



# BELTLINE BLUES

Running Time: 12:49

Directed By: Rhonda Chan Soo

## THE ISSUE

At \$5.45 billion, the controversial Northern Beltline -- a 52-mile proposed bypass around Birmingham -- would be the most expensive road project in Alabama's history.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Taxpayer dollars, clean water in the Cahaba River and Black Warrior River, clean air, endangered species, rural countryside, homes owned by families for generations.

## SUMMARY

With a \$5.45 billion price tag, the Northern Beltline would not only be the most expensive road project in Alabama history, but it would also push sprawl into rural landscapes, exacerbate air pollution in the region, and increase polluted runoff into the Black Warrior and Cahaba Rivers. And it would force many property owners to relocate -- some who have owned their property for generations.

"You can forget all your troubles," Ardell Turner says of her quiet, wooded homestead in Pinson, Alabama. "But it won't be like that when the highway comes through here."

The Alabama Department of Transportation's own studies have shown that the Beltline will do little to relieve traffic congestion in the Birmingham area. Proponents of the highway, which include powerful corporate landowners along the route's path, claim the Beltline would create jobs and growth. But is that really the case? Who really profits, and who pays, if the Northern Beltline is built?

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# ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

*Rhonda Chan Soo* was born and raised on the twin islands of Trinidad and Tobago, and it is there that she began to develop an affinity for the natural world and a strong desire to protect it. After receiving her Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Science from Furman University, she pursued a Masters Degree in Documentary Film at Wake Forest University. She became involved in making non-fiction films with an objective of increasing dialogue on important social and environmental issues, ultimately to foster change. Making a short environmental film with SELC provided an opportunity to combine two of her passions, environmental science and filmmaking. It is her hope that this film can provide a convincing argument for environmental protection in Alabama. She also aspires to apply the skills and knowledge she has developed in her work in Trinidad, the U.S., and worldwide. A fun fact about her: Her favorite part of the day is listening to NPR while having coffee in the morning.



## LEARN MORE

### **Southern Environmental Law Center**

[southernenvironment.org/cases/northern\\_beltline](https://southernenvironment.org/cases/northern_beltline)

### **Black Warrior Riverkeeper**

[blackwarriorriver.org/northern-beltline.html](https://blackwarriorriver.org/northern-beltline.html)

### **SOURCE (Save Our Unique River, Communities & Environment)**

[sourceonbeltline.org/](https://sourceonbeltline.org/)

### **Cahaba River Society**

[cahabariversociety.org/programs/roads-and-sewers/](https://cahabariversociety.org/programs/roads-and-sewers/)



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# FROM THE ASH

Running Time: 13:06  
Directed By: Nicholas Price

## THE ISSUE

Massive unlined pits of toxic coal ash are leaking arsenic and other pollutants into Alabama's rivers, streams, and groundwater.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Clean drinking water, freshwater ecosystems, wildlife habitats, the health of families and communities who live near coal ash landfills.

## SUMMARY

Despite the dangers revealed by the catastrophic coal ash spill at the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)'s Kingston plant in 2008, political and industry pressure from Washington has delayed the adoption of the tough federal regulations needed to ensure safe disposal of coal ash. Thus, coal ash ponds and landfills continue to leak toxins into rivers, streams, and groundwater, potentially affecting the quality of drinking water supplies for Alabamians.

TVA's Colbert Fossil Plant has been discharging coal ash into Cane Creek for years. "My drinking water comes just downstream from the Colbert Steam Plant," says Herbert Harris, a sixth generation farmer in Colbert County. "That's what I drink every day in my house."

Further south, Booker Gipson lives directly across the street from the Arrowhead Landfill, the final resting place of millions of cubic yards of coal ash from the 2008 Kingston spill. "What about the younger generation?" he asks. "What will get into our food and water coming from this landfill?"

Is Alabama becoming a dumping ground for coal ash?

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# ABOUT THE FILMMAKER



**Nicholas Price** graduated summa cum laude from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in May 2013, with a dual degree in International Studies & Linguistics and Film Studies. As an undergraduate, he began his documentary work through UAB's Media Studies program and later studied with the Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Communications Digital Production and Storytelling program in Dubai on a William Jefferson Clinton Scholarship. While at UAB, he was Editor in Chief of two publications, including the student newspaper, *The Kaleidoscope*. Nick's overarching goal is to publish stories that prompt the audience to ask for more, to self-educate. His films "Limitless" and "Schism 63" do just that from radically different vantages.

He is a native of Birmingham, Alabama.

