



Advocate, Educate, Preserve and Protect



**Alabama
Environmental
Council**

Protecting Alabama's Natural Heritage Since 1967

State news

FALL 2008 EDITION

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and much, much more...

Our Mission:

From the low and gentle mountains of the north to the pure white sands of the coast, we breathe Alabama's air, drink Alabama's water and depend on Alabama's land. We recognize the positive link between a strong economy, a clean environment and a healthy, proactive citizenry.

The Alabama Environmental Council works for a healthy environment with an emphasis on clean air, efficient and renewable energy, and improved waste reduction practices. We provide a voice for Alabama now and for the future.

**Alabama Environmental Council:
For a Clean and Healthy Alabama**

Our Vision:

EFFICIENT, RENEWABLE ENERGY

Alabamians are aware and informed of the critical impacts of global warming and are engaged in lessening pollution that causes climate change. Alabamians work proactively toward minimizing our eco-footprint which will lead to decreased affects on the biodiversity that is our unique natural heritage. We recognize a change in perception about climate impacts among Alabama's citizenry and see movement toward more sustainable, clean energy production.

TARGET:

Alabama will have a more diversified energy portfolio with reliance on clean renewable energy and efficiency and conservation, resulting in lessened effects of current and future climate change and the serious worldwide impacts.

CLEAN AIR AS A BIRTHRIGHT

Alabama's children will live and play in a toxic free environment. Businesses and governments will reduce the use and prevent the release of air pollutants that are harmful to human health. Parents and caregivers will not be

continued on back cover

Mary Burks
1921-2007*Founder*

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- Dan Tenpas*Recycling Coordinator*
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**Alabama Environmental Council:
For a Clean and Healthy Alabama**

From Executive Director *Michael Churchman*



Dear Vital Member,

Fall is nearly upon us and it is hard to imagine where the year has gone. If the old saying is true, I sure must be having fun. It has been great to know so many of you and I look forward to working with all of you in the near future. We continue to need your support.

Our Board of Directors held a retreat at Wonderful Camp McDowell in June where we put the final touches on our updated Strategic Plan that will guide us for the next few years. I think you will be proud of it...I know I am. I hope you will visit our website often to see updates on what is going on with your state organization.

As you will read in this copy of *StateNews*, our staff and members have been active in program work. This summer, we learned of the rollbacks to Opacity standards that were presented by ADEM. We organized a strong campaign in support of the more stringent rule. We were very disappointed with the outcome of the Environmental Management Commissions decision, and again saw how

strong an influence the regulated industries have over our state agency. But, we feel good about the effort that we put into it and think you will agree that it brought a lot of attention to this important issue. You have our pledge of continued advocacy for Clean Air.

On to exciting news: the Recycling Center Renovation is getting closer and closer. Williams-Blackstock Architecture has sent the plans to a contractor, and we may have a begin remodel date of November. I think you will be very excited about the plans to update the center, help it fit with the revitalized neighborhood, and consolidate our state offices with the center. Be watching for updates about how you can participate in this important project with your financial support and elbow-grease!

Thank you for your continued support. I hope you are pleased that your organization is progressing forward. Feel free to contact your staff at any time, and I look forward to seeing you soon.

For a Clean and Healthy Alabama,
Michael J. Churchman

Water & Energy Efficiency and Conservation Initiative Coming Soon!



Eco-Friendly Newsletters printed on Neenah Environment FSC 100% Post-Consumer Recycled Natural 80# Text. We utilized the "Environmental Calculator" on www.neenahpaper.com/ECOPaperCalculator to project our newsletters' environmental savings over the course of one year:

1,661 lbs wood	A total of 6 trees that supply enough oxygen for 3 people annually
2,100 gal water	Enough water to take 122 eight-minute showers
4min BTUs energy	Enough energy to power an average American household for 16 days
506 lbs emissions	Carbon sequestered by 6 tree seedlings grown for 10 years
270 lbs solid waste	A total of 9 thirty-two gallon garbage cans of waste

Through a partnership with the Alabama Rivers Alliance we recently received a World Wildlife Fund grant to develop a program to connect the dots between Energy usage and Water usage. We are thrilled to announce that we've been able to retain the services of long time friend and supporter Kirsten

Bryant. Kirsten, hardworking and talented, is helping us gather the support data needed for the project. When we finish our preparations for this important program, we will be bringing presentations across the state that are tailored to three specific Alabama watersheds. If you are interested in having the presentation at your group's meeting contact Jenny Dorgan at Jenny@AEOnline.org

From Program Coordinator *Jenny Dorgan*



Hi Friends!

I hope you've all enjoyed your summer and are looking forward to the changing seasons. We've been busy and productive working toward our goals of **Efficient Renewable Energy, Clean & Healthy Air and Improved Waste Reduction.**

I hear from more and more of you each day how excited you are about the work that we

are doing today and I want you all to know how much your support means to the staff here in the state office.

