

# ADEM UPDATE

The official newsletter of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management

April 1, 2022

Volume 15; Number 2

## U.S. Rep. Terri Sewell Visits ADEM



**Marilyn Elliott, U.S. Rep. Terri Sewell, and Lance LeFleur met March 24 to discuss ARPA**

U.S. Congresswoman Terri Sewell visited the Alabama Department of Environmental Management offices in Montgomery on March 24.

Rep. Sewell scheduled the meeting with ADEM officials in the middle of her 2022 “Congress in Your Community” tour, where she hosted town hall meetings in Lowndes, Wilcox, and Hale counties. Each year, Sewell hosts a series of town hall meetings in each of the 14 counties that make up her district to give constituents an opportunity to share their views and concerns, and hear updates on the latest in Congress.

Those issues in Congress include the situation in Ukraine, ongoing efforts to battle Covid-19, voting rights, and spending associated with the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

ADEM officials including Director Lance

LeFleur and Deputy Director Marilyn Elliott met with Rep. Sewell to discuss the Department’s work associated with ARPA, review details of the numerous projects, and to answer questions.

“Thank you to Director LeFleur and the entire leadership team from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management for today’s informative meeting,” said Sewell. “We know that the federal funding from the American Rescue Plan and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law are transformational, and I look forward to our continued collaboration to ensure that these resources are distributed fairly to reach the most vulnerable communities.”

Water and sewer improvements make up \$225 million of the ARPA appropriations to Alabama with funds designated for high-priority or emergency projects identified under the Clean Water State Revolving Fund or the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. ARPA also includes funding set out for matching grants for water or sewer infrastructure projects. ADEM is working on distribution of the funds on a needs-based approach.

“Alabama has an unprecedented opportunity to address longstanding and, in some cases, dire problems plaguing water and sewer systems,” said LeFleur. “It is imperative we take advantage of this opportunity to provide the help these systems desperately need.”

ADEM was chosen by Gov. Kay Ivey and the Legislature to oversee ARPA spending because of the Department’s work for decades in environmental regulatory activities and overseeing low-interest loans to water and sewer systems. Due to aging infrastructure in many of these systems, it is crucial for ADEM to accurately prioritize the various projects and spending based on the needs of each individual community - many of which are located in Black Belt Counties - in Rep. Sewell’s congressional district.

The Department has been gathering data and needs assessments to get projects underway with the goal of addressing the state’s greatest needs first. ADEM is also looking at sustainability of the projects and water and sewer systems to ensure long-term, successful operations.

ADEM is dedicated to working to ensure the money gets where it is needed the most. The Department is working closely with federal, state, and local organizations on the many procedures and the criteria being used to determine the specific projects receiving funds. The Department also plans to keep the process open and accessible to the public through regular website updates.

## ADEM and Engineer Recognized Internationally



**WPI President & CEO Paul Bishop presents award to ADEM's Jim Grassiano**

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management along with one of its engineers have been recognized by a worldwide organization.

Water Professionals International (WPI) named ADEM's water and wastewater Operator Certification Program the "Program of the Year." The presentation was made in January at the 2022 Innovation in Certification conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Jim Grassiano, Chief of ADEM's Compliance Assistance and Operator Certification Programs, was on hand to accept the award.

Grassiano, who also serves as chair-elect of the board for the WPI, received an individual award at the conference that was both live and virtually presented internationally. He was given the prestigious McAnespie Award for making outstanding contributions to the Water and Wastewater certification industry.

"I'm honored to be here," said Grassiano upon accepting the awards. "This is what I've dedicated my life to and I really appreciate this honor and look forward to working with you as we get better and better."

WPI is an international organization that establishes the requirements to ensure professional certification of water and wastewater operators. It also advocates for certified drinking water and wastewater operators worldwide.

Grassiano has worked at ADEM for 25 years, and prior to that, he worked as a consultant for CH2M Hill and as an engineer for a manufacturing company. He holds an M.S. in Environmental Engineering from Virginia Tech.

The WPI organization includes close to 100 certifying authorities, representing more than 40 states, ten Canadian provinces and territories, as well as other international and tribal programs.

These programs have facilitated the certification of more than 500,000 water and wastewater operators, laboratory analysts, plant maintenance technologists, biosolids land appliers, and backflow prevention assembly testers, since WPI's formation in 1972. This year marks WPI's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Part of the group's way of honoring this milestone was to re-brand the organization name from the Association of Boards of Certification to Water Professionals International.



