

ADEM *UPDATE*

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Poolos Named New ADEM Director

Ed Poolos is the new Director at the Alabama Department of Environmental Management.

The Alabama Environmental Management Commission unanimously voted to select Poolos as the next director of ADEM, replacing Lance LeFleur who retired earlier this year.

Poolos returns to ADEM after serving as the deputy commissioner at the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for the past eight years. Prior to that, he worked at ADEM for 24 years, with his last position at ADEM being Chief of the Field Operations office in Decatur.

"I really look forward to returning to ADEM," said Poolos. "I know the Department well - its dedicated staff and its mission. I am 100 percent invested in making the Department better, safeguarding the environment and protecting the health and well-being of all Alabamians. I am extremely excited about this opportunity."

A native of Jasper, Poolos is a 1992 graduate of the University of Alabama. He has extensive experience in state government as a scientist, management professional, and administrator. From 1993 to 2017 at ADEM, Poolos worked in many programs, including water quality, air monitoring, construction stormwater permitting and enforcement, and environmental emergency response.

As deputy commissioner at ADCNR, he directed the operations of 1,250 staff members in the management of freshwater and saltwater fishing, wildlife, marine resources, natural resources, state lands, and state parks. Poolos was also instrumental in overseeing growth at the agency as evidenced by a budget increase from \$188 million in 2017, to their current budget of \$435 million.

Ten people applied for the Director position at ADEM, and the seven-member Commission publicly interviewed four candidates at their meeting on June 13, before selecting Poolos to guide the Department.



New ADEM Director - Ed Poolos

ADEM Staff Volunteer as Judges at Science Fair



ADEM booth at AUM Science Fair

A number of ADEM employees volunteered their time at the Greater East Alabama Regional Science and Engineering Fair (GEARSEF), in March. The event welcomed middle and high school students from 19 counties. The fair was held on the campus of Auburn University at Montgomery, and ADEM is one of the community partners of the event which encourages students to pursue careers in science and engineering.

ADEM staff served as judges keeping the official scoring as well as helping work booths and set up at the event, and provided assistance to students, teachers, and AUM faculty. Volunteers from ADEM also provided their insight into the field of science, and provided examples of the many different things ADEM does to help safeguard Alabama's natural resources.

GEARSEF is a regional affiliate of the Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair (Regeneron ISEF), the world's largest international pre-college science competition, operated by the Society for Science. The ISEF provides a forum for students to showcase their independent research.

“Friends of the Forest” Educates Children

The first-ever “Friends of the Forest” outdoor event in Lowndes County was a huge success. More than 60 elementary students were on hand at Holy Ground Battlefield Park on the banks of the Alabama River to learn about nature, forestry, natural resources, and safety.

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management participated in the three-hour program with a hands-on, interactive, art project to explain the importance of keeping waterways clean for fish, wildlife, and recreation.

“Students were observed at the ADEM presentation table, laughing, asking questions, and commenting on how much they had learned,” said Tana Shealey, organizer of the event for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. “ADEM did an excellent job tailoring their agency’s educational mission to young learners.”

Fourth and fifth grade students from Jackson Steele Elementary School in White Hall and Lowndes Academy in Lowndesboro attended the event, which included a number of sponsors.

A team from the Alabama Forestry Commission taught students about fire prevention and demonstrated equipment used for fighting wildfires. A representative of the Alabama Game and Fish Division brought samples of deer antlers educating students on hunting regulations and native wildlife. The National Parks Service staff encouraged students at their station to run and make noises showing how scientists track animal migration, and the Lowndes County Sheriff’s Department drove all-terrain vehicles to the event to help students visualize safety practices and laws regarding ATVs.

The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers that operates Holy Ground Battlefield Park also sponsored the event to give students an opportunity to have an outdoor classroom setting to learn about water quality, safety around water, and how to securely put on a life jacket.