Please enjoy our program updates throughout the Fall Edition of the Alabama Environmental Council's *StateNews*.

If you're inspired to contribute an additional gift to our efforts you can give with a click at www.aeonline.org

We're working to update our Volunteer Manual which will be posted on our website soon.

And, as always, please don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions or concerns that we may be able to help you with.

Sincerely,
Jenny

From Board President *Scott Hofer*

I often stand in my backyard taking in the marvels of nature. I watch the limbs of the trees swaying in the breeze. I listen for the ripple of water that travels down the little stream that outlines our yard. I daydream of putting a water wheel there and utilizing nature's pure energy source. *What is your dream for the environment, for our role in Alabama's future?*

Many of you have shared some amazing stories about our early work, when we engaged in some epic environmental struggles and had some incredible victories. The rich history of our organization never ceases to amaze me. Like that stream in the

back yard, there are ebbs and flows in our history. Our past leads us to our future and I think it is wonderful that we still have relevance making a difference for Alabama. Now more than ever, we need your support.

Have you heard the saying, "Green is the new Black?" As the world is becoming more aware of the impact of our actions on the environment, the opportunity for Alabama Environmental Council to make a difference is bigger than ever, but we can't sit back on our heels. Now is the time for action. People are more open and willing to listen and to act in order to make our world a better place to live. Many people are looking for

information and guidance on how they can make a difference. That is one way that we can assist. We are ready to make a difference for Alabama's environment.

Help us make these dreams a reality. Look through this newsletter to see all the efforts that our organization has been a part of. And then, consider becoming involved and renew your membership today or make an additional financial gift to the Alabama Environmental Council.

For Alabama's Future,
Scott C. Hofer



From Recycling Coordinator *Dan Tenpas*



Hello recyclers! I hope everyone has had a great summer and is looking forward to wonderful fall.

I'm happy to announce that we now have two employees working down at the Center. Jon Paolone works Monday through Thursday and John Lyda works Friday through Sunday. The Center will be staffed from 8am till 5pm every day, rather than only four hours on the weekend. Don't forget to say hi to them when you're recycling.

We recently participated in a recycling fund committee at ADEM to assist in getting

together the language of the regulations for the recently passed Solid Waste and Recyclable Materials Act. The regulations should be up for public comment in the next few weeks and should be formally adopted following the comment period. As soon as the regulations are in place, ADEM will begin accepting applications for funds with a deadline of March of each year. This is really exciting news that hopefully will assist in the formation of recycling programs state wide which will help with AEC's goal of improved Waste Reduction!

Along the same lines, we just got word that the University of Alabama at Birmingham

will be initiating a campus wide recycling program at the beginning of the spring semester. This truly is exciting considering the size and breadth of the campus.

Businesses are still being added to the paper route in the metro Birmingham Area; and if you know of a business that would benefit from office paper recycling, please direct them to recycling@aeonline.org.

Last, but certainly not least, if you live in the Birmingham Area and frequent our Downtown Drop-off Recycling Center, watch out for the major improvements that will be taking place over the near future.

Thanks for Recycling!

ALABAMA VOICES: Seek renewable sources

By Jenny Dorgan

Reprinted with permission from montgomeryadvertiser.com, July 25, 2008

Mr. Gary Palmer: "Radical environmentalists and liberal social engineers are responsible for self-inflicted pain."

Mr. Ben Roper: "Brethren, by the bowels of Christ, bethink thee that thou mightst be mistaken" about global warming?

We feel that it's time for a meaningful dialogue to take place that shines the light on a proud nation of innovative citizens who are ready to move forward with solutions. Messrs. Roper and Palmer, along with all the other naysayers in Alabama, can play catch-up while the rest of us pick the ball up and run together with it.

Carbon regulations are on the way. The bad news: These regulations will be expensive for our current economy. The good news: They will stimulate the green economy.

Studies have shown that green jobs will be created when we hire people to build the infrastructure necessary in order to put non-polluting, diversified energy portfolios in place.

You can Google green jobs vs. fossil-based jobs to see Senate testimony that shows wind and solar power can produce almost three times as many jobs as fossil-based jobs.

Twenty three states have already enacted renewable energy portfolio standards and there is debate in the Senate and House right now regarding climate change regulations.

Alabama has a chance to lead the way or we will be following and trying to catch up in the future. We would hope that Alabama industries would be investing in research and development of renewable technologies because if they don't, when the carbon regulations are put in place, it will be even more costly for them to retrofit their plants to try to catch up.

Our elected officials and many citizens repeatedly claim that solar and

wind will not work for Alabama, but the fact of the matter is if you put photovoltaics on your home and offset some of your energy usage from Alabama Power or TVA's coal-burning power plants, then you've helped move us towards a solution-based approach to today's problems.

We know this to be true because many Alabamians are doing exactly that as you read this. Industries should be working toward clean and secure energy infrastructure that takes advantage of innovative technologies that are available to us today as a way to create profits in the future.