## ADEM Participates in ALM Leadership Meeting

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management continues to seek opportunities to educate the public on its efforts, programs, and services to safeguard the environment.



**ADEM Director Lance LeFleur addressed the ALM meeting in Montgomery**

The Department recently attended the Alabama League of Municipalities Municipal Leadership Institute at the Montgomery Performing Arts Center. ALM is a nonpartisan membership association of nearly 450 incorporated cities and towns working to strengthen municipal government through advocacy, training, and the advancement of effective local leadership.

ADEM Director Lance LeFleur spoke at the meeting regarding the Department's mission and how the American Rescue Plan Act funds would provide financial assistance to struggling water and sewer systems. The ARPA funds are designed to provide relief to people and government agencies to improve the economy during the pandemic. LeFleur also answered questions from local leaders regarding municipal wastewater treatment systems, brownfield sites, and grants.

## Public Availability Session Held in Uniontown

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management continues to improve operations to provide more input from the public.

ADEM has numerous reports, documents, records, and forms available on the Department's website at the click of a button. ADEM also has events and public hearings designed to give people increased access to the Department's activities.

To enhance ADEM's community outreach, the Department has developed public availability sessions to enable people to have interaction with ADEM staff, ask questions, review maps and charts, and express comments and concerns.

On January 27, ADEM hosted a public availability session in Uniontown in Perry County. The session was well attended by residents in the area, local public officials, and media representatives.

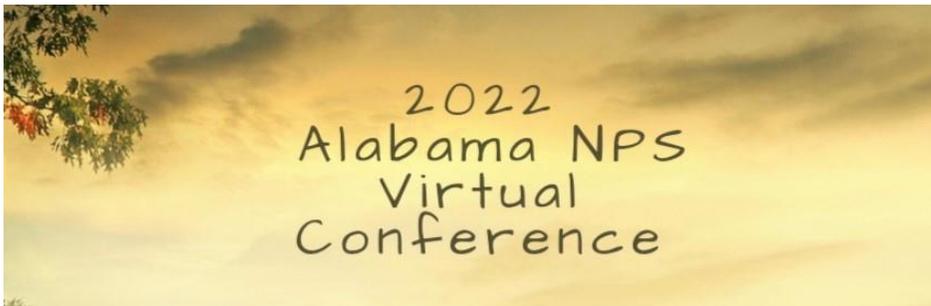
The public availability session was conducted regarding the proposed renewal of a solid waste disposal permit for the municipal solid waste landfill known as the Arrowhead Landfill. The session allowing people to ask questions and receive information about the proposed landfill permits.

ADEM has scheduled another public availability session and public hearing for April 14 in Uniontown related to the proposed permits.



**ADEM's most recent public availability session was held on January 27 in Uniontown**

## ADEM Holds Virtual NPS Conference



The Alabama Department of Environmental Management held its Annual Nonpoint Source Conference online on January 26. More than 170 environmental engineers, biologists, geologists, municipal leaders, and water quality specialists participated in the event.

The virtual conference featured reports and presentations from a wide range of speakers giving participants updates on topics related to nonpoint source pollution.

Nonpoint source pollution, also known as polluted runoff, occurs when rainfall flows over and through the land picking up contaminants such as sediment, nutrients, or bacteria. Streams or storm sewers then carry the pollutants to lakes, rivers, wetlands, and coastal waters. This type of pollution also can result from everyday activities such as fertilizing lawns, watering livestock, or construction, and because it comes from so many different sources, it is difficult to control.

ADEM's Nonpoint Source Management Program uses a voluntary approach to address nonpoint source pollution. The program relies on best management practices, education and outreach, monitoring and assessments, and resource assistance using a balanced statewide and watershed-focused restoration approach. Local partnerships and citizen input are primary implementation components. Grants under the federal Clean Water Act are available to fund targeted, on-the-ground, implementation practices to restore impaired waterbodies.

A number of organizations and agencies participated in the virtual conference. It was held online due to Covid-19 concerns. However, with no travel involved, ADEM was able to have speakers participate from many other states including Texas, Louisiana, and Florida.

# 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](http://adem.alabama.gov). The ADEM website also has links to videos related to the Department's programs, public hearings, and recent events of interest.



*The Alabama Department of Environmental Management does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability in the administration of its programs, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.*



Alabama Department of Environmental Management

P.O. Box 301463

Montgomery, AL 36130-1463

(334) 271-7700

[www.adem.alabama.gov](http://www.adem.alabama.gov)