

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Photo Credit: Ali F. Jones

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT | NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2023 was DRCR's 29th year in operation as the only non-profit group solely dedicated to Dog River improvement.

We accomplished many of our goals this year, which saw new projects and events unfold:

- Wood duck house build carried out with a local Scout Troop to promote waterfowl conservation.
- Development of a new educational program targeting 3rd graders called *Discover Dog River*, which teaches about the watershed, caring for it, unique wildlife, and litter education.
- New Volunteer Teacher Committee was formed, where volunteers were trained to go into the schools and present the *Discover Dog River* program.
- Living shorelines workshop was held for waterfront property owners.
- Member Appreciation event this summer was hosted to thank our membership and recruit new members.
- Procurement of 4 Eagle Reefs to help with water quality filtration and foster habitats.
- Added new water quality monitors bringing our network to 30 total monitors testing conditions monthly.
- Spoke out against a major development project happening on Rabbit Creek with our concerns.
- Kept pressure on MAWSS to mitigate the effects of a catastrophic sewage spill on Rabby Creek.

We also carried on with our usual fundraising and awareness events this year which all aim to further our mission towards creating a safe, clean, and accessible Dog River Watershed. MudBottom Revival Music Festival had its best year ever by far! And while we were so disappointed the Fishing Tournament was cancelled due to a small craft advisory being issued, our sponsors still made sure this event was a big success for DRCR and our ongoing projects.

As we look to 2024, we will continue to work towards furthering our mission to protect the river we all love. We will be welcoming new board members who promise to bring new skills and insight. We will do our best to carry forward the cause in all decisions and projects.

My family and I personally feel a deep connection to Dog River, as I'm sure many of you share. I have two young kids that I hope get to ski, boat, and learn to love and care for Dog River as much as my wife, Lee, and I do! I'm honored to again serve as your Board President next year in my final term and will do my best to lead this group as we strive to make a real difference in preserving Dog River for future generations to enjoy. See you on the river!

Andrew Levert
President

This year's membership and Board of Directors was especially active with so many new initiatives and projects happening! It's exciting to see membership growing and more of the community getting involved. It's my privilege to serve as your Executive Director and I will continue to do my best in 2024 to support the Board and goals of this organization.

Morgan Counts
Executive Director



2023 Board of Directors

Andrew Levert, *President*

Marbury Buckhaults, *Recording Secretary*

Richard Alexander, Jr.

Bob Bender

Black Chaffe

Michael Irby

Nate Jones

Cori Kitsos

Richard Meadows

Courtenay Rocconi

Jimmy Sewell

Pepper Woolsey

Morgan Counts, *Executive Director*

Advisory Board

Dr. Miriam (Mimi) Fearn

Retired Professor of Geography
& Water Quality Chair

Roberta Swann

Director, Mobile Bay National
Estuary Program

Mark Berte

Executive Director, Alabama
Coastal Foundation

Rosemary Ginn

Assistant City Engineer Environ-
mental Section

Don Bates

Osprey Initiative

Sue Cato Winter

Past Membership
Committee Chair

Debi Foster

Former Executive Director
and Grant Manager

John T Bender

Past DRCR Board Member
& DRCR Counsel

Frank Terrell

Past DRCR President

Hugh O'Neill

Past DRCR President

Dalton Nix

Past DRCR Board Member &
Fishing Tournament Chair

Ali Jones

Past DRCR Board Member &
Active Member of Committees

Our sincere appreciation goes to the many who serve on the DRCR committees!

8th Annual MudBottom Revival Music Festival Committee

Tucker Deaton, *Co-Chair*
Marbury Buckhaults, *Co-Chair*
Lavada Raouf
Lisa Drew
Ali Jones
Karen May

36th Annual AL Coastal Cleanup Committee

Richard Meadows, *Chair*
Suzanne Meadows
Genese Wolfenden
Kathy Sanders
Brad Sanders
Frank Vogtner
Karen May
Stephanie Booth
Olive Booth
Judith Hall
Brittany Woodard

