

ADEM UPDATE

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Recycling Grants Top \$1.5 Million in 2014



The sign on this recycling container highlights that the container was partially funded by ADEM through a grant from the Alabama Recycling Fund.

In an effort to enhance recycling and economic growth, the Alabama Department of Environmental Management recently announced the 16 recipients of more than \$1.5 million in recycling grants for this year. The funds will be used by local governments and non-profit organizations to purchase equipment such as balers, compactors, recycling trailers, recycling bins, collection trucks, and roll-off containers that will make recycling more accessible for Alabamians.

The recycling grant funds can be utilized to initiate new recycling programs, or enhance existing programs, and to also support education and outreach activities that promote the importance of recycling at the local level.

“Recycling continues to provide environmental and economic benefits in this state,” said ADEM Director Lance LeFleur. “And, I am pleased that ADEM can utilize our financial and technical resources to support

this effort for the citizens of Alabama.”

The recycling grant funds are made possible through the Solid Wastes & Recyclable Materials Management Act passed by the Alabama Legislature in 2008. The legislation imposed a \$1 per ton fee on all solid wastes disposed of in Alabama landfills. A portion of the proceeds generated by this fee supported the creation of the Alabama Recycling Fund, which provides the foundation for ADEM to award these recycling grants annually.

ADEM has steadily worked to enhance the opportunities for Alabama citizens to have access to recycling facilities. The ability to recycle and reuse waste materials provides environmental benefits by decreasing the amount of solid waste material that is sent to landfills, thereby conserving landfill space and reducing the need to construct new landfills.

At the August meeting of the Alabama Environmental Management Commission, Director LeFleur played a new public service announcement designed to encourage recycling through a statewide campaign entitled “Recycling Works for Me.” The PSA’s were developed in part by a \$75,000 grant from ADEM. The funding went to a partnership of 11 municipalities, including the City of Tuscaloosa, who worked with the Alabama Broadcasters’ Association to secure a three-to-one match on the investment. This effort provided \$225,000 worth of air time for the spots to run on television and radio in numerous markets around the state.

ADEM Makes Low Impact Development Handbook Available

Low Impact Development (LID) is an approach to land development that works with nature to manage stormwater as close to its source as possible.

LID minimizes stormwater runoff through natural resource based site design, minimizes land disturbances through resource planning, and uses natural processes such as infiltration, and storage of stormwater to reduce negative impacts on water quality.

Successful implementation of LID creates a more natural hydrologic cycle in a developed watershed, decreases polluted stormwater runoff, improves stream health, and promotes sustainable communities integrating ecology, economy, and social benefits.

In an effort to encourage the use of LID practices, ADEM worked with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System at Auburn University to develop an LID Handbook.

The LID Handbook contains specific chapters on stormwater control measures to assist municipalities in understanding and implementing the most appropriate LID practice for their watersheds. It also illustrates and explains that LID can be applied to new developments, or as retrofits to existing developments, and can also be adapted to high density or low density developments.

In an effort to assist municipalities in enhancing their “green infrastructure” ADEM provided a copy of the LID Handbook to all Alabama municipalities that operate under an MS4 stormwater permit. The Department also mailed a CD copy of the Handbook to over 500 municipalities across Alabama to encourage them to participate in the use of LID practices.

ADEM is also promoting the use of green infrastructure techniques in projects that solicit funding from the State Revolving Fund Loan (SRF) program. The Department is working with municipalities on what types of LID projects qualify under the SRF Loan program and how they can become eligible for principle forgiveness on specific loans.



School children at Carey Woods Elementary School in Auburn use rain water from a tank and gutter system to water a garden.

Water & Wastewater Survey Results Available Online

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management and the Environmental Finance Center at the University of North Carolina have announced that the results of the 2014 Alabama Water and Wastewater Rates Survey are now available online.

The survey gathered information on water and wastewater rates throughout the state from 451 utilities. The results will assist Alabama’s water and sewer systems with the understanding, benchmarking, and analysis of utility rates and financial health, to better assist communities in protecting public health and improving economic development through appropriate utility rate setting and financial planning.

The data collected via the survey is available in a free, interactive dashboard that allows users to compare rates among utilities according to multiple factors, including utility size, water source, river basin, and median household income. A final written report and rates tables are also provided alongside the dashboard.

ADEM a Leader in Availability of Electronic Documents

The ability to electronically access ADEM files and documents is at historically high levels due to the Department's computerized electronic management system, thus providing a significant benefit for the Department, the regulated community, stakeholders, and the general public. According to Information Systems Branch Chief, David Hutchinson, approximately 2.2 million documents are available on FileNet and e-File on the ADEM website.



This is a significant achievement and is the result of the dedicated work of the IT staff, as well as the staff responsible for scanning extensive files and documents. As a result of these efforts, ADEM records, documents, and files (both new and historical) are more available for public review which increases transparency. This effort also creates more efficiency and enables the Department to perform more work with fewer resources.

Steve Cobb, Chief of the Governmental Hazardous Waste Branch, reports that others (both regionally and nationally) have noticed what ADEM has been able to accomplish. "Based on our discussions and interactions with our peers at EPA and in other states, ADEM is a national leader in making public file information easily available and transparent to anyone with access to a computer and the Internet," said Cobb. "Many states are talking about making such information easily available, but few have achieved what ADEM has thus far."

The Department has also provided training events across the state over the past two years to teach local citizens how to utilize the e-File system and become more engaged in the Department's decision-making processes. These training sessions have demonstrated how to navigate the e-File system and obtain inspection reports, permits, discharge monitoring reports, enforcement documents, and other types of correspondence.

"ADEM is a leader in this arena," said Director Lance LeFleur. "These e-programs have paid financial dividends and allowed us to continue to be an exceptionally low-cost and high-quality provider of environmental regulation."

GIS Presentation Draws Overflow Crowd



ADEM's Lynn Ford conducted two GIS presentations in June as part of the Break to Educate program

The ADEM Break to Educate program drew a "standing room only" crowd on June 30 in the main hearing room. In fact, so many employees wanted to attend the program on GIS applications that a second session was scheduled that same afternoon.

A geographic information system (GIS) integrates hardware, software, and data for capturing, managing, and analyzing all forms of geographically referenced information. It enables people to view, understand, interpret, and visualize data in many ways that reveal relationships, patterns, and trends in the form of maps, reports, and charts.

ADEM GIS Coordinator Lynn Ford presented the Break to Educate program and explained the GIS web applications that have been developed for the Department. He also discussed and demonstrated the

capabilities of Virtual Alabama, desktop GIS, and answered questions.

"Geographic information systems help you answer questions and solve problems by looking at data in a way that is quickly understood and easily shared," said Ford. "Geo-spatial awareness is an important part of environmental management and assessment. Understanding and defining spatial relationships can be a powerful tool in assessing a variety of factors related to environmental management."

ADEM staff can use GIS to study the environment, report on environmental trends, and model how the environment is responding to natural and man-made factors. In addition, the use of GIS seems limitless because of the ability to manage multiple types of geographic data, assess relationships such as runoff and groundwater purity, model events such as drought impacts, and improve workflow processes.

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.



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