Elementary students enjoyed the “Friends of the Forest” event

ADEM Promotes Earth Day at the Montgomery Zoo



Children learned and had fun at the Earth Day Safari

After overwhelming success in the past, this year’s Earth Day Safari event at the Montgomery Zoo was expanded from one to two days in duration. So, almost twice as many people were able to attend this year’s event and learn more about how to better safeguard the environment for both animals and people.

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management has been a long-time sponsor and participant in the event, and 2025 was no exception.

On April 24 and 25, hundreds of children were able to spend a fun-filled, educational, and adventurous day at the zoo learning about daily habits that can affect the environment, wildlife, plant life, and the communities in which they live.

At ADEM, every day is “Earth Day,” and dozens of ADEM employees volunteered to be a part of this annual event to help raise awareness of the actions of children - and adults - in environmental stewardship. It also allows ADEM to demonstrate the crucial work it does to protect Alabama’s natural resources and to observe Earth Day. A number of tents and booths were set up with interactive exhibits on various topics such as recycling, stormwater runoff, and fish tissue monitoring.

Ardmore-ADEM Project Receives Prestigious Award



[L-R] Brian Espy, ADEM; Vena Jones, TDEC; Dr. Andrew Sawyers, EPA; Representative Andy Whitt; and John Laney, ADEM

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently honored the Town of Ardmore for its partnership with the Alabama Department of Environmental Management and Tennessee officials that led to the financing of the planned overhaul of Ardmore's sewer system.

EPA's George F. Ames Performance and Innovation in the SRF Creating Environmental Success (PISCES) program presented its Excellence in System Partnership award to the Ardmore Water Works and Sewer Board earlier this spring. The presentation took place at the Council of Infrastructure Financing Authorities Summit on Water in Washington, D.C.

The Ardmore project was one of seven selected out of all sewer infrastructure projects funded in 2024 through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund.

Ardmore is located on Alabama's northern border, and the Ardmore Water Works and Sewer Board serves residents in both Alabama and Tennessee.

The \$22 million project involved replacing the wastewater treatment plant. The bulk of the funding was awarded by ADEM from the state's share of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (IIJA). It included \$18.679 million for construction and \$1.27 million for planning and development.

ADEM's Brian Espy, Chief of the General Services Branch, noted that Ardmore was among more than 500 sewer and drinking water projects funded by the Department since 2022.

"ADEM is always looking for opportunities to work with water and sewer systems like Ardmore as they try to fix and upgrade their facilities," Espy said. "Over the past three years alone, we have distributed \$1.4 billion in SRF (State Revolving Fund), ARPA and BIL funding to systems across the state. We know these types of investments will pay off in terms of better water and sewer services for residents, and a healthier environment. This award is a terrific confirmation that ADEM is making a real difference for Alabama communities."

For their part, Tennessee officials contributed just over \$2.5 million to the project. That included \$2.2 million in ARPA grant funding from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and \$252,125 from the City of Ardmore, Tenn.

"Protecting our environment and the public health of our citizens in both Alabama and Tennessee is always our main objective," said Ardmore Mayor Billy Shannon, who is chairman of the Ardmore Water Works and Sewer Board. "Without help and funding from EPA Region 4, ADEM, and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, we would not have been able to fund a project of this magnitude and accomplish our goals for the betterment of our small community."

State Rep. Andy Whitt, R-Madison (whose district includes Ardmore) advocated for funding for the project due to public health concerns. He attended the event in Washington to receive the award on behalf of Ardmore.

"This is more than just infrastructure," Whitt said. "It's a generational achievement that will shape the future of our community. It reflects our commitment to smart growth, sustainability, and making history through progress. I couldn't be prouder, and I am grateful for the hard-working team at ADEM."

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 not printed. It is distributed electronically and available online through the publications link on the ADEM website at adem.alabama.gov. The ADEM website also has links to videos related to the Department's programs, public hearings, and recent events of interest.



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