13th Annual Dog River Fishing Tournament Committee

Richard Alexander, *Chair*
Kathy Sanders
Leigh Fobes
Judith Hall
Courtenay Rocconi
Andrew Levert
Bob Bender
Frank Terrell
Nate Jones
John Howard, *Weighmaster*
Fishing Chaos

Education Classroom Presenters - Discover Dog River Program

Anthony Barnes
Ruth Breland
Paula Jacobs

Wood Duck House Build Committee

Pepper Woolsey, *Chair*
Bob Bender
Michael Irby
Black Chaffe
Chuck Stefan
Clint Padgett

Fundraising Committee

Michael Irby, *Co-Chair*
Bob Bender
Marbury Buckhaults
Andrew Levert
Frank Terrell
Kathy Sanders
Ali Jones
Nate Jones
Richard Alexander
Pepper Woolsey
Black Chaffe

Membership Committee

Michael Irby
Chrissie Irby
Marbury Buckhaults
Sue Cato Winter

Education, Outreach & Communications

Courtenay Rocconi, *Social Media Chair*
Ali Jones
Pepper Woolsey
Dr. Mimi Fearn
Margaret Jordan, *Bold Layout*
Chae Saucier
Clint Padgett

Water Quality Monitors

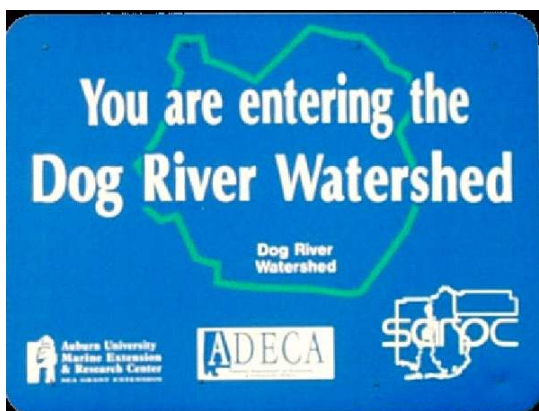
Dr. Mimi Fearn, *Chair*
Tom Andrews
Kathy Bailey
Joe Berardinelli
Michelle Berardinelli
Donna Brown
Marbury Buckhaults
Bruce Coldsmith
Elise Coldsmith
Dan Coleman
Richard Crump
Mike Damoff
Tucker Deaton
Mike Finan
Melinda Finan
Corinne Graddick
Judith Hall
Eric Holladay
Tom Lyon
Nathan Maisel
Karen May
Sherry McGowan
Joanna Miller
Molly Miller & USA Students
Chandler Ogburn
Amy Sprinkle & USA Students
David Strain
Frank Vogtner
Carol Zoch
Halls Mill Landing, Dog River Park,
Alba Club, Mobile Baykeeper

IMPROVED PUBLIC ACCESS

Located just north of the river's convergence to Mobile sits Perch Creek. We're delighted to have this section of the Dog River Scenic Blueway formally adopted in the Alabama Coastal Birding Trail! We were thrilled to again have a Perch Creek paddle included in SALT's AL Coastal Birdfest activities this year.



2023 saw the replacement of awareness signage at Halls Mill Landing and Dog River Park which included DRCR Watershed educational signage, Blueway signage, and anti-littering signage.



This year the City of Mobile, under Councilmember Ben Reynolds lead, was awarded a 2.5 million dollar GOMESA grant for a "Halls Mill Creek Public Access Project" which entails the development of a kayak and boat launch and site improvements in the Todd Acres/ Cypress Shores community area off Shipyard Rd.

We applaud Councilmember Reynolds and his dedication to improving public access to Dog River! DRCR will also get the opportunity to have input on design and erect educational signage at this park.

We spread DRCR awareness this year through presentations, attending community meetings, signage, and new outreach events. We were also featured on Fox10 News, The Sean Sullivan radio show, had an ad in Do Some Good magazine, and had a sponsored commercial run thanks to Eastern Shore Toyota!

Dog River and its creeks and streams drain most of Mobile and serve as important places for families to play and fish. The river is greatly affected by the land surrounding it and our urban watershed that drains into it. To improve Dog River conditions, the entire watershed must be part of the solution, which is why it's so important to spread our message!

