

ADEM UPDATE

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Thousands Learn and Enjoy at Water Festival



ADEM's Patti Hurley explains the edible aquifer to 4th graders

School buses unloaded thousands of children at Auburn University Montgomery on May 15-16 for the 2012 Montgomery County Water Festival.

Designed to educate 4th grade students about all aspects of water, natural resources, wetlands, and groundwater, the festival was a huge success. More than 2,800 students participated in the event and were able to learn about the source of their drinking water and how to protect water resources for themselves and future generations.

Through educational sessions, hands-on experiences, and even a magic show, the students learned about the many ways water is used and needed in our environment. ADEM staff taught many of the sessions at the festival

to give the children an understanding of the many uses of water to include drinking, bathing, washing, and swimming. In addition, students learned that water is a natural resource that should not be taken for granted.

The children were able to experience hands-on learning at several activities including an edible water aquifer session. This gave the 4th graders an opportunity to see the effects of pollution by pouring sprinkles, colored sugar and clear soda on their ice cream. Following the explanation of the aquifer and what the ingredients represented, the students got to eat their project. The message got through, with one student overheard saying, "It is everyone's responsibility to protect the water in our environment."

ADEM Wins Exchange Network Award

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management has been recognized for the second consecutive year for its leadership and innovation regarding the electronic flow of data, and sharing of data, through the Exchange Network.

ADEM was recently honored by the U.S. Environment Protection Agency with the presentation of the Exchange Network Leadership Award for the Department's "outstanding leadership in achieving the Exchange Network's strategic vision." The award follows on the heels of ADEM's receipt of the Exchange Network Progress Award in 2011 for "outstanding progress in meeting the Exchange Network's goals."

The Exchange Network is a partnership between States, Tribes, Territories, and EPA that was first envisioned in 1998. The Network provides a foundation that supports the ability of these groups to work together, share data, and provide better access to high quality environmental data. The automation, standardization, and real time access to high quality data allows environmental decision makers to make better, timelier decisions that lead to better outcomes for the environment.



Landfill Moratorium Public Meetings Underway

The Department has announced the scheduling of a series of meetings to be held throughout the State focusing on the management of solid waste. In its 2011 Regular Session, the Alabama Legislature directed ADEM to evaluate the current solid waste management procedures in Alabama, including the requirements for permitting new, solid waste landfills. The Legislature also imposed a 24-month moratorium on the issuance of permits to certain new landfills. Earlier this year the Legislature passed a one-year extension of the moratorium that will run through May 2014.

In order to ensure an independent, unbiased perspective on the current state of Alabama's solid waste management procedures, ADEM is working with Auburn University to facilitate the meetings and compile the public input into a final report. Once completed, later this year, the final report along with any needed program enhancements will be presented to ADEM and the Alabama Legislature.

"This project is another example of ADEM seeking meaningful public input from the citizens of Alabama regarding the implementation of its programs," said ADEM Director Lance LeFleur. "ADEM is constantly seeking ways to improve Alabama's environment and these public meetings and solid waste study provide yet another opportunity to continue that effort."

As part of the study effort, Auburn has established a project website (www.eng.auburn.edu/asws/) to provide pertinent information to interested parties. Any person interested in attending one of the public meetings can obtain specific meeting information from the website.

Groundwater Professionals from Around the State Gather

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 the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, along with helping drinking water systems operate at maximum efficiency.

Each year, ADEM 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.

More than 170 professionals who work to manage and protect groundwater resources attended the conference in Montgomery on June 6 where they heard presentations on a variety of topics including real-time monitoring of groundwater conditions, field testing of aquifers, remediation strategies, and new methods of water resource management.

ADEM also took advantage of the conference to review what reports have to be submitted to the Department and how to discover the release of pollutants. Drinking water systems were also encouraged to prepare for natural events, such as droughts and storms, which could possibly disrupt the safety or reliability of Alabama's drinking water supplies.



Over 170 people attended the ADEM Groundwater Conference

Earth Day Event Wows Students

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management hosted a special Earth Day event in April with more than a hundred high school students visiting the Central Offices on Coliseum Boulevard in Montgomery.

The celebration enabled 11th and 12th grade students from area high schools to visit ADEM and learn about the environmental programs implemented on a daily basis to protect and preserve Alabama's natural resources.

The students received guided tours and learned about a wide-range of environmental programs including fish tissue monitoring, water quality sampling, air monitoring, recycling, solid waste disposal, and efforts to ensure that Alabamians are provided with clean, safe drinking water.

Fifty-five ADEM employees provided support and worked hard to make the effort a tremendous success. The Department's staff gave the students opportunities to learn about careers at ADEM, and encouraged the students to pursue careers in the sciences.

"ADEM has one of the most diverse staffs in all of state government," said ADEM Director Lance LeFleur. "Our scientists, engineers, geologists, meteorologists, chemists, biologists, and other professionals have dedicated their careers to protecting Alabama's environment and we are pleased to provide this opportunity to educate high school students on the benefits of protecting our natural resources, and at the same time provide them with information on career opportunities."

Participating schools were Holtville High School, Booker T. Washington Magnet High School, G.W. Carver High School, and Sidney Lanier High School. In addition, local media outlets also attended the event and interviewed students and staff in conjunction with their coverage of Earth Day.



Over 100 high school students attended the ADEM Earth Day Career Fair

Commission Action Reduces Gas Prices Five Cents per Gallon

A better scientific understanding of how the air pollutant ozone is formed prompted the Alabama Environmental Management Commission (AEMC) to eliminate the requirement that Birmingham area consumers use a costly special blend of gasoline during the summer months.

The special blend, also called "boutique" gasoline, has been required in the Birmingham area and other urban areas around the county for approximately 10 years. Originally put in place to improve air quality in urban areas, the special blend gasoline has recently been found to have virtually no impact on improving Alabama's air quality yet it increases the fuel costs of consumers by about 5 cents per gallon.

The AEMC took action at its February meeting in hopes that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency would grant approval in time to avoid having to use the special blend gasoline during the summer. Although the EPA approval process normally takes at least six months, which would not have been in time to help area consumers this year, the EPA unexpectedly published its approval of the change in April and also authorized its implementation immediately.

Elimination of the requirements for the special blend of gasoline has resulted in lower fuel costs in the Birmingham area this summer. In addition, by approving Alabama's action, EPA paved the way for the implementation of similar actions across the nation.

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 emailed and available online through the publications link on the ADEM website at adem.alabama.gov.



Alabama Department of Environmental Management
(334) 271-7700



Alabama Department of Environmental Management
P.O. Box 301463
Montgomery, AL 36130-1463
www.adem.alabama.gov