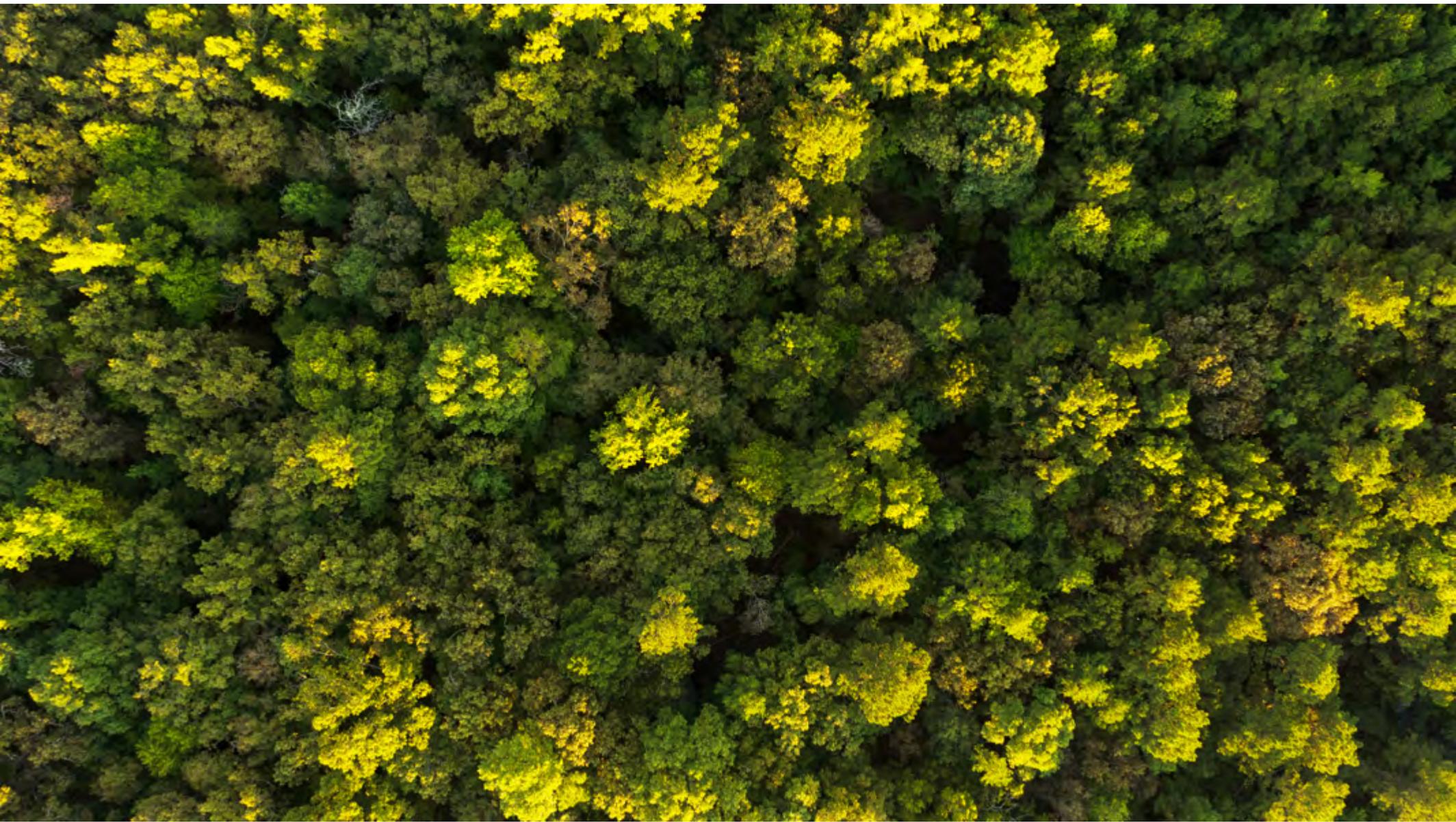
The two islands are on the southwest border of the river and are part of the property.



Map shows the

- 362 acres in red
- 146 acres of leased land in white
- Deeded access from County Road 10,
- Roads in yellow.
- The entrance gate is a mile south of Marvel
- Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge is 5.8 miles by road and a little over a mile by river.
- The additional 146 acres of leased land would extend the river frontage .9 miles to the old rail road tressel, which is only a few hundred yards from the Cahaba National Wildlife Refuge.







362 Acres Bibb County on the Cahaba River with 1 3/4 miles of river frontage and large stands of hardwood and native pine timber.

Beth Maynor Finch

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