## LEARN MORE

### **Southern Alliance for Clean Energy**

<http://www.southeastcoalash.org/>

### **Southern Environmental Law Center**

[http://www.southernenvironment.org/cases/coal\\_waste\\_spill/](http://www.southernenvironment.org/cases/coal_waste_spill/)

### **Southeast Coal Ash Waste**

<http://www.southeastcoalash.org/>



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# OVERBURDENED: UNDERMINED

Running Time: 11:31  
Directed By: Lacey Kennedy

## THE ISSUE

More than 90 active strip mines in the Black Warrior River watershed are causing irreversible damage to the landscape and jeopardizing the health of waterways and local communities.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Clean water in the Black Warrior River, wildlife habitats, endangered species, forests, property values, recreation, and quality of life for communities near mines.

## SUMMARY

Strip mining for coal is one of the most environmentally destructive practices imaginable. First, all trees, vegetation, and topsoil are cleared away. Then, dynamite is used to blast away rocks to gain access to coal seams. The leftover rubble may be dumped into nearby valleys, burying streams and wildlife habitats. Runoff from the mines can carry acids, heavy metals, and sediment, polluting nearby waterways and disturbing the ecosystems. Because of their proximities to the mines, peaceful waterfront communities like River Lawn in Walker County have to deal with noise, dust, shaking, and even fly rocks coming from blasting at nearby mines.

“It’s louder than the fireworks you see on the 4th of July,” says Russell Oliver, a resident of River Lawn. “We had tremendous dust from the blasting. It shook my house so bad that my rafters would move.”

State agencies have consistently failed to require the protections needed to reduce harm to water quality and quality of life. Can a river — and a community — ever recover from such a devastating practice? How do you take a landscape, destroy it, and then put it all back together?

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# ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

*Lacey Kennedy* is a senior in the University Honors Program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She is pursuing a degree in Molecular Biology with minors in Media Studies, Spanish, and Chemistry. An activist at heart, she is heavily involved in the immigrant rights movement in her home state of Alabama and is interested in using film to illuminate environmental justice issues. Her work has been shown at the Sidewalk Film Festival. “Los Obreros” is a bilingual piece which explores the daily challenges and triumphs of Latino immigrant workers in the greater Birmingham area.

<http://vimeo.com/23864226>



## LEARN MORE

### **The Southern Environmental Law Center**

[http://www.southernenvironment.org/cases/coal\\_mining\\_alabama](http://www.southernenvironment.org/cases/coal_mining_alabama)

### **Black Warrior Riverkeeper**

<http://blackwarriorriver.org/coal-mining.html>

### **Friends of Hurricane Creek**

<http://www.hurricanecreek.org/creekkeepercorner>



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# DAMMED: THE STORY OF ALABAMA'S RIVERS

Running Time: 11:29

Directed By: Katherine Gorringer

## THE ISSUE

Dams disturb the structure and function of Alabama's watersheds and can affect water quality and quantity for users. The state does not have a comprehensive water plan to assure the need for dams and prevent against harm from dams. As a result, property owners can dam rivers without the approval of their downstream neighbors.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

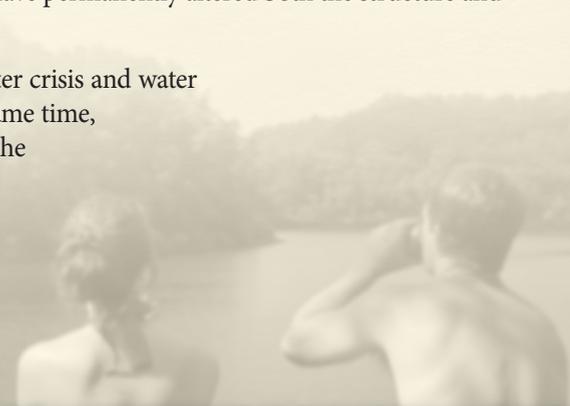
Freshwater flows, fish and other aquatic life, riparian habitats, drinking water quality and quantity for downstream users.

## SUMMARY

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the damming of the Coosa River in Alabama, an event often cited as the single greatest cause of extinctions in the modern history of the United States. Dams have permanently altered both the structure and function of several once free-flowing water bodies in the state.

However, "Dams have an interesting and complicated relationship to our water crisis and water solutions because on the one hand, dams inhibit the flow of rivers, but at the same time, dams provide a number of benefits," says Heather Elliot, Professor of Law at the University of Alabama. Indeed, dams can provide hydropower, and the lakes created by dams allow for a wealth of recreational opportunities.

