

ADEM UPDATE

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Capital City Plume Comes off Superfund List

Two decades of work by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Alabama Department of Environmental Management and an alliance of governmental and business groups to identify, monitor and clean up contaminated groundwater and soil in a 50-block area of downtown Montgomery culminated in the recent EPA announcement that the Capital City Plume Superfund Site will not be included on the National Priorities List (NPL).

The announcement formally confirms that the EPA is satisfied with the remediation work and the oversight by ADEM and no longer considers the site a public health threat worthy of priority status. It also should give another boost to downtown economic revitalization, which in recent years has seen the building of a minor league baseball park, riverfront park, amphitheater, black history museums and entertainment district.

“This is validation of all the hard work by many parties – city, county, state, federal and business entities – over many years to address and resolve a real environmental challenge,” said ADEM Director Lance LeFleur. “It couldn’t have happened without all the parties deciding we needed a plan to tackle the problem and agreeing to work together to carry it out. Now, this area of downtown Montgomery that has already seen significant redevelopment and reuse can blossom even more.”

The EPA’s action to remove the Capital City Plume from its proposed NPL listing was part of the federal agency’s larger announcement last week that it had added six other Superfund sites to the priority list and is proposing the addition of four others. None of the 10 sites are in Alabama. The NPL includes the nation’s sites with the most serious uncontrolled or abandoned releases of contamination. The list serves as the basis for prioritizing EPA Superfund cleanup funding and enforcement actions.

ADEM began investigating a report of soil contamination in downtown Montgomery in 1993. Subsequent investigations found several zones of contaminated groundwater under the downtown area, including contamination in two city wells. Contaminants detected were volatile organic compounds, including various forms of dry cleaning solvents, cleaning agents and degreasers. A chemical wholesaler, auto repair shops and dry cleaners were identified as possible sources.

The site was proposed for listing on the National Priorities List in 2000.

Remediation actions taken included emergency soil excavation; groundwater monitoring; abandonment of all affected public water supply wells and closing all private wells in the area; planting trees that help remove contaminants; use of vapor barriers in some buildings; and implementing ordinances and other land use rules to prevent groundwater use and future potential vapor intrusion risks.

In 2012, the City of Montgomery, Montgomery County, the Montgomery Water Works and Sanitary Sewer Board, the State of Alabama, the Montgomery Advertiser, Standard Roofing of Montgomery and other businesses formed the Downtown Environmental Alliance. The Alliance worked with the EPA and ADEM to develop an action plan and agreement to address remaining remediation needs. It also agreed to reimburse the EPA for the costs of the federal agency’s involvement with the site. ADEM, through an agreement with the EPA, has overseen site assessment and remediation since 2015.



This map illustrates the plume site in Downtown Montgomery

ADEM Receives Trash Free Waters Grant



EPA awarded ADEM funds for a Gulf of Mexico project

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced that the Alabama Department of Environmental Management has been selected to receive a \$500,000 grant to reduce and prevent trash from entering the Gulf of Mexico. ADEM's litter abatement project entitled "Help Keep Our Waters Clean," is one of five entities to receive this award.

The project is designed to promote awareness about watersheds and create reductions in nonpoint source pollution entering waterbodies draining to the Gulf of Mexico. This project utilizes a watershed approach and litter reduction initiative to enable citizens to participate in the voluntary practice of preventing litter from reaching waterways.

The most visible aspects of the "Help Keep Our Waters Clean" project are signs being placed along interstates in Alabama to inform motorists they are entering a watershed and encourage them not to litter, as well as colorful metal sculptures of water life – such as fish, turtles and water birds – that will mark litter collection sites at rest areas and other strategic locations.

ADEM will work to create engagement opportunities to abate sources of trash at litter collection sculpture sites while receiving education about the watershed, and promoting long-term sustainable voluntary practices to reduce pollution.

An important component of the project is education. ADEM will reach out to disadvantaged and other communities to promote anti-littering messages and to educate the public about the importance of good watershed health. The project will target specific locations and schools in its efforts.

