

ADEM UPDATE

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Mulberry Fork Back to Normal



A wastewater spill and fish kill has been closely monitored by ADEM since June 6

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management has been actively involved in response to a wastewater spill and subsequent fish kill for the past 35 days. ADEM's commitment to providing a safe, productive, and healthful environment has been evident throughout the process.

On June 6, the Department was notified of a release of partially-treated wastewater from River Valley Ingredients (Tyson Farms, Inc.) in Hanceville into Mulberry Fork. The release was reportedly due to a pipe/hose failure that was being used to pump from one holding pond to another. River Valley Ingredients hired an emergency response contractor who removed

recoverable wastewater and dead fish.

ADEM staff responded to the spill on the same day and confirmed that the discharge was stopped, and alerted Tyson Farms, Inc. to initiate the public notification process. ADEM along with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources promptly began monitoring water quality and assessing the situation.

The Department collected water quality data at numerous locations and documented reduced levels of dissolved oxygen that is believed to be the main cause of the fish kill. ADCNR also collected data along with ADEM on the number of fish killed and the different species impacted.

ADEM documented the levels of dissolved oxygen extending approximately 22 miles downstream from the plant location as well as the elevated levels of pathogens associated with the spill. Dead fish were observed by the Department as far as 40 miles from the facility as a result of rain and river flow. ADEM worked with the Alabama Department of Public Health to confirm that a fish consumption advisory was not warranted due to the fish kill being related to depressed levels of dissolved oxygen.

On June 13, ADEM called a meeting in Montgomery with Tyson Farms, Inc. officials to review public outreach, response efforts, and remediation efforts. Information from ADEM's response and investigation into the spill has been made available on the Department's website with links to sampling locations.

ADEM also contacted drinking water systems with downstream intakes after the spill regarding possible impacts. The systems in the area have adjusted treatment as needed to ensure that drinking water meets all health-based standards.

The Department's investigation of the incident remains open, and permanent signage has been posted at boat ramps to allow boaters, anglers, and users to access water quality information. ADEM will take the appropriate enforcement actions following a full review of the comprehensive reports, sampling data, and all other relevant information.

ADEM Celebrates Earth Day



Approximately 200 students participated in ADEM’s Earth Day event

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management hosted a special Earth Day event on April 11 with approximately 200 middle school students visiting the Central Offices in Montgomery.

The celebration enabled the students to visit ADEM and learn about the environmental programs implemented on a daily basis to protect and preserve Alabama’s natural resources. The students watched up-close demonstrations and learned about a wide-range of environmental programs including fish tissue monitoring, water quality sampling, air monitoring, recycling, hazardous waste

disposal, and efforts to ensure that clean, safe drinking water is provided for all Alabamians.

ADEM staff provided support and worked hard to make the effort a success illustrating that at ADEM, “every day is Earth Day.” More than 65 departmental employees gave the students opportunities to learn about careers at ADEM, and encouraged the students to pursue science-related fields of study.

The following schools were represented this year: CAMO Kids from Bullock County, Alabama Christian Academy, Goodwyn Middle School, Millbrook Middle School, and Brewbaker Middle School. The Earth Day event lasted from 9 a.m. until noon, and received local media coverage from WSFA, TV-12 in Montgomery and WAKA, TV-8 in Montgomery.

The first organized “Earth Day” was held in 1970, with more than 20 million Americans demonstrating in various cities. It is now an annual event in which activities are held worldwide to demonstrate support for environmental awareness.

Beach Monitoring Information Available Online

ADEM continues to closely monitor the situation along the Gulf Coast. The state’s beaches have remained open through June and July even after Tropical Storm/Hurricane Barry caused water levels to rise and excess water flowed back out into the Gulf. In addition, Mississippi’s beaches were closed due to toxic algae, but that has not been a problem in Alabama.

The Department routinely monitors 25 high-use and potentially high-risk recreational sites from Perdido Bay to Dauphin Island. The selection of sites is determined using a risk-based evaluation and ranking process. This process considers a number of factors for a given site including the amount of use and the amount of risk. Water samples are typically collected twice per week, once per week, or once every other week from June through September (and once per month during the cooler months).

This information is available on ADEM’s website. The goal of ADEM’s beach monitoring program is to increase public awareness and provide valuable water quality information to help the public make more informed decisions concerning their recreational use of coastal waters.