2023 saw the development of our new education program titled *Discover Dog River* that targets 3rd graders at all schools. The presentation helps students gain a better understanding of the Dog River watershed and discover facts about its hidden treasures! Students learn how to help protect Dog River by being a good river steward in their community and it teaches students about litter abatement, water quality, and wildlife specific to the Dog River watershed.

DRCR again participated in the City of Mobile's Environmental Education Booklet where our *Discover Dog River* course is featured.

Along with developing this new course, we also formed a new committee of trained volunteer classroom presenters that are going into the schools teaching this program! We will continue to train new volunteer teachers during a mandatory one-time training session that's offered every Spring and Fall.



DRCR hosted a wood duck house build this Fall to promote waterfowl conservation on Dog River. We partnered with Boy Scout Troop #127 to build duck boxes. We then sold the boxes as a fundraising item. Everyone had a great time, and we plan to do this event again next year on a larger scale. There was so much interest in this event and anytime we can get folks to the river is a win for DRCR!





This year in April Mayor Sandy Stimpson read a proclamation proclaiming Saturday, April 22 as Earth Day in the City of Mobile. Many of our local environmental organizations came together in support of the proclamation – and in protecting our natural resources. DRCR was proud to stand in support and attend! Board Member, Marbury Buckhaults, is representing DRCR.



DRCR as part of Mobile United's Natural Resource Task Force and Mobile Bay Green Drinks Committee set up experts Nigel Temple and Sara Martin to come speak at Sept Green Drinks on living shorelines. The implementation of living shorelines is part of our Dog River Watershed Management Plan. Sara Martin with MSU Extension offered a unique opportunity for Dog River waterfront property owners to sign up for a free site assessment, permitting, and design services. Around a dozen Dog River property owners signed up for this! Thank you to Sam Winter & Co for sponsoring this important event.

DRCR is proud to have a strong network of Alabama Water Watch certified volunteer water quality monitors. Our monitors act as an early warning system for MAWSS and have been responsible for early detection of sewage leaks in Dog River. This year, we have spread our reach even further and now have a network of 30 monitors testing conditions monthly! One of our monitors was even an integral part of discovering and monitoring the Rabby Creek sewage spill this year.



Dr. Mimi Fearn training new monitors

In keeping with the goals of the Litter Abatement Plan and Watershed Management Plan for the Dog River Watershed, improving water quality remains a primary goal of DRCR.



DRCR participated in Mobile United's annual MLK Day of Service cleanup in January where a dump spot that flows into Rattlesnake Bayou in Tillman's Corner was cleaned up. Volunteers collected 550 lbs of trash and debris.

This Fall, 195 volunteers showed up for the 36th Annual AL Coastal Cleanup site that DRCR hosted at Dog River Park. This hard working group of volunteers removed 4,500 lbs of trash and debris from the watershed.



WATER QUALITY

Through DRCR's participation in the Love Your Community (LYC) anti-litter program DRCR was able to replace awareness signage at Halls Mill Creek Landing and Dog River Park Landing highlighting litter education, Dog River Watershed education, and locating the kayak launch access points on the Dog River Scenic Blueway all using LYC grant funds!

We also accrued enough hours again this year to again receive another \$1500 grant which will be used towards the procurement and placement of 4 Eagle Reefs in Dog River which help with water filtration and fostering habitats along with new water quality monitoring supplies.



Photo credit: PEP



Harrison Tract Map

2023 saw 291 acres of undisturbed, high quality, pristine headwater wetlands in the Dog River Watershed on Halls Mill Creek permanently preserved, and DRCR led the way towards making this happen! These wetlands serve an important role in filtering out sediment and contaminants from flowing into Dog River. According to our Watershed Management Plan "the protected parcel comprises of one of the largest, contiguous undeveloped acreages of bottomland hardwood wetlands remaining in the Greater Dog River Watershed. Preserving these 291 acres of extreme biodiversity helps protect vegetation and habitats for endangered species like manatees and bald eagles. It will also contribute to the long-term health of the Dog River Watershed." This was a HUGE win for DRCR!

PARTNERS & LETTERS OF SUPPORT

DRCR seeks to collaborate with and support our partners. By working together on our common goals we're much more effective!



