

# ADEM FY2024 Operating Plan

(10/01/2023)

In response to the Unified Strategic Plan, the Department has prepared its short term (FY2024) operating plan. This plan includes specific actionable projects to be undertaken to accomplish the results envisioned by the Department and Commission outlined in the Unified Strategic Plan adopted by the Commission in 2019.

## Goal 1: Effective and Responsive Commission

- A. The Department will continue to inform the AEMC on regulations initiated by the Department by providing specific pertinent data on each request for rulemaking (see regular “Ongoing Rulemaking Information” memos).
- B. The Director will regularly provide Commission members relevant information on current environmental issues potentially impacting environmental policy (for example EPA initiatives, PFAS & CCR issues, litigation, etc.).
- C. The Director will regularly provide the Commission relevant metrics on performance of the Department.

## Goal 2: High Performing Work Environment

- A. Provide adequate financial and physical resources to support a high performance work environment:
  - i. Maintain stable state-sourced component of funding including the continuation of the 4 million dollar General Fund appropriation for FY 2025 and match dollars for the State Revolving Fund (SRF) /Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).
  - ii. Seek long-term funding for water program.
  - iii. Pursue appropriate new sources of federal funding by submitting proposals through EPA competitive Grants Program.
  - iv. Sell old Mobile Field Office Lab.
- B. Provide high caliber, diverse, motivated workers as human resources to support a high-performance work environment:
  - i. Continue to recruit high quality candidates with emphasis on outreach to minority candidates through college co-op and intern programs and pre-college school age outreach (see item 3 D i-iv below).
  - ii. Investigate and utilize available recruitment tools.
    - a. Post jobs on indeed, Ziprecruiter, Handshake, etc.
    - b. Advertise job openings in professional journals such as AL Professional Engineers.
    - c. Prepare recruitment tools such as videos depicting departmental jobs to use in conjunction with standard recruitment.
  - iii. Continue to clearly communicate to all employees the Department’s mission, goals and the programs to achieve those goals and an understanding of their individual roles in achieving the overall mission.

- iv. Provide inhouse networking opportunities to stimulate a better understanding of the various functions of the Department and their relationship to the Department's mission.
  - v. Train managers in leadership skills by enrolling all new managers in CPM I and "Dynamics of Supervision".
  - vi. Train future managers in leadership skills using workshops in Foundations of Transformational Leadership.
  - vii. Continue Media training for managers.
  - viii. Continue to recognize individual high performance in appropriate venues.
  - ix. Continue to encourage / provide on-going professional development such as CPM, PG and PE accreditation (recognize at AEMC).
  - x. Encourage PG & PE accreditation by providing specialized Engineering/Geologist training opportunities.
  - xi. Develop senior managers to replace retiring personnel.
  - xii. Enhance teleworking strategy including refinement of guidelines to address issues identified during periodic program review.
  - xiii. Incorporate mentoring methodologies into permanent teleworking strategy.
  - xiv. Enhance the training program for managers of a remote workforce.
  - xv. Develop a CPM refresher course to reinforce management skills for ADEM leadership.
- C. Employ appropriate data collection for performance measurement and analysis to support management control. Systems to be used may include:
- i. EPA dashboards
  - ii. State Framework Review metrics and findings e.g. addressing and preventing SNCs
  - iii. Major Significant Non-Compliance list, HPV list
  - iv. EPA grant commitments (see item 4 C)
  - v. Performance statistics to verify measures implemented for efficiency improvement e.g. CAFO Rule modification.
  - vi. Statistics tracking activities in low income and minority communities
  - vii. Productivity statistics and monitoring tools for a remote workforce
- D. Promote innovation as opportunities arise:
- i. New or leading edge electronic applications (see item 4 G).
  - ii. Virtual inspections and remote monitoring technology.

### **Goal 3: Credible Relationships with External Stakeholders**

- A. Be available for regular meetings with the environmental groups.
- B. Be available for regular meetings with the Industrial workgroup.
- C. Maintain ready access to ADEM public information spokesperson.
- D. Continue outreach to schools:
  - i. Conduct annual Earth Day environmental education event hosted by ADEM at either the Central Office, one of the ADEM-Field Offices, or another appropriate location.
  - ii. Promote recycling through the "Recycle Challenge" targeted at K-12 schools.
  - iii. Support Water Festivals for elementary school students.

