



September 29, 2011

## **Public Invited to Watch Biologists Reintroduce Endangered Mussel into Bear Creek**

**What:** Reintroduction of the Alabama Lampmussel

**When:** October 6, 2011 at 12:00 CST

**Where:** Bear Creek Picnic Area (at milepost 313)

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Good news for an Alabama mussel species that is close to extinction. State and federal biologists are introducing a new population of Alabama Lampmussels (*Lampsilis virescens*) to Bear Creek in Colbert County, Alabama.

The Alabama lampmussel is listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act, and is considered a Priority 1 Species by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR). A Priority 1 species is one that is critically imperiled and at risk of extinction/extirpation because of rarity, restricted distribution, decreasing population, specialized habitat needs, or habitat vulnerability.

The Alabama Lampmussel is only known from two river systems in North America, the Paint Rock River in Jackson County, Alabama, and the Emory River in Morgan County, Tennessee. Historically, the species was restricted to the Tennessee River basin, upstream of what is now Pickwick Reservoir. Biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and ADCNR's Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division will release over 1,000 cultured mussels into Bear Creek to help give the species a boost. Biologists raised this population at the Alabama Aquatic Biodiversity Center, an ADCNR imperiled species recovery facility based outside Marion, Alabama. This is the third such reintroduction of this species in a year. Three releases were carried out in 2010, two in the lower Paint Rock River, and one in the Elk River in Tennessee. The Tennessee reintroduction was a cooperative release with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency.

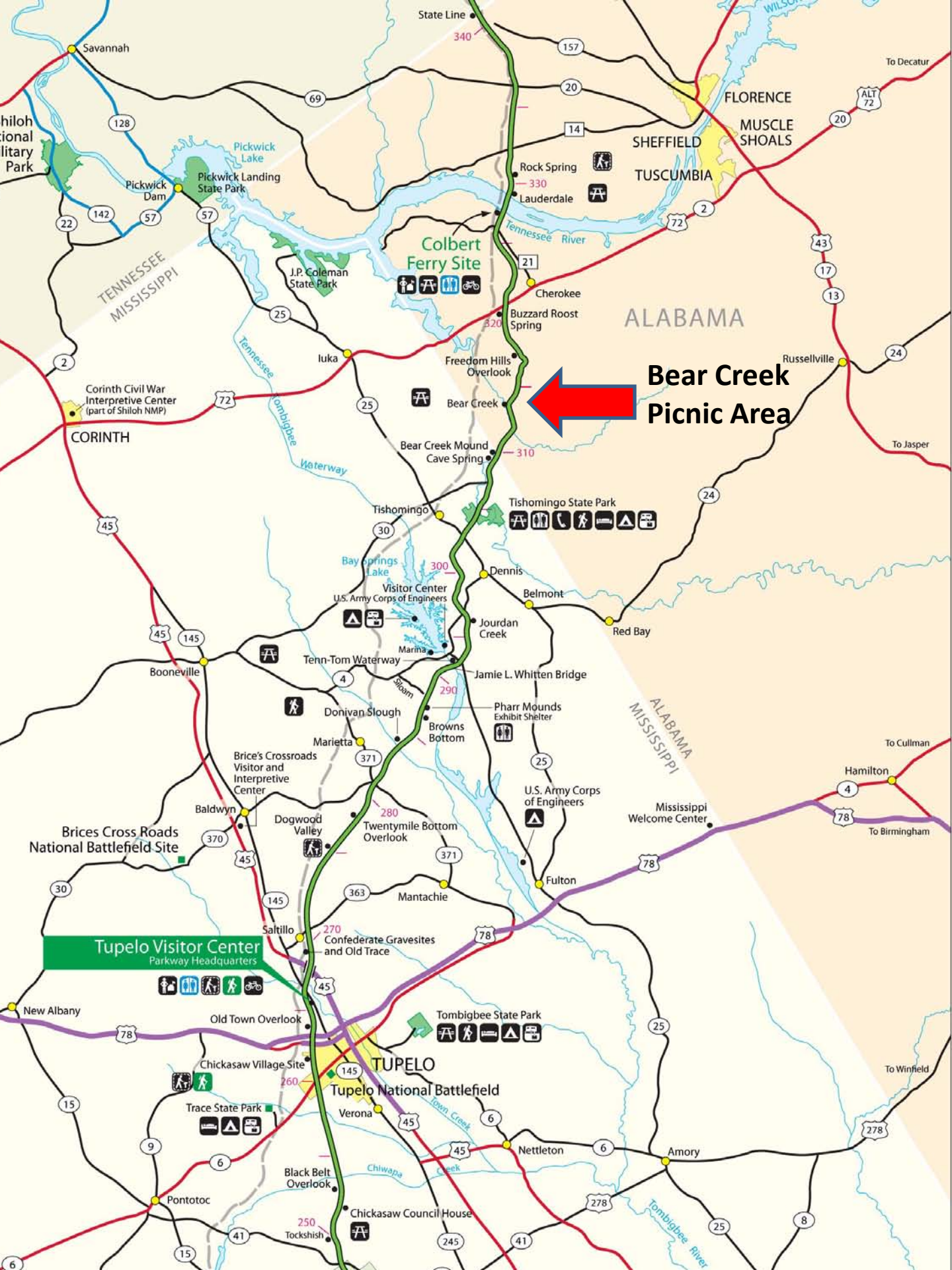
"We're excited to partner with other state and federal wildlife resource agencies in directing a

comprehensive species recovery effort for what is truly one of the rarest species in the United States,” said Dr. Paul Johnson, Program Supervisor for the Alabama Aquatic Biodiversity Center. “Follow-up monitoring of 2010 reintroduction localities completed earlier this summer indicates each effort is persisting, so far,” Johnson said. Biologists plan to augment these reintroduced populations several times to improve the condition of each population. The Bear Creek reintroduction if successful, will move the species closer to recovery and possibly down listing. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Plan requires three stable populations to meet Alabama Lampmussel down-listing criteria, and five populations for possible delisting.

“Thanks to the dedicated efforts of the ADCNR, the Alabama Lampmussel is on the road to recovery. Although the species is still critically imperiled, adding a third population to its range significantly reduces its chances of going extinct in our lifetime,” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Biologist Jeff Powell.

Bear Creek contains a high diversity of fish and mollusks, including the federally-endangered Cumberland Combshell and state-protected Slenderhead Darter. It was also designated as critical habitat for two species of freshwater mussels by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2004.

The reintroduction would not be possible without the help of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the National Park Service (NPS). The TVA agreed to modify operations at two dams in the headwaters of the Bear Creek system, making the habitat more conducive for the new population. The NPS manages the Natchez Trace Parkway and has been an integral supporter of imperiled species recovery on NPS lands.



# Bear Creek Picnic Area



Colbert Ferry Site

Tupelo Visitor Center  
Parkway Headquarters

TUPELO  
Tupelo National Battlefield