

# ADEM FY2025 Operating Plan

(10/01/2024)

In response to the Unified Strategic Plan, the Department has prepared its short term (FY2025) 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 2024.

## 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 10 million dollar General Fund appropriation for FY 2026 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.
  - v. Implement facility updates to the Central Laboratory building constructed in 2005.
- 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, student led professional organizations at universities, 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, Handshake, LinkedIn, etc.
    - b. Advertise job openings in professional journals such as AL Professional Engineers.
  - 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 to recognize individual high performance in appropriate venues.
  - viii. Continue to encourage/provide on-going professional development such as CPM, PG and PE accreditation (recognize at AEMC).
  - ix. Encourage PG & PE accreditation by providing specialized Engineering/Geologist training opportunities.
  - x. Develop senior managers to replace retiring personnel.
  - xi. Enhance teleworking strategy including refinement of guidelines to address issues identified during periodic program review.
  - xii. Incorporate mentoring methodologies into permanent teleworking strategy.
  - xiii. Enhance the training program for managers of a remote workforce, including Microsoft Teams training
  - xiv. Continue to provide a CPM refresher course to reinforce management skills for ADEM leadership.
  - xv. Provide for online and in-person training for staff at the regional and national level through programs including EPA APTI-Learn and Fed Talent.
  - xvi. Implement an Employee Relations Committee to improve employee retention and improve work environment in all Divisions.
  - xvii. Conduct or contract a Salary Survey for technical staff – recruitment and retention.
- 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. Partner in annual Earth Day environmental education event 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. Complete fabrication and develop a utilization strategy for 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, municipalities, & 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
  - v. Rural Water, Alabama’s Water Environment Association (AWEA), Alabama Water and Pollution Control Association (AWPCA), Alabama Water & Wastewater Institute (AWWI), and/or Alabama Stormwater Association.
- F. Host or participate in educational conferences and workshops 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 upon request and implement a plan to distribute informational materials statewide 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. Alabama Environmental Permitting and Compliance System (AEPACS) Site Explorer (public)
- H. Develop guides, videos, and/or presentations for new users of Electronic Monthly Operating Reports (eMORs) for public water systems.
- I. Continue engagements with ADPH, ADCNR, Alabama Department of Commerce, Governor’s Office and other state & local agencies as appropriate.
- J. Continue to update Community Outreach document and implement provisions. Track community outreach activities for FY2025 and record in the “Community Engagement” document.

- K. Continue to implement formal EJ, Title VI, and diversity & fair treatment training for supervisors and employees.
- L. Complete the sampling program for lead in drinking water at childcare and public schools while providing technical assistance to public water systems and the Alabama State Department of Education as they begin to plan their own required programs to address lead in drinking water.
- M. 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.
- N. 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.
  - iv. Require NPDES and SID permittees to sample for PFAS in effluent, as necessary.
- O. Encourage industry to increase outreach to local communities.
- P. Continue to strengthen external communications exploring the use of available communication tools and partnerships.
- Q. Complete the design of the ADEM website with a focus on functionality and user friendliness using appropriate methodologies and establishing milestones (multi- year).
- R. Increase environmental awareness in the communities through focused participation in activities such as public availability sessions, "USPS Every Door Direct Mail", community gatherings, festivals, service club meetings, and identify and evaluate available mobile technologies such as Nextdoor app as a community notification tool.
- S. 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).
- T. 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).
- U. Continue 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 and operate litter traps in Baldwin and/or Mobile counties.
- W. Partner with OIT regarding Cybersecurity at Drinking Water and Waste Water systems.
- X. Investigate and identify live stream/virtual outreach opportunities, including internet pop up technology.
- Y. Conduct or participate in grant writing workshops to help local communities take advantage of available grant programs (multi-year).

- Z. 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.
- 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. Utilize the newly constructed Mobile Office as a showcase to highlight low impact development techniques.
- CC. Continue to participate in the Alabama EV Advisory Group.
- DD. Attend regional and national meetings with stakeholder groups, (e.g., ASTSWMO, ACWA, ASDWA, AAPCA) to maintain professional contacts and ensure that the State of Alabama's interests are expressed during national discussions.
- EE. Identify and communicate W&S projects for Congressionally Directed Spending.
- FF. Support well driller fee legislation.

#### **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 FY2025 NPDES EPA work plan requirements.
  - ii. Meeting or exceeding the FY2025 SDWA EPA work plan requirements.
  - iii. Meeting or exceeding the FY2025 RCRA EPA work plan requirements.
  - iv. Meeting or exceeding the FY2025 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. Solid Waste and other Land Division programs (multi-year)
  - ii. Air program
- H. Develop a timeline for remaining AEPACS applications.
- I. 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. Complete the development of a monthly operating reports (MORS) database and development of eDWR system to allow the submittal of MORS data, including pilot testing and initial rollout.
  - iii. Continue to increase participation in electronic SSO reporting by incorporating electronic- 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 In-State reimbursement, which provides destination picklists (Cities/Counties), enable automated calculations, and automated routing for signatures, etc.
  - vii. Research and obtain available bulk email service to efficiently notify numerous members of the public, industry, and/or municipalities regarding Departmental actions, emergency communications with municipalities, etc.
- J. Participate on national workgroups to support new or enhanced e-enterprise development and integration into federal and state programs.
  - K. Continue to improve IT operations to ensure high reliability, high-performance, energy efficient infrastructure required to support Departmental operations by updating 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.
  - L. 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.
  - M. 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.
  - N. Update Air Rules to incorporate final federal rules regarding climate change as applicable.
  - O. Resolve State CCR program issues and educate public on CCR issues.
  - P. Resolve Ozone Transport SIP issues.
  - Q. Continue development of the Beneficial Use (Biosolids etc.) program including additional rulemaking that may be necessary to effectively manage program.
  - R. 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.
  - S. Prepare for rulemaking for new EPA regulations: PM<sub>2.5</sub>, Methane, Pb/Cu rules, Legacy rule, etc.
  - T. Update Medical Waste and recycling rules.
  - U. Review water assessments to optimize and possibly expand.
  - V. Finalize ADEM's revised Records Disposition Authority including review by OGC and submission to the Department of Archives and History for final approval.

- W. Update and continue implementation of replacement schedule for laboratory equipment that is no longer being serviced by the manufacturer.
- X. Distribute American Rescue Plan Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds in accordance with guidelines established by the Alabama Legislature and Congress.
- Y. Continue development and implementation of SRF Database.
- Z. Implement security audit findings and improve cybersecurity (multi-year).
- AA. Startup/implement new Out-of-State Travel app "Concur".
- BB. Develop new Drinking Water, Waste Water, and Landfill operator certification on-line application.
- CC. Implement Unmanned Aerial Vehicle tools through external entities.
- DD. Relocate Air Monitor to Africatown.
- EE. Develop new SOPs and revise existing SOPs as necessary to aid in quality assurance throughout Department operations.