In 2009, the city of Cullman proposed to build a \$60 million dam on the Duck River in response to fears of drought. Would the damming of the Duck River mean catastrophe for that watershed? How has the damming of Alabama rivers altered our watersheds, water quality, and water quantity of our state?



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# ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

**Katherine Gorringer** is a second-year student in the M.F.A. program in Documentary Film & Video at Stanford University. Torn between her passion for music and social justice, she received a B.A./B.M. from Northwestern University and began working on non-fiction film productions to marry her creative and humanistic sides – including projects for The History Channel and independent filmmaker Laurie Collyer. While studying in Buenos Aires, Argentina, she produced her first documentary film, “Los Vecinos,” about residents who use public space to remember the “disappeared” people of the 1970s dictatorship. Since then, she has been a teacher, a musician, a goat farmer, and a filmmaker with a passion for beautiful and compelling stories. She has a special interest in telling stories about people and communities who resist the status quo and envision a better world.



## LEARN MORE

### **Alabama Rivers Alliance**

<http://www.alabamarivers.org/>

### **Coosa Riverkeeper**

<http://coosariver.org/issues/dams/>

### **The Southern Environmental Law Center**

[http://www.southernenvironment.org/cases/clean\\_water\\_agenda\\_for\\_alabama/](http://www.southernenvironment.org/cases/clean_water_agenda_for_alabama/)

### **The Nature Conservancy in Alabama**

<http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/habitats/riverslakes/reducing-the-ecological-impact-of-dams.xml>

### **Black Warrior Riverkeeper**

<http://blackwarriorriver.org/dams.html>



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# RAIN'S GONNA COME

Running Time: 14:17

Directed By: Emily Fraser

## THE ISSUE

Polluted runoff from our streets, parking lots and other surfaces is a major problem for Alabama's waters, and one of the leading causes of water pollution in the South.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Clean water in rivers, streams, deltas and bays, freshwater ecosystems, wildlife habitats, recreational areas, drinking water quality.

## SUMMARY

Every time it rains, water carries trash, chemicals, and other pollutants directly into our rivers and streams, posing a serious threat to the health of our waterways and drinking water. Some rivers in Alabama have been turned into virtual rivers of trash, the Dog River in Mobile being a prime example.

“Last year we were the rainiest place in the country,” says Kim Sweet, a resident of Mobile. “We have so much water here, people take it for granted.”

The problem may seem overwhelming, but there are solutions—and local businesses in Alabama are embracing innovative solutions that are making a difference. Will it be enough to turn the tide?

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# ABOUT THE FILMMAKER



*Emily Fraser* is a graduate student in Stanford University's Documentary Film M.F.A. program.

Emily graduated from the College of William and Mary in 2007 with a dual degree in Environmental Policy and Art/Architecture. Before transitioning into filmmaking, Emily worked in the Washington, DC area in both the nonprofit and private sectors, focusing on projects in conservation, resource management, and alternative energy. She attended the George Washington University Institute for Documentary Filmmaking in 2010 and has since served as the lead videographer for Philmont Scout Ranch in northern New Mexico and as a submission screener for AFI Silverdocs Documentary Film Festival. Her recent work includes a 16mm black and white film about a California dairy farmer, a short documentary about a civilian supplying critically needed supplies to U.S. troops, and a personal essay film about insomnia.

## LEARN MORE

### **Cahaba River Society**

<http://www.cahabariversociety.org/programs/water-quality/>

### **Choctawhatchee Riverkeeper**

<http://choctawhatcheeriver.org/index.html>

### **Mobile Baykeeper**

<http://mobilebaykeeper.org/programs/stormwater.html>

### **Dog River Clearwater Revival**

<http://dogriver.org/>

### **Black Warrior Riverkeeper**

<http://blackwarriorriver.org/stormwater-runoff.html>

### **Alabama Stormwater Partnership/Muddy Water Watch**

[http://mobilebaykeeper.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=196](http://mobilebaykeeper.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=196)



# FOREVER WILD

Running Time: 11:24

Directed By: Sebastian Rogers

## THE ISSUE

Alabama is last in the Southeast when it comes to the amount of public land available for its citizens' use; however, the Forever Wild Land Trust Program is attempting to make more public land available to its citizens.

## THE SOLUTION

To provide for greater habitat conservation and public recreational opportunities, the Forever Wild Land Trust Program created state-owned Nature Preserves and Recreation Areas.

## SUMMARY

In 1992, over eighty percent of Alabama voters approved a constitutional amendment establishing the Forever Wild Land Trust (FWLT), making it the most successful conservation ballot measure in the history of the United States. Over the past 20 years, FWLT has purchased more than 227,000 acres of land in Alabama for public use.

