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## **Two Students kayak from Tuscaloosa to Mobile to raise awareness for river conservation in Alabama**

(Mobile, Ala.) – Two students from the [University of Alabama](#), Chris Cochrane (Gadsden, Ala.) and Collin Williams (Nashville, Tenn.), recently completed a 340-mile paddling trip from Tuscaloosa to Mobile to raise awareness for river conservation efforts in Alabama, traveling down the Black Warrior River and Tombigbee River for 15 days.

Cochrane, a recent graduate of environmental science, and Williams, a marine science student, wanted to highlight the importance of freshwater conservation to Alabama's ecosystem, which contains 38 percent of North America's fish species and more species of freshwater fish, crayfish, mussels, turtles, and snails than any other state in the U.S.

“People don't usually talk about freshwater conservation until something terrible happens, so we really wanted to expose the citizens of Alabama, and the country as a whole, to this important concept,” said Cochrane.

Though both students have a considerable educational background in environmental science, they wanted to take some of the lessons they have learned and apply them outside of the classroom.

“I have always been very passionate about freshwater ecosystems, and about a year ago, I had a dream that inspired me to start planning this long distance kayaking trip,” said Williams.

Proceeds raised from the journey, titled [“Kayaking for Conservation”](#), are being donated to [Black Warrior Riverkeeper](#) and [Mobile Baykeeper](#), two of eight organizations in Alabama affiliated with [Waterkeeper Alliance](#). Charles Scribner, Executive Director of

Black Warrior Riverkeeper, believes this is an important way to showcase the linkage between Alabama's rivers.

"Through river exploration, a great American tradition, these students have highlighted the connectivity of Tuscaloosa and Mobile, while also supporting the two Waterkeeper groups who protect that vital nexus," said Scribner.

A few staff members of Mobile Baykeeper were fortunate enough to join the students and paddle the last mile of their journey with them, concluding the trip at Scott's Landing on Friday, May 27, where they were met by cheering family and friends.

"What these guys did to raise awareness for river conservation in our great state is beyond admirable," said Justine Herlihy, Development Director for Mobile Baykeeper. "On behalf of Mobile Baykeeper's staff, board of directors, and membership, we extend our deepest gratitude for their wonderful efforts."

In addition to raising awareness for river conservation efforts, Williams hopes his idea will help inspire other students to embark on a similar adventure.

"I hope our trip inspires others to get outside and experience everything the streams and rivers of Alabama have to offer," said Williams.

Donations are still being accepted to support this cause. To donate or learn more, please visit [www.gofundme.com/m5vq2kf8](http://www.gofundme.com/m5vq2kf8) or "Like" the "[Kayaking for Conservation](#)" [Facebook Page](#).

For a high-resolution photo of the kayakers upon reaching Mobile Baykeeper, [click here](#).

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*[Black Warrior Riverkeeper](#) is a citizen-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to protect and restore the Black Warrior River and its tributaries. We are advocates for clean water, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities throughout the Black Warrior Rivershed. To learn about the river and the threats to it, please visit [www.blackwarriorriver.org](http://www.blackwarriorriver.org).*

*[Mobile Baykeeper](#) is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization that works to provide citizens a means to protect the beauty, health and heritage of the Mobile Bay Watershed, Alabama's waterways and coastal communities. To learn more about Mobile Baykeeper, please visit [www.mobilebaykeeper.org](http://www.mobilebaykeeper.org).*