- iv. Fabricate a mobile classroom facility to conduct environmental education in minority and low-income communities (multi- year).
- E. Host or participate in regular conferences with a clear focus on educating regulated Alabama businesses & consultants on compliance requirements geared at increasing compliance:
  - i. Air & Waste Regulatory Update
  - ii. UST Assessment and Remediation / ADEM Groundwater Conference
  - iii. Drinking Water Conference
  - iv. Wetlands Regulatory Workshop
- F. Host or participate in educational conferences with regulated and non-regulated public and/or private entities regarding voluntary participation in the following programs:
  - i. Clean Water SRF / Drinking Water SRF Program
  - ii. Alabama Recycling Fund Program
  - iii. State Brownfields Redevelopment Program
  - iv. Section 319 Non-point Source Program
  - v. Health Services Inc Community Health events
- G. Conduct workshops and other activities including development of videos to educate stakeholders (with focus on minority and disadvantaged communities) on how to access environmental data and information using the ADEM web page:
  - i. "What's Happening in Your County
  - ii. e-File
  - iii. e-Complaint
  - iv. e-Map
  - v. e-SSO
  - vi. Alabama Environmental Permitting and Compliance System (AEPACS) Site Explorer (public)
- H. Continue engagements with ADPH, ADCNR, Alabama Department of Commerce, Governor's Office and other state & local agencies as appropriate.
- I. Continue to update Community Outreach document and implement provisions. Track community outreach activities for FY2024 and record in the "Community Engagement" document.
- J. Continue to implement formal EJ, Title VI, and diversity & fair treatment training for supervisors and employees.
- K. Continue the sampling in drinking water at childcare and pre-k facilities in conjunction with Department of Early Childhood Education and the Department of Human Resources and complete the initial lead sampling in public schools.
- L. Work with the Southeastern Fire and Air Quality Workgroup and the Alabama Forestry Commission to help reduce effects of prescribed fires on Air Quality in the state.
- M. Collaborate with EPA/ECOS on PFAS and other emerging contaminants, and collect and publish information (e.g. ambient water quality data, effluent data, drinking water data), as appropriate, for use by ADEM and other state/federal agencies and the public.
  - i. Require public water systems to sample for PFAS, as necessary.
  - ii. Continue water quality sampling and fish tissue sampling for PFAS in Alabama waterways as needed based on other data/information.

- iii. Investigate and identify potential sources of PFAS impacting public drinking water systems (see item 3 M i).
  - iv. Require NPDES permittees to sample for PFAS in effluent, as necessary.
  - v. Investigate the feasibility of the addition of PFAS to the department's laboratory capabilities.
- N. Encourage industry to increase outreach to local communities.
  - O. Continue to strengthen external communications exploring the use of available communication tools and partnerships.
  - P. Hire contractor to redesign the ADEM website with a focus on functionality and user friendliness using appropriate methodologies and establishing milestones (multi- year).
  - Q. Increase environmental awareness in the communities through focused participation in activities such as public availability sessions, "USPS Every Door Direct Mail", evaluation of Nextdoor app as a community notification tool, community gatherings, festivals and service club meetings.
  - R. Develop formal agreements with government-owned solid waste facilities and industry to establish a scrap tire processing network to increase the beneficial re-use of scrap tire materials in the state (multi-year).
  - S. Continue to expand formal agreements with Municipal and County leaders concerning unauthorized dumping of solid waste and scrap tire remediation by developing relationships through focused meetings, and with a focus on developing cooperative agreements (multi-year).
  - T. Partner with the Alabama Department of Transportation to install anti-litter sculptures at Alabama Welcome Centers on Interstate Highways (multi- year).
  - U. Implement the Statewide Litter Education Campaign and other litter reduction strategies to promote trash free waters.
  - V. Partner with local government entities through the use of GOMESA funds to install litter traps in Baldwin and/or Mobile counties.
  - W. Investigate and identify live stream/virtual outreach opportunities, including internet pop up technology.
  - X. Develop grant writing workshops to help local communities take advantage of available grant programs (multi-year).
  - Y. Promote and participate in Intergovernmental Relationships with counties and municipalities to share ideas, information, and other resources in order to address and resolve environmental issues at the local level.
  - Z. Complete 5 year survey of public opinion on environmental quality and focus communication/education based on results.
  - AA. Continue to participate in EPA's Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) program to provide grants to assist with the control or replacement of older, dirtier diesel engines.
  - BB. Participate in EPA's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) program to assist recipients in their efforts to compete for climate pollution reduction grant funding.
  - CC. Utilize the newly constructed Mobile Office as a showcase to highlight low impact development techniques.