ADEM’s website lists beach monitoring information

Recycling Challenge Rewards Schools



Floyd Middle Magnet School won the 2019 Recycling Challenge

Floyd Middle Magnet School collected the largest amount of recycled materials, and received a check for \$430.28 for their efforts, while Prattville Junior High was second and received \$300. ADEM Director Lance LeFleur made the check presentations as part of ADEM's Earth Day activities.

Recycling in Alabama is a \$6 billion industry that employs more than 10,000 people. A ten-percent increase in recycling could yield an additional 1,400 new jobs with an estimated, gross personal income of over \$66 million. ADEM is pleased to provide students with the opportunity to represent their school in the annual recycling challenge, which benefits local communities as well as Alabama's environment.

Public Availability Training Held at ADEM

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management continues to improve operations to provide more input from the public. ADEM has numerous reports, documents, records, and forms available on the Department's website at the click of a button. ADEM also has events and public hearings designed to give Alabama taxpayers better access.

As a part of the Department's public hearing process, ADEM has developed public availability sessions to enable concerned citizens to have interaction with ADEM staff, ask questions, review maps and charts, and make comments on the record.

Recently, the Department held its first-ever public availability training session to involve more personnel in this process. ADEM employees from Air, Land, Water, Permits & Services, and Field Operations Divisions attended this workshop in March. The training is designed to show ADEM staff how to set up and conduct a public availability session that generally takes place prior to a public hearing. The sessions provide information to the public, enable citizens to have questions answered face-to-face, and help the Department interact in a more open dialogue with the public.

The public availability sessions typically involve personnel from the Public Relations Unit, the Environmental Justice Coordinator, the Office of General Counsel, and the ADEM division hosting the public hearing / public availability session. The training workshop included 20 employees and covered all aspects of an availability session, including set-up, research materials, checklists, sign-up sheets, maps, graphic displays, and visual aids.



ADEM employees listen and learn at public availability class

ADEM Helps Recycling Club Collect Caps for Benches



L-R: Lance LeFleur, Laurel Bacon, Chrisdeona Jackson, Marilyn Elliott, and Gavin Adams

Stanhope Elmore High School's Recycling Club began a plastic cap drive in September 2018 to help collect plastic tops, lids, and various types of medicine bottles to recycle into benches for the school. With the help of ADEM, the City of Millbrook, and the school's parents, students and teachers, the recycling club was able to gather more than 400 pounds of plastic for their project.

Of the material collected, ADEM contributed over 40 pounds to the club's mission. The Department's participation helps to demonstrate the benefits of recycling and the rewarding outcome of collecting small plastic to repurpose into something greater.

After a four month collection drive, students from the club visited ADEM with their collected caps and

gave details of their plan to deliver the plastic to Green Tree Plastics in Indiana to recycle the caps into four benches. Each bench is made with about 100 pounds of plastic. The caps were dropped off in May and four new benches were returned and placed in the school's atrium, for the enjoyment of students and visitors alike.

The goal is to continue recycling so more benches can be made for Stanhope and possibly other schools in Millbrook. ADEM employees interested in helping out, can put their plastic lids in the designated cups at the recycling bins in the main building.

Groundwater Conference Held in Montgomery

Each year, the Alabama Department of Environmental Management hosts a groundwater conference for public drinking water utilities, municipal officials, government agencies, and environmental consultants to meet and discuss issues of importance related to groundwater availability, impacts to groundwater resources, and changing regulatory requirements. The event provides an opportunity for groundwater professionals to network and learn about new technologies related to groundwater protection and restoration.

On June 12, more than 115 professionals who work to manage and protect groundwater resources attended ADEM's 19th Annual Groundwater Conference in Montgomery at the Gordon Persons Building, where they heard presentations on a variety of subjects related to geology, hydrology, geochemistry, assessment, remediation and regulatory issues.

Approximately 1.5 million Alabamians depend on groundwater resources as their source of drinking water. Ensuring a clean, safe supply of this precious commodity is a priority for ADEM along with helping drinking water systems operate at maximum efficiency.



ADEM's 19th Annual Groundwater Conference was held in June in Montgomery

ADEM UPDATE Available Online

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management publishes the *ADEM UPDATE* quarterly to inform Alabamians on the latest news and activities of the Department. As a cost-savings measure, the *ADEM UPDATE* is no longer printed. It is distributed electronically and available online through the publications link on the ADEM website at adem.alabama.gov.



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