



# *the* Flattened Musk Turtle



A SOUTHERN COMPANY

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Smith Lake Shoreline Management  
5558 Curry Highway, Suites 3&4  
Jasper, AL 35503  
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Photos by Meg McKinney



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## Quick Facts:

- Scientific name: *Sternotherus depressus*
- Small aquatic turtle with a distinctly flattened carapace (upper shell) up to 4.7 inches long.
- Believed to live for 50 years.
- Active from April to October.
- Native to the Black Warrior River system in west-central Alabama, including Smith Lake.
- Preferred habitat: crevices, submerged boulders and rock shelves.
- Diet: snails, mussels and aquatic insects.



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Alabama Power and our partners are working to preserve the federally threatened flattened musk turtle (FMT) and its habitat on Smith Lake.

During the past several years, our biologists, working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), have conducted research to better understand the FMT and its habitat. This research led to the development of shoreline stabilization methods that preserve the federally threatened species and its habitat while also providing continued recreational opportunities for lake residents.

## FMT habitat permitting

Our shoreline management team reviews every shoreline permit application with federal protection guidelines in mind. After review, sites identified as flattened musk turtle habitat have special permit requirements meant to minimize the impact of construction activities to the species.

As part of these requirements, Alabama Power developed enhanced natural stabilization guidelines. These outline how to use appropriate slopes and materials to provide foraging, cover and protection for the flattened musk turtle, as well as providing the turtles access to breeding sites.



Permitted construction activities that may affect the flattened musk turtle or its habitat are authorized between Nov. 1 and March 31, when the turtle is less active.

A demonstration of enhanced natural stabilization techniques is available for viewing adjacent to the Smith Dam boat launch.

Known Range of Flattened Musk Turtle



## Endangered Species Act

On June 11, 1987, the USFWS listed the FMT as a threatened species, offering it protection under the Endangered Species Act.

The act - passed by Congress in 1973 - safeguards plants and animals by providing protection against direct human threats, such as killing and trapping, as well as preserving their habitat. The protection of species listed as endangered or threatened by the Department of the Interior extends to public and private lands.



APC biologist conducts FMT research on Smith Lake.