"It's a God-given responsibility to care for and manage our natural resources with stewardship principles in mind. Forever Wild, to me, is an extension of all of those things," says Tim Gothard of the Alabama Wildlife Federation.

The program runs on just ten percent of the interest from the savings in the Alabama Trust Fund, which is supported by royalties from offshore drilling. Without relying on taxpayer money, coastal wetlands, forests, wildlife habitats and other natural areas in Alabama have been protected by FWLT so that future generations can enjoy them.



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# ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

*Sebastian Lasaosa Rogers* is a recent graduate of Vanderbilt University, having double majored in Anthropology and Film Studies. At Vanderbilt, Sebastian worked for the Outdoor Recreation Center teaching rock climbing and leading outdoor climbing, backpacking, and service trips. He grew up in Concord, Massachusetts and currently lives in Nashville, Tennessee pursuing a filmmaking career. The primary focus of his film and social justice work concerns workers' rights issues. He is interested in the intersection between environmental sustainability and the needs of local workers in areas heavily impacted by resource exploitation and human/environmental vulnerability.



LEARN MORE

**Forever Wild Land Trust**

<http://alabamaforeverwild.com>



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# LIVING SHORELINES

Running Time: 10:49

Directed By: Laurence Alexander

## THE ISSUE

Bulkheads, seawalls and other hardened structures are being built along Alabama's shorelines under the false assumption that they stop coastal erosion and protect property, when they actually contribute to loss of shorelines and coastal habitats.

## THE SOLUTION

"Living shorelines" are a cost-effective solution to erosion that protects property and creates aquatic and wildlife habitats by mimicking processes of a dynamic coastal environment.

## SUMMARY

Almost half of Mobile Bay's shoreline is armored with bulkheads and concrete seawalls under the assumption that they prevent erosion. Unfortunately, these hard structures are expensive, temporary, and actually cause erosion in adjacent areas, speeding the breakdown of our fragile shores.

Fortunately, there's a better, more cost-effective solution—and it's catching on. "Living shorelines" are built by cutting back the shore to reduce wave energy, planting vegetation to anchor the bank and counter wave impact, and placing an oyster reef to act as a breakwater. They create a critical aquatic habitat for many species, including shrimp, oysters, and other marine life essential to a healthy coast and local communities that depend on a vibrant seafood industry.

"Our community here is very dependent on tourism, on the seafood industry, on recreational and charter fishing," says Jeff DeQuattro of the Nature Conservancy in Alabama. "[Coastal Alabama] is a destination for people. The reason they come here is because we have these natural resources."

State agencies, local governments, property owners and more are increasingly coming together to share ideas and strategies for supporting the use of living shorelines, as well as education of the public on the necessity of using long-term, natural solutions to erosion in Alabama.

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# ABOUT THE FILMMAKER



*Laurence Alexander* is currently pursuing her M.F.A. in Science and Natural History Filmmaking. Always intrigued with the natural world, she obtained her B.S. in Conservation Biology from Clemson University. Throughout her undergraduate years, she cultivated a keen interest in the impact humans have on the natural world and how advocacy can mitigate that effect. She believes that the strongest avenue to change is through education. While she has worked in several education capacities, she hopes that her films will reach a larger audience. Her production experience ranges from crewing for short films to working as a camera operator at live events, and she was recently contracted by the U.S. Geological Survey to produce a public outreach film on brucellosis in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Laurence is currently producing an independent film that examines the relationship between the salt marsh ecosystem and surrounding human communities.

## LEARN MORE

### **The Southern Environmental Law Center**

[http://www.southernenvironment.org/cases/living\\_shorelines/](http://www.southernenvironment.org/cases/living_shorelines/)

