



**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program  
Community Action Committee Meeting**  
Wednesday, January 31, 2018 - 10:00 am at Five Rivers  
**Agenda**

Welcome

Approval of Minutes

**Updates and Presentations**

**How ADEM Utilizes Citizen Monitoring Data**

Chris Johnson, Alabama Department of Environmental Management

**CAC Member Updates**

**Other**

- Announcements
- Meeting dates for 2018

Adjourn

## Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Community Action Committee Meeting

January 31, 2018

Five Rivers Delta Center

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In attendance: Harold White, Leslie Gahagan, Ted Henken, Ronald Phelps, Kim Tran, Lee Galbreath, David Thompson, Sally DeMott, Mike Shelton, Chris Johnson, Lauren Jackson, Ashley Campbell, Mimi Fearn.

MBNEP Staff: Jason Kudulis, Bethany Dickey, and Jackie Wilson

Jason called the meeting to order at 10:02 am.

Takeaways:

- ADEM assured the committee that they review your AWW data - AWW provides their statewide data records. ADEM then uses software to sort and identify data anomalies that could indicate water quality issues, potentially leading to follow up or more intensive monitoring by the state.
- CAC interested in continuing discussions with ADEM to identify strategic locations in coastal Alabama that have little or no data. (Fill data gaps, provide early warning)
- Water Rangers/AWW connection is complete. Data submitted via Water Rangers is now automatically forwarded to AWW.

Jason introduced Chris Johnson and David Thompson from ADEM. Chris first explained the role of ADEM's Water Quality Branch and Water Division, who are charged with TMDL creation, 303d list assessments, and water quality monitoring. We reviewed the five categories describing water body impairment according to the Clean Water Act. The first category represents the best quality and the fifth meaning listed on the 303d list for impairments. Each year they examine volunteer data. Every two years ADEM generates a [305b report](#) for EPA – Water Quality Report to Congress. ADEM is in the process of shifting data entry from [WQX STORET](#) into a new database called [ATTAINS](#). All data must be submitted to the Water Quality Exchange (WQX portal). Fish or macroinvertebrate data is not available online, only through direct contact with ADEM. Citizen data is important in identifying problems that need to be addressed and could potentially lead to recategorization of a waterbody.

**Many water bodies are Cat. 3, (waters for which there is no data or information to determine if any applicable water quality standard is attained or impaired - these waters will be considered unassessed.) why?** Either inaccessibility or too many water ways, not enough monitors and resources to adequately assess. ADEM monitors all major reservoirs every three year but only focuses on main body. Trying to monitor tributaries is difficult unless there is an issue reported (\*CAC offered to help fill this void in coastal Alabama with guidance from ADEM). Reservoirs are preferred for regular monitoring where issues present themselves. Volunteer monitoring areas are needed where there is a large amount of fresh water influx, (example: Wolf Creek and tributaries.) ADEM indicated that random sampling is not as efficient as a set station, trend data preferred. Trend station analysis has helped monitor problems and provide data for building watershed models. This method is expensive however and the spatial network contains many gaps unless basin specific monitoring is implemented in rotation around the state.

**How much data would be required for a volunteer to present an issue to ADEM?** Parameters and depth are very important. Dissolved oxygen should be collected at half the water depth. **The AWW water depth, protocol states to sample at “elbow” depth, could this be reevaluated to meet ADEM standards?** (\*We connected ADEM and AWW to discuss some of the testing inconsistencies between the two organizations, but it would be difficult for many volunteer monitors to collect at half the water

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column without a remote sampler or test for Enterococci). Complications arise with different parameters. Data depends on the photic zone depth. ADEM shifted from E. coli to Enterococci for coastal program. Chris then explained that ADEM redefined the way it classifies a coastal water versus a noncoastal water – coastal water is defined as a water feature that is inside the 10-foot elevation contour line (i.e., less than 10ft elevation). Everything south of the Dolly Parton Bridge or I-65 corridor should be monitored for Enterococci. GIS layer online can help monitors define their monitoring site's correct bacteria indicator based on elevation. It is important for the CAC to understand Standard Operations and Protocol and how and where to make changes so the data gathered can be used.

Category 4 waters are a priority for ADEM (Waters in which one or more applicable water quality standards are not met but establishment of a TMDL is not required. Category 4A Waters for which all TMDLs needed to result in attainment of all applicable WaterQualityStandards have been approved or established by EPA.). ADEM revised E. coli standards last year, making them more stringent. Many waters that were previously not listed as impaired, are now 303d list eligible.

**Other areas volunteer monitors can assist ADEM?** Diverse types of data can be gathered with a GPS and a camera, water chemistry not necessarily required. Knowing where nonpoint source issues are allows for proper allocation of funding. Citizens can use the [ADEM online complaint system](#) to report nonpoint source issues, or contact your local environmental advocacy group, or city officials or 311.

**Does ADEM have intentions to remove unnecessary dams?** Trend towards removal of fish barriers, culverts, and dams that create fragmentation issues upstream. There has been improvement in fish scores in these areas. These are issues to consider on MS4. An MS4 is a conveyance or system of conveyances that is:

- owned by a state, city, town, village, or other public entity that discharges to waters of the U.S.,
- designed or used to collect or convey stormwater (e.g., storm drains, pipes, ditches),
- not a combined sewer, and
- not part of a sewage treatment plant, or publicly owned treatment works (POTW).

**Where can citizens go to access ADEM data? WQX?** This information was sent to the CAC in an email dated February 19, 2018 – MBNEP CAC: ADEM Resources

**If there's an issue with shellfish, who has the final say? Alabama Department of Public Health or ADEM?** When ADPH says there is an issue, ADEM must list that water body on the 303d list.

**Who is monitoring red tides?** ADEM looking into monitoring that and cyanobacteria.

**Is there a lack of fish tissue data?** There isn't a lack of data. Mercury is an issue down here. Chris provided a contact in the follow up email referenced above. **Is there an improvement in fish tissue?** With the reduction of fossil fuel use, the data should start to reflect that change over time.

**How else can we help you?** Contact legislator to increase funding.

From this discussion the group felt a need for more coordination between AWW and ADEM to tweak monitoring procedures. (Ex: E. coli vs. Enterococci.)

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Bottomline, if you think there is a problem in your watershed, call ADEM.

**Is there a way to get a water body off the 303d list?** (Example: Fowl River) If mercury is the impairment like Fowl River, that would be very difficult

When large distribution center is constructed, do they get a point source requirement? Yes, county should monitor.

**Announcements:**

Users can now submit data to AWW via Water Rangers – Two things to consider before submitting through Water Rangers 1) be sure to include the AWW site code for any new or existing sites (ex:



Description  
Eslava Creek @ Litter Trap on McVay.  
Site ID: AWW06005004  
Lat: 30.643722859141  
Lng: -88.0969136953354  
Timezone: America/Chicago

2) Data forms can be customized, be sure if you are testing using AWW protocols to customize the datasheet to match the AWW version. Most groups have already set theirs up this way but if anyone needs help contact Jason Kudulis.

Wolf Bay Water Watch's Annual Meeting (20 years!) is Saturday, February 3, 10-12 at Graham Creek Nature Preserve.

Alabama Water Watch is interested in holding their 2019 Annual Meeting in coastal Alabama. This would be a great opportunity to network with other monitors from across the state, highlight your groups work, and show-off coastal Alabama's bountiful water resources.

The [2018 AWW Annual Meeting](#) is in June.

11:40 Adjourn