

## THE CONSERVATION FUND-PURCHASED PARCEL COMPLETES SIPSEY WILDERNESS

*USFS Managing Alabama Destination for Hunting, Hiking and Conservation*

**BIRMINGHAM, Alabama (May 5, 2025)** — Fifty years after it was first created, Alabama’s Sipsey Wilderness is now complete thanks to a recent acquisition led by The Conservation Fund and supported by the federally funded Land and Water Conservation Fund. The 40-acre parcel on Thompson Creek — the last missing puzzle piece of this incredible southern resource — is now part of the area that opened the door for dozens of eastern Wilderness areas.

“Fifty years after it was first created, Alabama’s iconic Sipsey Wilderness is now complete and protected for the American public,” said Mike Leonard, senior advisor to The Conservation Fund. “As someone who advocated to protect this area in the 1970s, I couldn’t be prouder of the role The Conservation Fund played in saving this final piece of the wilderness puzzle from development.”

Local hikers have traversed this parcel via the Thompson Creek Trail for decades under private ownership. But despite the handshake agreement that allowed hikers to access the property, it could have been closed to the public without notice. This purchase ensures that it is now part of the Sipsey Wilderness, under management by the U.S. Forest Service as part of the Bankhead National Forest, for the good of the American public.

“This acquisition of the last remaining inholding of the Sipsey Wilderness on the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Sipsey Wilderness is a great testament to our partnership with The Conservation Fund and will ensure the protection of this area for visitor enjoyment and many rare species,” said Linwood Butler, forest supervisor for USFS in Alabama.

The Sipsey Wilderness was created as part of the 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act and signed into law by President Gerald Ford. In 1988, Congress expanded the Sipsey Wilderness and created the Sipsey Fork National Wild and Scenic River. Thompson Creek, which crosses the property, is a legislatively designated part of the National Wild and Scenic River.

LWCF was established in 1965 and reinvests a small percentage of offshore energy revenues — not taxpayer dollars — in conservation and recreation access projects supporting critical natural resources, wild habitats, historic sites and working lands. LWCF has funded more than 45,000 conservation projects in every state and county in the United States. In 2020, Congress passed the Great American Outdoors Act and President Donald Trump signed it into law. That bill provided permanent full funding for LWCF. The protection of these lands using LWCF was made possible thanks to Alabama’s federal Congressional delegation representing the Sipsey area including U.S. Senator Katie Britt, U.S. Senator Tommy Tuberville, and U.S. Representative Robert Aderholt.



“The Sipsey Wilderness is one of the most treasured natural areas in Alabama, and I am proud that it lies within the Fourth Congressional District,” said Representative Aderholt. “Completing the protection of this final piece along Thompson Creek ensures that future generations can continue to enjoy hiking, hunting, and the incredible natural beauty of this special place. This success is a powerful example of what can be achieved through strong partnerships and the vital support of programs like the Land and Water Conservation Fund.”

For Leonard, who worked with local conservation luminaries like Mary Burks and Elberta Reid and testified before Congress in support of expanding Sipsey in 1982 with the Birmingham Audubon Society’s John Randolph, the victory is a testament to decades of effort. He first learned about this inholding 46 years ago.

“Big conservation wins like the Sipsey Wilderness take vision and tenacity,” says Leonard. “I’m thrilled that after 50 years of work, this important project is complete and ready for future generations to enjoy.”

### **About The Conservation Fund**

The Conservation Fund protects the land that sustains us all. We are in the business of conservation, creating innovative solutions that drive nature-based action in all 50 states for climate protection, vibrant communities and sustainable economies. We apply effective strategies, efficient financing approaches, and enduring government, community and private partnerships to protect millions of acres of America’s natural land, cultural sites, recreation areas and working forests and farms. To learn more, visit [www.conservationfund.org](http://www.conservationfund.org).

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