We sent in letters of support for the following partner grant applications this year:

- The Nature Conservancy's grant to enhance stormwater and restore streams inside the Watershed at the new airport complex (Rabby Creek)
- The Dauphin Island Sea Lab's grant aimed at "Quantifying the effectiveness of a long-term citizen science program on the Mississippi-Alabama coast: Data validity and human dimensions of DISL's Manatee Sighting Network"
- Mobile Baykeeper's grant for a cost sharing program for property owners who put in living shorelines. We hope to be valuable outreach partner if they receive this grant!
- City of Mobile Brookley by the Bay grant funds to protect wetlands and educate citizens inside our neighboring Garrows Bend watershed off DIP.
- We signed on as a supporting partner to the SHOR ACT which will require the installation of signage with pictures and names of fish with an active consumption advisory to be posted at every public boat ramp or fishing area, require those with water pollution permits to post signs on waterways where their permitted pollution is being discharged, and give the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources the charge to communicate fish consumption advisories when issuing fishing licenses.

We also worked with partners on the following important initiatives:

- We combined forces with SALT & Mobile Baykeeper on how to best combat the proposed Rabbit Creek cut and fill wetland development project
- Worked with Mobile Baykeeper and Peninsula of Mobile on how to hold MAWSS accountable for the devastating effects of the major Rabby Creek sewage spill
- Worked with PEP on a litter cleanup this April of the Montlimar Canal
- Worked with Mobile United on their Natural Resources Task Force and Green Drinks Committee
- Worked with District 4 Councilmember Ben Reynolds on several Dog River improvement projects. We commend Ben Reynolds for his dedication to protecting Dog River and making protecting this waterway a big priority in his agenda!
- Collaborated with Boy Scout Troop #127
- Collaborated with Riverside CAG

CITIZEN COMPLAINTS

DRCR seeks to protect Dog River and thanks to our partnerships with Mobile Baykeeper and the City of Mobile Stormwater Team, all citizen complaints that came in were investigated and responded to promptly. Citizens reported the following this year:

- Red clay runoff in Perch Creek
- Fish kill on Halls Mill Creek
- Derelict vessels
- Bad construction practices
- Filling in of wetlands
- Sewage overflows
- Litter hotspots for cleanup

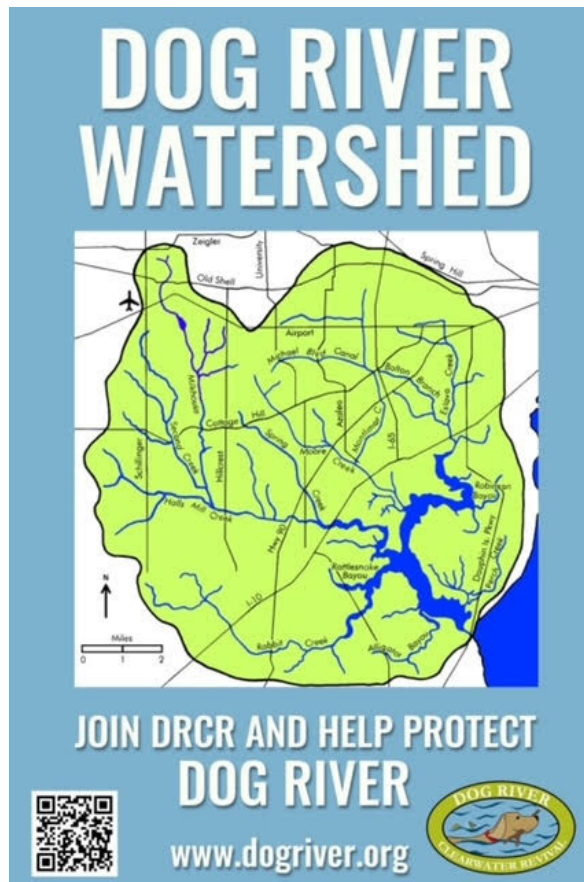


Thank you to our membership for your concern and dedication to preserving the river we all love. You are our valued Riverkeepers! Keep us informed on what you see!