ADEM Participates in Trust Fund Meeting

Due to Covid-19 restrictions and safety concerns, the Alabama Underground and Aboveground Storage Tank Trust Fund Management Board held its July meeting via teleconference. ADEM's Chip Crockett, Dorothy Malaier, and James Thrash participated in the meeting for the board's first meeting since January.

The Board heard a financial update from ADEM staff, and a proposed administrative cost budget for the 2022 fiscal year, and unanimously approved proposed revisions to ADEM's administrative code (335-6-16) regarding Tank Trust Fund guidelines and procedures.

A new contract with Alabama Tools, LLC was also approved by the Board to continue the Alabama Tank Operators online learning system. The meeting lasted just over two hours.

The Tank Trust Fund is designed to reimburse eligible tank owners and operators for costs associated with the assessment and remediation of eligible releases from underground and above ground storage tanks. For many owners and operators throughout the state, the fund serves as the required financial responsibility mechanism.



ADEM staff participated in a Tank Trust Fund meeting in July

High Honor Goes to ADEM Employee

An employee at ADEM has been recognized for a prestigious achievement. Cal Johnson, a biologist at ADEM's field office in Decatur, has been named as the Fisheries Conservationist of the Year in Alabama. Johnson received the award at the 2020 Alabama Wildlife Federation Governor's Conservation Achievement Awards ceremony in August.

This year's event was specifically modified to incorporate Covid-19 safety precautions. Usually an indoor banquet with 400 attendees, the 2020 event was limited to 90 attendees and held outdoors at the Matt W. Bowden Gathering Area at the AWF's NaturePlex facility in Millbrook.

Additional precautions included the use of face coverings and no self-serve food or beverage.

Award recipients and presenters were allowed short, mask-free photo-ops. Governor Kay Ivey provided a congratulatory video prepared specifically for award recipients.

In a news release from AWF, Johnson was touted as being committed to Alabama's fisheries resources. He currently works in ADEM's Field Operations Division conducting fisheries and stream assessments.

Johnson is also active in the Alabama Rivers and Streams Network and served as chair of the Alabama Chapter of the American Fisheries Society in 2018. He is highly committed to his profession, as one of his fellow professionals stated, "Cal always makes himself available. He demonstrates leadership and wisdom beyond his years, and represents the fisheries industry with professionalism."

Johnson was also recognized by ADEM Director Lance LeFleur at the August meeting of the Alabama Environmental Management Commission. This is the second time an ADEM employee has won this award. In 2013, Roy Collins was selected as Water Conservationist of the Year. The AWF Governor's Conservation Achievement Awards are the most respected conservation honors in the state of Alabama. Over the past 45 years, AWF has presented awards to individuals and organizations that make great contributions to the conservation of Alabama's wildlife and related natural resources.



ADEM's Cal Johnson accepts the Conservationist of the Year award

ADEM Receives Grant to Help Emergency Response

ADEM has been awarded a grant to better respond prior to, during, and after hurricanes and other natural disasters. The funds will be used to buy generators and expand an emergency communications system.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has awarded \$340,754 to ADEM to assist the Department in carrying out its mission and better protect Alabama's water resources. The funds will be utilized to improve ADEM's emergency response efforts and field presence through enhanced communication capabilities and quicker response times.

Under the Clean Water Act, EPA has awarded ADEM these funds as part of its Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act. The grant is in response to Hurricane Michael which inflicted a large amount of damage to several south Alabama counties in October 2018. The hurricane made landfall causing major damage and flooding, including problems with infrastructure and wastewater utilities. Excessive rainfall and loss of power during the storm resulted in sanitary sewer overflows in the affected areas. The counties suffering the most damage included Geneva, Henry, Houston, and Mobile counties.

ADEM will work with the Alabama Rural Water Association to purchase three generators to deploy to better assist wastewater treatment systems during future hurricanes and severe storms. The Department and ARWA will work together to deploy the generators where they are needed most.

The Department will also use a portion of the grant funds to pay for and expand GroupCast, which is a service to call, text, email, and utilize social media to contact area residents in times of emergencies and for educational reminders. The system has been successful for rapidly contacting water systems in emergency events. ADEM plans to expand this service to cover municipal wastewater treatment systems that will enable the Department to more quickly contact either a wide segment, or all of the systems before, during, and after natural disasters.

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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