## Goal 4: Efficient and Effective Departmental Operations

- A. Maintain open communication among Director, Deputy Director, and Division Chiefs through formal and informal means.
- B. Proactively stimulate communication at all staff levels through bi-weekly executive management meetings, distribution of Director's report to AEMC, distribution of Operating Plan, etc.
- C. Operate to maintain primacy for all EPA authorized programs including NPDES, Drinking Water, RCRA and AIR programs by:
  - i. Meeting or exceeding the FY2024 NPDES EPA work plan requirements.
  - ii. Meeting or exceeding the FY2024 SDWA EPA work plan requirements.
  - iii. Meeting or exceeding the FY2024 RCRA EPA work plan requirements.
  - iv. Meeting or exceeding the FY2024 AIR EPA work plan requirements.
- D. Engage with EPA to accomplish the principles of Cooperative Federalism in EPA oversight of ADEM authorized federal programs as well as expanding coordination of nondelegable programs such as TSCA and CERCLA.
- E. Operate within state provided funding and within federal budget limitations.
- F. Continue to promote the LID Handbook as a companion to the existing Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook to provide a LID guide to municipalities and the construction industry in Alabama.
- G. Using established milestones implement AEPACS to handle Permitting, Inspections, Enforcement, Electronic Reporting, program specific management output reports, and nSPECT for:
  - i. Operator Certification
  - ii. Solid Waste and other Land Division programs (multi-year)
  - iii. Air program
  - iv. Recycling Facility Reporting Module
- H. Continue activities to incorporate greater e-enterprise and e-business applications as a means to reduce costs and increase quality:
  - i. Continue to increase the use of web based forms/applications to eliminate paper from both external and internal sources.
  - ii. Develop a monthly operating reports (MORS) database and development of eDWR system to allow the submittal of MORS data (multi- year).
  - iii. Continue to increase participation in e-SSO by incorporating e-SSO participation requirements in all newly issued Municipal NPDES Permits.
  - iv. Incorporate written SSO response plans, including public notification as a permit condition requirement in all newly issued Municipal NPDES Permits.
  - v. Continue development of informative e-Compliance Assistance Tools for the ADEM website including program-specific Compliance Assistance videos, fact sheets, and FAQ resources linked to the Compliance Assistance link on the ADEM homepage.
  - vi. Develop Laserfiche forms (similar to Laserfiche timesheets), for both In-State and Out-of-State travel reimbursements, which provide destination picklists (Cities/Counties), enable automated calculations, and automated routing for signatures, etc.

- I. Participate on national workgroups to support new or enhanced e-enterprise development and integration into federal and state programs.
- J. Continue to improve IT operations to ensure high reliability, high-performance, energy efficient infrastructure required to support Departmental operations.
  - i. Upgrade and replace departmental phone system, replacing the on-premises system with a more robust cloud solution.
  - ii. Update the formal disaster recovery plan to utilize our new backup and recovery systems so that we have a plan to replace equipment and work environment in case of a physical disaster to the building and/or the computer room.
- K. Continue efforts on Cyber Security to assure departmental information systems are protected; i.e., employee cyber security training, enhance cloud backups to provide added security for the Department's data.
- L. Maintain a high-level marketing effort to educate local governments, with an emphasis on disadvantaged communities, on funding available from the State Revolving Fund for water and wastewater infrastructure including Low Impact Development and green projects including any necessary legislation.
- M. Update State CCR rules as federal CCR program evolves and educate public on CCR issues.
- N. Continue development of the Beneficial Use (Biosolids etc) program including additional rulemaking that may be necessary to effectively manage program.
- O. Evaluate potential updates to beneficial use regulations based on results of ADEM funded Auburn research on elimination of odor related to poultry processing by product.
- P. Update Medical Waste, Scrap Tire and Brownfields VCP rules.
- Q. Continue to review recycling and scrap tire programs for possible increases in effectiveness including additional rulemaking that may be necessary to effectively manage program.
- R. Review water assessments to optimize and possibly expand.
- S. Finalize ADEM's revised Records Disposition Authority including review by OGC and submission to the Department of Archives and History for final approval.
- T. Identify and implement improvements to the electronic processing and storage of legal documents.
- U. Update and continue implementation of replacement schedule for laboratory equipment that is no longer being serviced by the manufacturer.
- V. Distribute American Rescue Plan Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds in accordance with guidelines established by the Alabama Legislature and Congress.
- W. Continue development and implementation of SRF Database.
- X. Implement security audit findings and improve cybersecurity.
- Y. Finalize MOU with Auburn University to provide limited Unmanned Aerial Vehicle assistance.
- Z. Explore Artificial Intelligence in order to evaluate the cost effectiveness of AI in increasing the efficiency in permitting, compliance, and enforcement processes.