

# ADEM UPDATE

*The official newsletter of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management*

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## **ADEM Resumes Testing Drinking Water in Schools**



**ADEM set to resume water testing in schools**

To better ensure the safety of drinking water in public schools, the Alabama Department of Environmental Management is collaborating with the Alabama State Department of Education to resume sampling of drinking water in the public schools.

This partnership is supported by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and will be in addition to an ongoing sampling program for childcare centers. The project also marks a return to sampling drinking water at public schools, after a successful three-year effort from 2017-2019.

Childhood exposure to lead has long been a concern of researchers and medical professionals. While public water systems are required to conduct rigorous testing to ensure the water they produce meets all health-based standards, no state or federal requirements exist for child care centers or schools to test for lead in drinking water.

“This project’s continued goal of providing information to the parents and staff and protecting our children from dangerous exposure to lead will be served well by ADEM’s partnership with the State Department of Education,” said ADEM Director Lance LeFleur. “We look forward to working with schools again to further our mission to ensure clean drinking water for Alabama’s most vulnerable populations.”

The program is based on EPA’s “3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water” guidance used by schools and childcare centers. It emphasizes training, testing, and taking action to reduce lead exposure in drinking water. Participating schools will be provided training and resources to self-evaluate and select fixtures for testing. The samples will be sent to the State Drinking Water Laboratory for analysis at no cost to the schools. The program calls for schools to share the results with students, parents, and staff, and periodic reports will also be posted on ADEM’s website.

## **Brownfields Grants Awarded for Three Alabama Projects**

Brownfield Assessment Grants for \$1.5 million have been awarded for three projects in Alabama.

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management has announced that the City of Tuskegee, the East Alabama Regional and Development Commission and the Top of Alabama Council of Governments have received funding for cleanup plans and community engagement activities.

The funding comes from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to provide critical finances to lift up and protect underserved and overburdened communities. The funds will be used to address and improve the environmental, public health, economic, and social impacts associated with contaminated and abandoned sites.

The East Alabama Regional and Development Commission in Anniston/Sylacauga and the Top of Alabama Council of Governments in Scottsboro each received \$600,000 in this Brownfield Assessment Grant, and the City of Tuskegee was awarded \$300,000 to develop multiple cleanup plans for reclaimed industrial sites.

“I want to express ADEM’s appreciation to EPA for again assisting communities in Alabama in rehabilitating once-contaminated sites so they can be put to productive use,” said ADEM Director Lance LeFleur.

## Earth Day Recognized in Montgomery

For the second consecutive year, four Retirement Systems of Alabama buildings in downtown Montgomery were illuminated with green and blue lights at the request of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management to celebrate Earth Day.

“Earth Day is always a big day for us here at ADEM,” said Director Lance LeFleur. “It’s an opportunity to highlight Alabama’s many natural wonders, as well as help educate and raise public awareness among young people and adults alike about how they can help protect and preserve the state’s environment.”

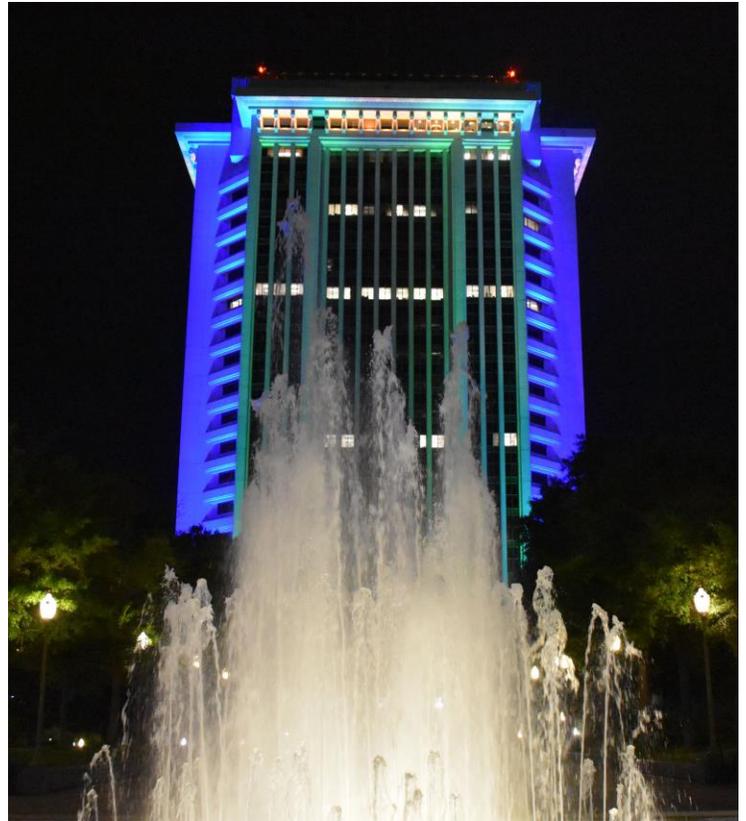
The buildings that were lit up green and blue were the RSA Tower on Monroe Street, the RSA Headquarters on South Union, the Renaissance Hotel & Spa on Tallapoosa Street and the RSA Dexter Avenue Building.

