

ADEM UPDATE

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Ribbon Cutting Held at New Coastal Field Office

Numerous groups and individuals were on hand for the ribbon cutting ceremony on March 28 at the new Coastal Field Office for the Alabama Department of Environmental Management.

The facility is a first of its kind - blending green infrastructure, low-impact development, and incorporating numerous environmentally friendly features to help sustain Alabama's natural resources, and complement Mobile's redevelopment of the South Broad Street area near the airport.

Construction of the \$13 million, 15,000-square-foot building began in 2022 and was funded in collaboration with the Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council (AGCRC). The 10-member

AGCRC, which includes Gov. Kay Ivey, local mayors, county commission chairs and other officials, contributed \$7.9 million in settlement money from the 2010 BP oil spill. The Alabama Legislature allocated \$3 million, and ADEM covered the remaining costs.

"This new facility is the result of 13 years of collaboration by a number of parties who united behind the mission of protecting Alabama's coastal areas," ADEM Director Lance LeFleur said. "It really was an earnest team effort, and we are grateful that our partners could be with us to celebrate this important milestone."

The new coastal office brings under one roof more than 30 ADEM staff who previously worked in two locations in the Mobile area. The new location is closer to area headquarters for the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and will enhance cooperation between the agencies.

"This makes for more streamlined operations with our nearby partners, and the site is more visible and accessible to the public," said LeFleur.

The facility showcases a number of environmentally friendly features. The parking lot is paved with rubber-modified asphalt produced with recycled tires. "Rain Chains" are in place to take water from building's metal roof to underground cisterns for storage, and a retention pond on site will help manage stormwater. A curved front façade on the building produces a changing effect as the sunlight and shadows move through the day, reflecting the dynamics of the hydrological cycle. The facility includes an electric vehicle charging station, auto light switches, LED lighting, and design functions to maximize natural light that contributes to efficiency.

Joining ADEM officials at the grand opening ceremony were the mayors of Mobile, Dauphin Island, and Bayou La Batre; Mobile County Commissioner Merceria Ludgood; representatives for U.S. Senators Tommy Tuberville and Katie Britt, and officials with Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Alabama Port Authority, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and various environmental organizations and businesses.

"Mobile is making a considerable investment in the redevelopment of this section of Broad Street, which is a main link between downtown and the airport," LeFleur said. "The location of our building contributes to those redevelopment efforts and, we hope, will help make a favorable impression for visitors to Mobile."



ADEM's new environmentally friendly facility in Mobile is open

Nonpoint Source Conference Held in Wetumpka

NPS Program has momentum from 30-plus years of success

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management held its Nonpoint Source Conference for 2024 at the Wetumpka Civic Center in January.

Despite freezing temperatures, 146 people attended the event entitled, “Unlocking Opportunities: A Passport to the Future.”

The conference featured exhibitors and speakers that helped environmental engineers, biologists, geologists, water quality specialists, and local government officials get a better understanding of the state’s NPS program that has been in place for 35 years.

ADEM Director Lance LeFleur provided a welcome and introduction at the conference. He mentioned the past success of Alabama’s NPS program, encouraged attendees to continue

cultivating relationships, reach out to the public, and to build on the momentum the program has generated.

“All of you help to preserve the wonderful environment we have in the state of Alabama,” said LeFleur. “You all have some wonderful accomplishments in the work that you have done. We thank you and give you recognition for it.”

The conference included numerous exhibitors with displays and handouts. The sessions offered attendees a variety of updates on efforts to achieve improved water quality in Alabama.

These included the installation of best management practices, the development of education and outreach materials, and the implementation of watershed management plans to enable local stakeholders to play an active role in protecting water quality.



A number of vendors had exhibits at the Conference



ADEM held its NPS Conference on January 18 in Wetumpka

ADEM staff also presented updates on various initiatives including funding projects through State Revolving Fund loans and a water quality presentation.

“Dollars don’t go as far as they used to so anything you can do to get these projects done and reach out to local communities is good,” LeFleur said. “To get these projects done you really have to have relationships. So, put value in community relationships and continue to work efficiently and effectively.”

A number of organizations and agencies participated in the conference including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Alabama Forestry Commission, the National Association of RC&D Council, Freshwater Land Trust, River Region Trails, E.A.T. South, and the Auburn University Water Resources Center.

The next statewide Nonpoint Source conference is scheduled for 2026.

Commissioners Receive Environmental Report



The EMC listens to the “State of the Environment” report

The state of the Alabama’s environment is much improved over what it was 20 to 30 years ago. According to ADEM, Alabamians breathe much cleaner air, they enjoy higher quality water, improvements have been made in the management of solid waste, and recycling continues to expand.

“The current state of the environment in Alabama is very good, and getting better. The overall trends are favorable,” said ADEM Director Lance LeFleur in his report to the Environmental Management Commission on February 9.

As he does annually, LeFleur articulated ADEM’s “State of the Environment” presentation to the Commission, and the report was very positive. ADEM currently regulates more than 35,000 facilities and the Department works closely with federal authorities,

stakeholders, and state and local governments to ensure that Alabama’s natural resources are safeguarded in the most effective and efficient manner possible.

“Our efforts have resulted in measurable improvements in many comparisons for air, land, and water,” LeFleur said. “Improved communications with the public has also helped to get ADEM’s message out.”

That message especially in regards to drinking water, clean air, and recycling has been very positive and productive for all of Alabama. Drinking water directly impacts every individual in Alabama. The percentage of public water systems in the state that are in compliance with health-based standards is 98 percent. In fact, only one other state (Hawaii) has a lower number of drinking water violations than Alabama.

Air quality in the state has improved over the last three decades. There are six basic air quality standards: carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, oxides of nitrogen, fine particles, ozone, and lead. ADEM’s programs have enabled the state to attain individual air quality standards for each of these.

Alabama’s solid waste is being managed responsibly while recycling continues to increase. Statewide recycling is well above the goals set by the Department back in 1991, and the rates of the amount of solid waste going to landfills has been reduced significantly. ADEM has accomplished this by promoting the beneficial reuse of wastes, and the processing of scrap tire materials for reuse, along with recycling.

Administered by ADEM, the state’s “robust recycling program” is up to a total recycling volume of more than 3.9 million tons per year. The Department has also provided more than \$30 million in grants to achieve this success since it started in 2010. In addition, in the last 18 years, ADEM’s scrap tire program has resulted in the cleanup of 386 illegal scrap tire sites containing more than 11 million tires.

ADEM Reaches Out to Environmental Professionals

ADEM continues to reach out to local governments, stakeholders, along with various groups, and organizations to help assure a safe, healthful, and productive environment. Earlier this year, ADEM officials spoke to a couple of different groups to help foster better communication and cooperation with environmental professionals.

On January 8 in Decatur, ADEM staff made a presentation to the North Alabama Environmental Professionals Association (NEPA). The Department discussed compliance assistance, along with education and training available through ADEM sponsored conferences. ADEM also provided information regarding the tools available to everyone through its website.

In Pelham on February 8, a number of ADEM staff spoke to more than 150 members of the Birmingham Environmental Professionals Association (BEPA) on compliance and enforcement methods and updated rule changes.



BEPA professionals listen to an ADEM presentation

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. 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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