Member renewal dues postcards will go out in January. Member dues are how we fund our projects. However, we also cannot operate without the hard work of our dedicated volunteers. Therefore, this year we've added a "Volunteer Level" membership which seeks to include those who give their time and efforts by volunteering at DRCR events and cleanups throughout the year. Your time is just as important as giving financially. If you'd like to renew your membership at the "Volunteer Level" please do so and if you choose to send a check as well any amount is greatly appreciated but there's no obligation to give.

2023 saw our membership numbers grow! We increased our focus on outreach and even hosted a Summer Member Social which was well received and well attended.



We were delighted to have Mobile Bay National Estuary Program speak at our January 2023 Member meeting on updates to the Dog River Watershed Management Plan.

SAVE THE DATE for our 2024 Annual General membership Business Meeting which is set for Thursday, January 25th at 6PM at Grand Mariner. We'll be electing new board members, cover goals for the year, and are thrilled to have Dr. Sean Powers and Capt. Patric Garmeson as our featured speakers on Dog River Fishing tips and trends and red snapper season in AL.

FUNDRAISING

Our fundraising events are designed to raise money to implement our ongoing programs and projects.



The 8th Annual MudBottom Revival Music Festival had its most successful year ever and raised \$51,000! These funds will have a direct impact on water quality and be used towards the betterment of Dog River. Mark your calendars now for the 9th Annual MudBottom on Sunday April 21, 2024!



