

ADEM FY2026 Operating Plan

(10/01/2025)

In response to the Unified Strategic Plan, the Department has prepared its short term (FY2026) 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 with 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.
- D. The Department will inform the Commission of accomplishments and successes within each Division.

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 a General Fund appropriation for FY 2027 and match dollars for the State Revolving Fund (SRF).
 - ii. Seek additional long-term stable funding for department operations.
 - iii. Pursue appropriate new sources of federal funding by submitting proposals through EPA competitive Grants Program.
 - iv. 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 through college co-op and intern programs, student led professional organizations at universities, and pre-college school age outreach (see item 3 D i-iii below).
 - ii. Investigate and utilize available recruitment tools.
 - a. Post jobs on Indeed, Handshake, LinkedIn, etc.
 - b. Advertise job openings in professional journals.
 - 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 in-house 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 various workshops or classes.
 - 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. Enhance wastewater training for ADEM staff by piloting an abbreviated wastewater operator training class.
 - xi. Develop senior managers to replace retiring personnel.
 - xii. Review teleworking strategy including refinement of requirements and guidelines.
 - xiii. Incorporate mentoring methodologies into permanent teleworking strategy.
 - xiv. Enhance the training program for managers of a remote workforce, including Microsoft Teams training.
 - xv. Continue to provide a refresher course to reinforce management skills for ADEM leadership.
 - xvi. Provide for online and in-person training for staff at the regional and national level through programs including EPA APTI-Learn and Fed Talent.
 - xvii. Continue implementation of the Employee Relations Committee to improve employee retention and improve work environment in all Divisions.
 - xviii. 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. 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 education targeted at K-12 schools.
 - iii. Support Water Festivals for elementary school students.

- 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
 - iii. ADEM Groundwater Conference (Planning for FY27)
 - iv. Drinking Water Conference
 - v. Wetlands Regulatory Workshop
 - vi. 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
- G. Continue to educate stakeholders on how to access environmental data and information using the ADEM web page, including:
 - 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. Update guides, videos, and/or hold additional 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 seek new and current outreach opportunities that demonstrate ADEM's commitment to assuring a safe, healthful and productive environment.
- K. Continue to implement formal Title VI and diversity & fair treatment training for supervisors and employees.
- L. Work with the Southeastern Fire and Air Quality Workgroup, the Alabama Prescribed Fire Council, 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. 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, as necessary.
 - iv. Require NPDES and SID permittees to sample for PFAS in effluent, as necessary.
- 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. 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.
- Q. Continue to work with 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).
- R. Continue to utilize 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).
- S. Continue the Statewide Litter Education Campaign and other litter reduction strategies to promote trash free waters.
- T. Continue to monitor and evaluate the use of GOMESA funds that were used to install and operate litter traps in Baldwin and/or Mobile counties.
- U. Partner with OIT regarding Cybersecurity at Drinking Water and Wastewater systems.
- V. 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.
- W. Continue to participate in EPA's Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) program to provide grants to assist with the control or replacement of older diesel engines.
- X. Continue to participate in the Alabama EV Advisory Group.
- Y. 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.
- Z. Identify and communicate W&S projects for Congressionally Directed Spending.
- AA. Support well driller 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 routine 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 FY2026 NPDES EPA work plan requirements.
 - ii. Meeting or exceeding the FY2026 SDWA EPA work plan requirements.

- iii. Meeting or exceeding the FY2026 RCRA EPA work plan requirements.
 - iv. Meeting or exceeding the FY2026 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. Hazardous Waste Transporter Permits and 8700-12 (multi-year)
 - ii. Air program
- 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. Provide necessary updates and enhancements for the monthly operating reports (eMORs) database, as appropriate.
 - iii. Promote utilization of eMORs database for drinking water systems and increase utilization.
 - iv. Continue to increase participation in electronic SSO reporting by incorporating electronic- SSO participation requirements in all newly issued Municipal NPDES Permits.
 - v. Incorporate written SSO response plans, including public notification as a permit condition requirement in all newly issued Municipal NPDES Permits.
 - vi. 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.
 - vii. Develop Laserfiche forms (similar to Laserfiche timesheets), for In-State reimbursement, which provides destination picklists (Cities/Counties), enables 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. 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.
 - ii. Evaluate potential replacements for the ADEM virtual environment in order to determine the most fiscally sound and technically proficient path forward.

- K. Continue efforts on Cyber Security to ensure 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 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 Air Rules to incorporate final federal rules regarding climate change as applicable.
- N. Resolve State CCR program issues and educate public on CCR issues.
- O. Resolve Ozone Transport SIP issues.
- P. 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 (multi-year).
- Q. Prepare for rulemaking for new EPA regulations: PM_{2.5}, Methane, Pb/Cu rules, Legacy rule, PFAS MCLs, Consumer Confidence Report rules, etc.
- R. Finalize ADEM's revised Records Disposition Authority including review by OGC and submission to the Department of Archives and History for final approval.
- S. Update and continue implementation of replacement schedule for laboratory equipment that is no longer being serviced by the manufacturer.
- T. Distribute American Rescue Plan Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds in accordance with guidelines established by the Alabama Legislature and Congress.
- U. Continue development and implementation of SRF Database.
- V. Implement security audit findings and improve cybersecurity (multi-year).
- W. Develop new Drinking Water, Wastewater, and Landfill operator certification on-line application.
- X. Implement Unmanned Aerial Vehicle tools through external entities.
- Y. Relocate Air Monitor to Africatown.
- Z. Develop new SOPs and revise existing SOPs as necessary to aid in quality assurance throughout Department operations.
- AA. Evaluate the cost and necessity of equipment to perform destruction and removal efficiency (DRE) testing at stationary VOC sources and purchase if appropriate.
- BB. Hold complaint coordinator meetings to review and continue to update electronic complaint procedures and/or database as appropriate to ensure citizen complaints are appropriately, efficiently, and consistently addressed across the Department.
- CC. Evaluate modern data systems (e.g. PowerBI) to replace current data systems with announced end-of-support dates. (multi-year).
- DD. Transition Drinking Water data management to DW-SFTIES, EPA's cloud-hosted modernization of SDWIS/State (multi-year project – EPA system scheduled to be completed in Fall 2027).
 - i. Participate in transition-related workgroups, pilot projects, and early adopter planning sessions.
 - ii. Ensure data is complete and high-quality.
 - iii. Update interfacing applications (EDWRS, OpCert Online, etc.) to be compatible with DW-SFTIES.
- EE. Initiate small-group discussions to develop or support development of a replacement for Drinking Water Watch (multi-year).

FF. Identify new location for air monitor in Wetumpka due to loss of property access at current location.