

Black Warrior RIVERKEEPER® Board of Directors Spotlight: Rob Brewer

Rob Brewer is a business analyst with SunGard, a software and services company providing retirement plan administration solutions. He has been in the IT field for 20 years in programming, customer support, process improvement and project management. Brewer has a lifelong association with the Black Warrior through his family's property at Little Shoals Creek on Bankhead Lake. He enjoys bass fishing, boating and bird-watching.

In addition to regular board oversight, Brewer has been able to assist Black Warrior Riverkeeper "in many small ways," as he likes to say. For example, at SunGard, Brewer collects used cell phones for Riverkeeper's Cell and Ink Recycling Fundraiser. For more detail on that project and our other unique fundraisers, please visit <http://blackwarriorriver.org/fundraisers.html>.

Brewer has used his computer expertise to advise the organization in website design and hardware purchases, while also donating equipment for office use. Last but certainly not least, Brewer successfully solicited a generous friend to provide free storage space for our patrol boat!

Rob Brewer in Washington's Olympic National Park. Photo by Mary Brewer.



Cahaba RIVERKEEPER® Approved by WATERKEEPER® ALLIANCE



Myra Crawford, PhD, MPH, founder and board president of Cahaba Riverkeeper. Photo by Shaun Crawford.

Cahaba Riverkeeper was recently approved as a member of Waterkeeper Alliance, joining Black Warrior Riverkeeper, Choctawhatchee Riverkeeper, Hurricane Creekkeeper and Mobile Baykeeper in defending the ecological integrity of Alabama's waters. The Cahaba River stretches for 190 miles across central Alabama and, along with the Black Warrior, is a major source of drinking water for Birmingham and its surrounding communities, accounting for one-fourth of Alabama's population. The Cahaba also receives treated municipal and industrial wastewater and storm water drainage.

Cahaba Riverkeeper's mission is to defend the ecological integrity of the Cahaba River and its tributaries and watershed. Cahaba Riverkeeper seeks to ensure clean water, a healthy aquatic environment, and the recreational and aesthetic values of the Cahaba. Cahaba Riverkeeper will investigate and bring to justice environmental lawbreakers who threaten the rights of every citizen to enjoy this water resource. While excellent watershed organizations such as Cahaba River Society and Friends of Shades Creek provide fantastic education and advocacy for the river, and offer recreational activities that help engage future Cahaba enthusiasts, Cahaba Riverkeeper is positioned to take a more litigious role, when necessary, in helping ensure that the waters of the Cahaba remain clean.

In 2003, the "State of the Upper Cahaba River Watershed: Resources and Threats, Opportunities and Challenges," was produced by professional consultants with the input of local environmental, civic, and business organizations and interested individuals. The report stated that advancing and relatively unchecked commercial growth abutting waterways threatens the life of the river and, consequently, the interests of the citizens who depend on the river for sustenance. Since the publication of the report, virtually no action has occurred to respond to the study findings or the recommendations to preserve the integrity of the river and the inhabitants that depend on its health.

The diversity of the Cahaba's fish population is greater than any other temperate river its size and reportedly second only to the Amazon. More than 130 species of fish have been found in the Cahaba, which is more than any other river of its size in North America. The river is also home to more than 40 species of freshwater mussels and 35 species of freshwater snails. Many of the river's animal and plant species are very rare, with ten fish, snail, and mussel species officially under the protection of the U.S. Endangered Species Act. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed the designation of critical habitat in the Cahaba for eight endangered or threatened species of mussels.

Cahaba Riverkeeper will monitor the Cahaba River Watershed to identify violations of clean water legislation and take appropriate legal steps to notify perpetrators and appropriate authorities of violations. Remedial and legal action will be pursued to protect and conserve Alabama's natural resources and drinking water supply. Cahaba Riverkeeper will provide information and programs to educate construction professionals and corporate entities about appropriate planning, construction, sustainability, and maintenance of safeguards to protect the Cahaba River Watershed. Case-studies and research will be used to demonstrate ways in which a community, town or city can save money and protect its natural resources. Cahaba Riverkeeper believes that a healthy watershed promotes a healthy economy and that development and a clean environment can coexist naturally if appropriate laws, regulations, ordinances, and guidelines are implemented and enforced.

Myra A. Crawford, PhD, MPH, is Cahaba Riverkeeper's founder and president of its board. Dr. Crawford is a Clinical Research Professor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and served as Director of the Research Division, Department of Family and Community Medicine, School of Medicine. Other board members include Peggy Gargis, David Guin, Erik Heninger, Byron Bart Slawson, and Tyler Vail. Cahaba Riverkeeper, a non-profit organization, is open to membership from individuals, organizations, and businesses and will be seeking a permanent staff Riverkeeper in the near future. Cahaba Riverkeeper's website will soon be www.cahabariverkeeper.org. In the meantime, the organization can be reached via Dr. Crawford at 205-967-2600.