### **Mobile Baykeeper**

<http://mobilebaykeeper.org/programs/coastal-restoration.html>

### **The Nature Conservancy in Alabama**

<http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/alabama/index.htm>

### **Restore Coastal Alabama**

<http://100-1000.org/>



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# STATE OF POWER

Running Time: 11:45

Directed By: Luke Buckley

## THE ISSUE

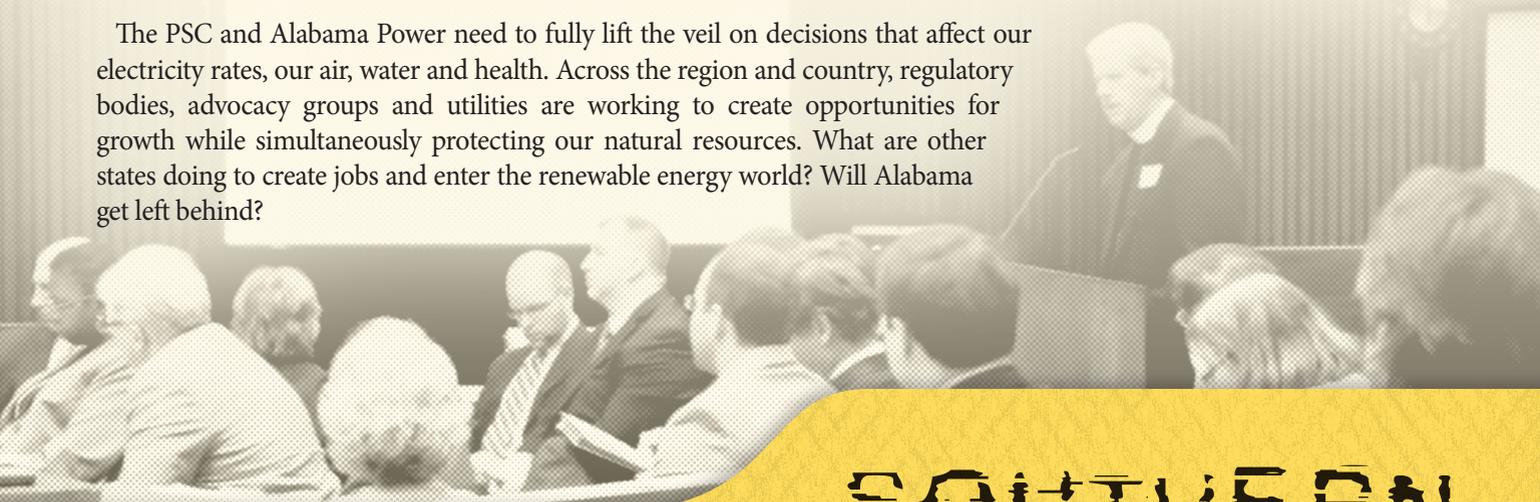
Despite its abundant potential, solar energy is a vastly underutilized resource in Alabama, and the current state of politics makes it difficult for Alabama to catch up with the rest of the country for clean energy solutions.

## SUMMARY

Alabama Power has a monopoly over energy in the state, and the Public Service Commission, the entity in charge of checking this overwhelming power, has done little to challenge that over the course of 30 years. But Alabamians have been paying the price, both in pollution from coal-fired power plants and utility rates.

“In the future, I would like to see Alabama use and take advantage of more alternative energy sources,” says Reverend Mark Johnston, an Episcopal minister and the director of Camp McDowell in Nauvoo. “I’m worried about the future of my children and my grandchildren.”

The PSC and Alabama Power need to fully lift the veil on decisions that affect our electricity rates, our air, water and health. Across the region and country, regulatory bodies, advocacy groups and utilities are working to create opportunities for growth while simultaneously protecting our natural resources. What are other states doing to create jobs and enter the renewable energy world? Will Alabama get left behind?



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# ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

**Luke Buckley**, originally from Long Island, New York, attended the University of Alabama where he received his B.A. in Visual Journalism and Creative Writing before going on to complete his M.A. in Communication at the University of South Alabama. In between his degree programs, Buckley worked in Brooklyn, New York, at Sidetrack Films, where he assisted in the releases of “Kurt Cobain: About a Son” (2006) and “Beautiful Losers” (2008). His first short- documentary, “The Future is in Your Hands” (2012), is an oral history of the struggle for voting rights in Mobile, Alabama. The film went on to win Best Short-Film at the 2012 South Alabama Film Festival and continues to be used as a means of raising civic awareness in southern Alabama. As a follow-up to the film, Buckley ventured out to learn more about felony disenfranchisement. The result is a seven minute short film titled, “Denied.” He is currently working on the film’s distribution campaign in an effort to raise awareness about the issue at a national level. In 2012, Buckley’s comedic-adaptation of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” received top honors at the Mobile Film Scramble. From 2011 to 2012, Buckley produced Noise Candy, a podcast featuring musicians from around the country for AL.com.



## LEARN MORE

### **The Southern Environmental Law Center**

[http://www.southernenvironment.org/cases/solar\\_initiative/](http://www.southernenvironment.org/cases/solar_initiative/)

### **GASP**

<http://www.gaspgroup.org/>

### **Alabama Environmental Council**

<http://www.aeconline.org/energy>



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