“I want to thank Dr. David Bronner and the RSA for again demonstrating their support for Earth Day,” LeFleur said. “We hope people were reminded of the environmental treasures we enjoy and the need for good stewardship, such as keeping our waters and lands free of litter and trash, and doing their part to recycle plastics, paper, aluminum cans and other materials - all of which contribute to a clean, healthy environment.”

This past April 22<sup>nd</sup> marked the 51st anniversary of the first Earth Day. The theme in 2021 for this global day of activism was “Restore Our Earth.”

In addition to the lighting, ADEM created a series of videos explaining and demonstrating many of the Department’s key functions in protecting Alabama’s environment.

The videos cover a variety of topics, including air monitoring, fish tissue sampling, water quality and recycling.



The RSA Tower featured green and blue lights for Earth Day

## ADEM Provides Water Quality Monitoring at Public Beaches

Water quality information for Alabama’s Gulf Coast public beaches is available to help people make informed decisions about their recreational use of coastal waters this summer.

ADEM has initiated the enhanced summer monitoring associated with its 2021 Coastal Beach Monitoring Program and resumed its weekly collection and analysis of water samples at 25 public beaches in Mobile and Baldwin counties.

ADEM staff conduct water quality sampling and testing to establish overall water quality data from each public beach. The enhanced monitoring efforts will stretch through Labor Day with water samples being collected weekly, or more frequently if needed, at each of the public beach locations.

Beach selection and sampling frequency are determined using a risk-based evaluation and ranking process that considers the amount of beach use, the level of risk, and any specific factors associated with each location.

The public beaches that are monitored display a color-coded sign advising swimmers of the most recent water quality conditions and information about potential health risks associated with swimming or other water activities at the beach. In addition to the on-site signs, water quality information is available online at [www.adem.alabama.gov](http://www.adem.alabama.gov) along with a map of the beach monitoring locations.

ADEM partners with the Alabama Department of Public Health and the Baldwin County Health Department to ensure the successful implementation of its Coastal Beach Monitoring Program.

## ADEM Employee Elected to International Organization

A worldwide group has recognized one long-time employee at the Alabama Department of Environmental Management.

Jim Grassiano, Chief of ADEM's Compliance Assistance and Operator Certification Programs, has been elected to the Association of Boards of Certification.

The ABC is an international organization that advocates for certified drinking water and wastewater operators. In early 2021, Grassiano was elected to be the vice chairman of the board for the ABC.

"I'm deeply honored to have been elected as the new 2021 ABC vice chair," said Grassiano. "I look at my board term as an opportunity to give back to the certified operator profession, to serve others, and to help our members grow in knowledge, technical ability, and leadership in the times ahead."

Grassiano said that his election to the board at ABC is a very good thing for ADEM. He said it gets the Department noticed in a lot of positive ways.

He noted that ADEM was even nominated for "Operator Certification Program of the Year" in 2021, making it one of only three programs that were nominated. The Canadian city of Calgary won the award, but Grassiano said being nominated was a big deal for ADEM.

Grassiano has worked at ADEM for 24 years, and prior to that, he worked as a consultant for CH2M Hill. He holds an M.S. in Environmental Engineering from Virginia Tech.

The Association of Boards of Certification includes close to 100 certifying authorities, representing more than 40 states, ten Canadian provinces and territories, as well as several international and tribal programs. These programs have certified more than 240,000 water and wastewater operators, laboratory analysts, plant maintenance technologists, biosolids land appliers, and backflow prevention assembly testers, since ABC's formation in 1972.



**Jim Grassiano**

## Water Quality Studied Through Macroinvertebrates



**Alicia Phillips**

At ADEM, many environmental scientists work throughout the Department in unique roles.

For Alicia Phillips, she enjoys her job outdoors and in the water. Alicia is a senior environmental scientist and has worked for the Department for 11 years and helps determine the water quality of streams. She does this by collecting and identifying macroinvertebrates in the streams.

Macroinvertebrates are organisms large enough to see without a microscope that do not have a backbone such as worms, snails, insects, and crayfish. Macroinvertebrates live in different habitats, such as rocks, logs, sand, or aquatic plants where scientists collect them to help determine the condition of the water. Some of the macroinvertebrates collected are more tolerant of environmental conditions where others are not.

Following the collection of habitats, Alicia and other scientists sort out the macroinvertebrates and analyze them for data and research.

"We put this data in our database and we do some calculations that comes up with a rating for the stream based on the bugs living in the stream," said Phillips.

This process, along with water quality, fish, and periphyton data, help ADEM better understand the health of the streams, and overall water quality. This is one of the many aspects of what the Department does on a daily basis to ensure Alabama has a safe, healthful, and productive environment.

# 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](http://adem.alabama.gov). The ADEM website also has links to videos related to the Department's programs, public hearings, and recent events of interest.



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