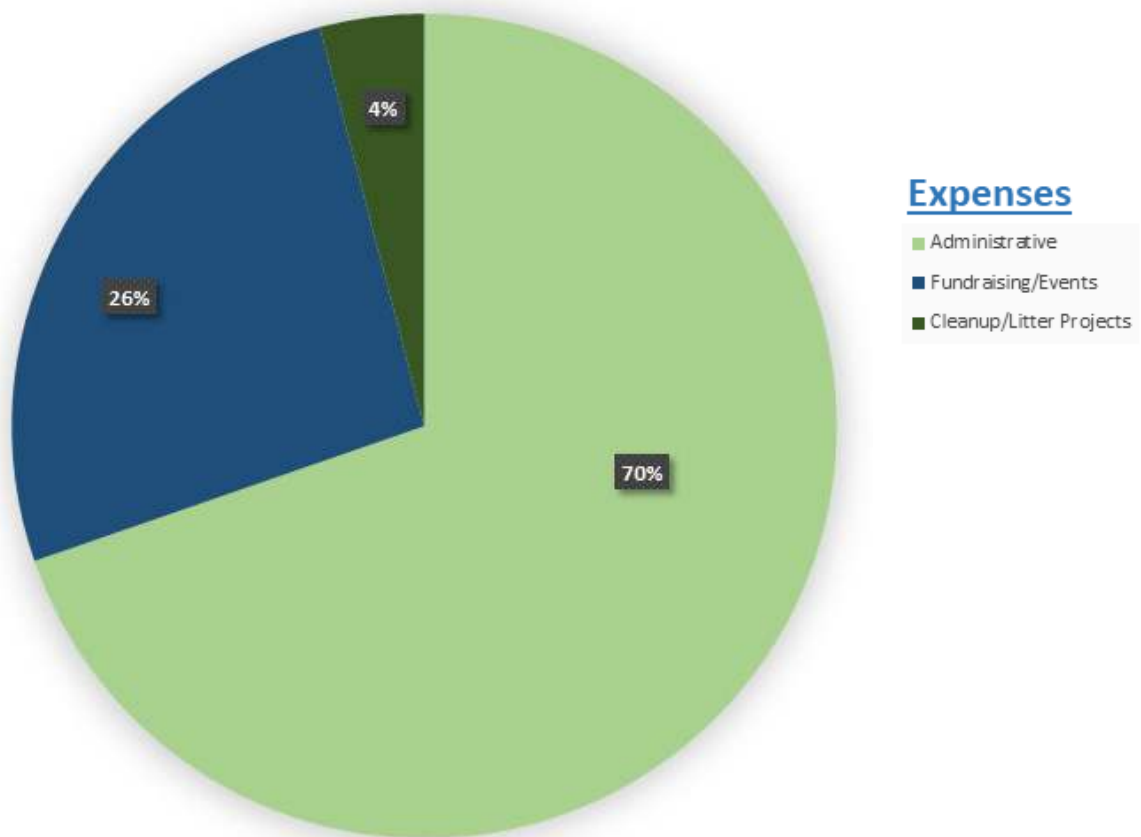
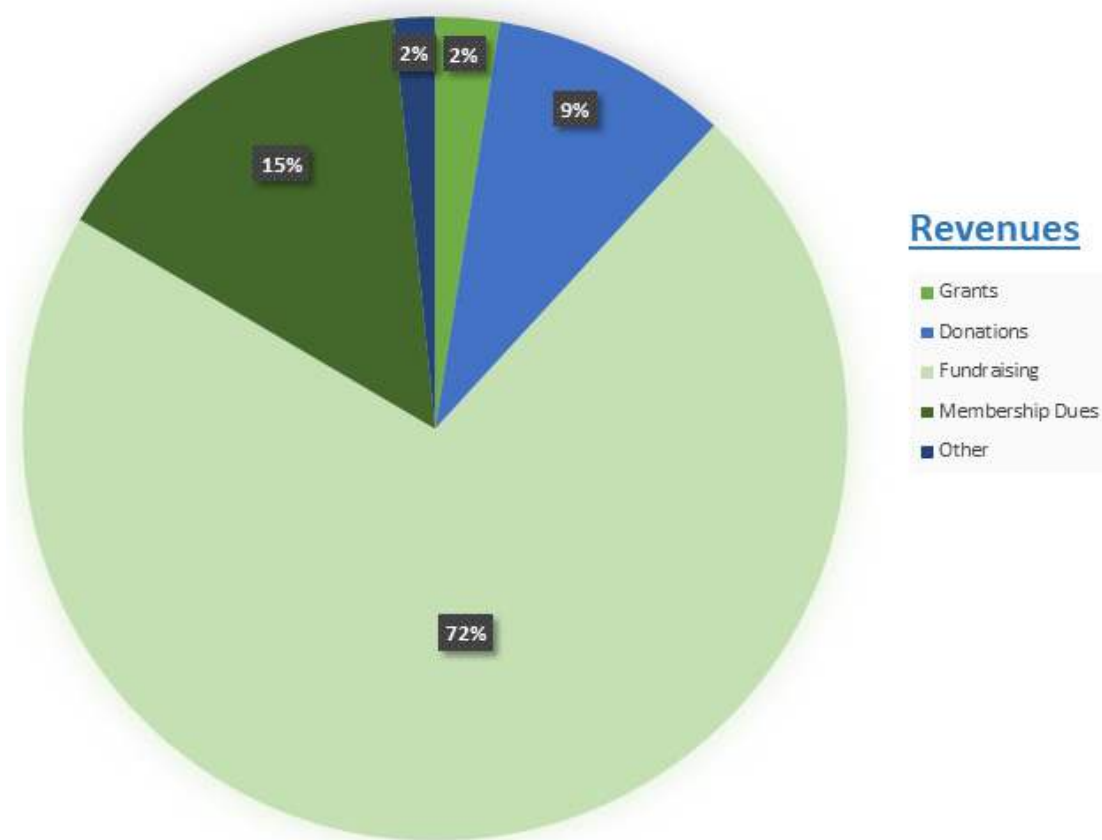
The 13th Annual Dog River Fishing Tournament was unfortunately forced to be cancelled at the last minute due to high winds and a small craft advisory being issued. We know many of you look forward to this event and we're excited to host it again next year under better weather conditions! However, it was still a big success because of our dedicated sponsors and raised \$8,200 for DRCR projects.



**SAM
WINTER
& CO.**
REAL ESTATE

Local business partner Sam Winter & Co generously donated \$2500 to DRCR this year as part of their 10th year anniversary giving back to the community campaign. These funds went towards a living shorelines public awareness event and helped fund our educational program materials. So thankful for business allies who share our goals!

All DRCR resources are dedicated to projects in keeping with mission of clean water, healthy habitats, pollution control, and family fun on Dog River and its urban tributary creeks.



