



## MEDIA ADVISORY

- WHO:** U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service      Mobile Area Water and Sewer System  
Environmental Defense      Southeastern Natural Resources  
Senator Jeff Sessions
- WHAT:** Media event to announce a Habitat Conservation Plan for the threatened gopher tortoise and recognize an important public-private partnership creating a 222-acre conservation bank to protect the tortoise, and restore its diminished habitat, the longleaf pine ecosystem.
- WHEN:** June 25, 2001, 10:00 a.m.
- WHERE:** Converse Reservoir (Big Creek Lake), Mobile, Alabama.
- WHY:** This is the first Federal conservation bank for the gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*), and a first for the State of Alabama. The event will be an important milestone for the United States, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the State of Alabama, and its public and private partners. The Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) demonstrates that endangered species conservation and the needs of private property owners need not be mutually exclusive. The HCP is unique in that it provides property owners with a simple, less expensive way to comply with the Endangered Species Act while at the same time restoring and protecting habitat for the gopher tortoise. It is a win-win partnership for the species, the habitat, conservationists, landowners, and local, state and federal officials. The gopher tortoise is a keystone species for the longleaf pine habitat (*Pinus palustris*). Among the 362 species using gopher tortoise burrows or longleaf pine ecosystems are the black pine snake, the eastern indigo snake, and the gopher frog. By offering realistic and beneficial options to landowners, the bank maximizes the conservation benefits for the entire ecosystem.

### MEDIA CONTACTS:

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**VISUALS:** Gopher tortoise, special site visit, outdoor setting with expansive lake views.

Please visit the following websites for updates on this emerging story: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: <http://southeast.fws.gov/daphne>, Environmental Defense: [www.environmentaldefense.org](http://www.environmentaldefense.org)  
Mobile Area Water and Sewer System: [www.mawss.com](http://www.mawss.com)



Photo Credit: USFWS, Daphne Field Office  
Description: Typical gopher tortoise burrow entrance



Photo Credit: USFWS, Daphne Field Office  
Description: Gopher Tortoise



Photo Credit: USFWS, Daphne Field Office

Description: Gopher tortoise hatchling burrow



Photo Credit: Dr. David Nelson, University of South Alabama

Description: Gopher Tortoise