Without your support our important work would not be possible!

PARTNERS

Alabama Coastal Foundation
Alabama Coastal Heritage Trust
Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources
Alabama Department of Transportation
Alabama Rivers Alliance
Braided River Brewery
Peninsula of Mobile
South Alabama Land Trust
Keep Mobile Beautiful
Love Your Community
Partners for Environmental Progress
City of Mobile
Mobile Baykeeper
Sunshine Canoes
Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Mobile United
Osprey Initiative
The Nature Conservancy
Sierra Club of Alabama
USA School of Marine & Environmental Sciences
Dauphin Island Sea Lab
Alabama Water Watch
Eslava Creek Yak Club

SPONSORS

8th Annual Mudbottom Music Festival

Kennon & Lisa Drew
Council Member Ben Reynolds
The Shropshires
Tonsmeire Properties
Sam Winters & Co.
The Legends
Mobile Area Water and Sewer System
Pat & Susan Coffey
The Deatons
The Greens
Regional Steel Products, Inc.
Uniti Fiber
Bruce & Cathy Wagner
Joy Gardner Studio
Dr. Candace Harsany, A Loving Memorial to Dr John Harsany
The Hargrove Foundation
Council Member Scott Jones
The KBA Group PC
Linda & Dan Leonardi
Saunders Yachtworks
Council Member C J Small
Thompson Engineering
Marbury & Dave Buckhaults
Old Shell Investments & Contracting
Osprey Initiative

Allied Mortgage Corporation
Animal Hospital of Mobile
Dakinstreetarchitects
Mike & Heather Daniels
Nate Jones, GYN Oncologist w USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute
Rod & Courtenay Rocconi
Synergy Marine & Environmental Contractors
What the Finan?
Wood Specialities
AdVenture Specialties Company
Dina & Tom Bender
Roy & Missy Benton
Coldsmith, Ryder and Associates Ameriprise Financial
Susan & Monty Dees
David Delaney
Eagle Eye UAS Drone Services
Kathy & Percy Fountain
Dr. and Mrs. J. Russell Goodloe, Jr.
Gulf Wilbert Vault Co., Inc.
The Hansards
Jeffries Family Law, LLC
Mit & Charlotte Kopf
Andrew & Lee Levert
Rejuvenation Medspa
Mobile Import Salvage
Sophiella Gallery
Steiner Shipyard
Andy & Liz Terry
Darlene & Steve Willis

IN KIND SPONSORS

The Adams
Callaghan's Irish Social Club
Cammie's Old Dutch Ice Cream Shoppe
Pamela Denham & Associates
Gulf Distributing
The Mobile Rundown
The Pools
Rock & Roll Offs
Showbiz Theatrical Services
Willow Bridge

13th Annual Dog River Fishing Tournament

Regional Steel Products, Inc.
Dependable Sheet Metal
Osprey Initiative
Leavell Investment Management
Hancock Whitney Bank
Marine & Industrial Rigging & Testing Solutions
Gator Bender
ROB'T J. BAGGETT, INC
Rivory Coffey
Mobile Big Game Fishing Club
Imperial Dade
The Levert Family
Mr and Mrs Erling Riis III
Raymond James & Associates
Black Chaffe
Dog River Marina
Davidson Fuels
Gulf Distributing
Grand Mariner Restaurant & Marina
John Howard, Weighmaster

Our sincerest gratitude and appreciation to the countless volunteers who give their time and energy for our cause and to our devoted membership. We look forward to a successful 2024. Thank you and see you on the river!



Please remember DRCR in your charitable gifting in two ways: first, a direct gift is always appreciated, and second, remember us in your will or estate plan.

Traditional IRA holders who are required to take RMD yearly can contribute to DRCR any part of their RMD as a Qualified Charitable Deduction (QCD) and have that amount excluded from taxable income. This is a very easy process. Consult your Broker and Tax Accountant for questions.

Be sure to subscribe to receive our quarterly newsletter *titled River Reads, What's Current?* by visiting our website www.dogriver.org and follow us on Facebook and Instagram to stay up to date on Dog River happenings.