Florida Power and Light Energy is the largest generator of solar power in the nation through its connection to solar collectors in the Mojave Dessert. If our southeastern sister state can figure it out, why can't Alabama?

One example of an untapped natural resource is the tri-state wind regime of North Dakota, South Dakota and Texas with enough badlands, wild lands, scrublands and otherwise unused land mass to place four windmills per acre and generate all of the nation's power.

And, we could generate all of America's power needs in addition to shutting down all of our polluting power plants -- including nuclear, fossil and hydro. Why drill off the white sands of our coast or in some of our best and last wild places in our country if we don't have to?

Thomas Edison said that burning fossil fuels for power production is like burning your front door for heat. We're a proud nation of inventors and we've seen an amazing advancement in our fuel sources since the prehistory of today. The economics of eastern coal is shifting. Is Alabama going to continue to drag her feet?

Gov. Riley has an opportunity to be a knight in shining armor for Alabama by creating thousands of jobs while protecting our environment and our national security. Will he do it? Or will Alabama maintain her spot at the top of so many "worst-in-the-nation-for" lists?

We need a commitment to clean and secure energy. We must decrease Alabama's dependence on coal-based energy that pollutes our air by working toward a diversified energy portfolio that will implement some of the innovative technologies that we have available to us today. It is the patriotic duty of our time.

The children of Alabama will inherit the legacy of the choices we make today. What kind of natural health and heritage will we leave for them?



AEC on WBHM Public Radio:

Birmingham's air quality has improved significantly over the last century. But you wouldn't know it. The area still has problems with

smog and other particulate matter, exceeding federal standards. (*On The Line, June 23 at 6:30 p.m., WBHM guests take comments and questions about Air Pollution and how to clean up Birmingham. Panelists included, Alabama Environmental Council Program Coordinator Jenny Dorgan, Alabama Power's Willard Bowers, Jefferson County Department of Health's Corey Masuca and Black Warrior Riverkeeper's Nelson Brooke.*)

Our friend Sam said: "Oh what a "driveway moment" that was for me. I've never sat in my car in the driveway for 35 minutes listening to a WBHM-NPR broadcast ending before." To listen—go to www.wbhm.org/News/2008/AQ-OTL.html or get there via the Air Program Link at www.aconline.org

Area Groups Team Up for Alabama Teens — YouthServe Urban Service Camp and EcoAction

This summer, about a dozen area teenagers will hit the streets of Birmingham for a first time EcoAction program with an annual Urban Service Camp. AEC teamed up with our friends at YouthServe, Inc. and other partner groups to introduce the signature program. The YouthServe Urban Service Camp encourages teenagers to take ownership and pride in their city through a proactive approach to their neighborhoods by engaging in community service. The Alabama Environmental Council worked with YouthServe this year to provide opportunities for Eco-Action around the city. The team utilized Birmingham's public transportation by traveling between Eco-Action sites by Metro bus. "These are the next generation of leaders in our great state—it's important that these young people are involved in working for a clean and healthy Alabama," said Program Coordinator Jenny Dorgan.

Day One: The teens spent time helping to spruce up our Recycling Center downtown. While they lunched a few blocks away at the Alabama Rivers Alliance headquarters, they learned about what a non-profit career is like and heard about the Alliance's Save and Share Campaign to save water, energy and money! Back at the Recycling Center in the urban redevelopment area of Birmingham, the teens spruced up our bins, helped with landscaping, helped patrons unload recyclables and learned about operations of the Center. On this first day—the teens made the connection between recycling, water savings and energy savings.

Day Two: Participants joined Black Warrior Riverkeeper, Nelson Brooke, at 5th Avenue North and 7th Street North, which is where Valley Creek emerges from under the city. It's Birmingham's own underground stream! This was a unique educational opportunity for the teens to learn about solid waste, from our streets and parking lots, that doesn't make it to the Recycling Center, but instead enters storm drains, which end up discharging trash at this site after it rains. Trash that makes its way into Valley Creek flows downstream from Birmingham through Bessemer and West Jefferson County into Bankhead Lake on the Black Warrior River.

The team picked up trash along the creek and was surprised by the amount of material that they found. Then the teens loaded up on the bus and headed to Birmingham Southern Environmental Center to watch an eco-video then take a tour of the Southern Environmental Center.



Final Day: The proactive teens helped staff the Recycling Center and finished up the projects from first day. They lunched at the Regional Planning Commission and learned about the CommuteSmart program. Then they headed to Linn Park to display the garbage they picked up from Valley Creek on the second day of camp to demonstrate the amount of garbage that people dump on Alabama. Mayor Larry Langford was present to deliver an award to the 2008 YouthServe and Alabama Environmental Council's Urban Service/EcoAction participants.

The Mayor was so impressed with the youth and their commitment to service in the community that he decreed a formal proclamation from the City of Birmingham!



photo credits: Alan Gurganus and Scott Hofer

EMC Votes to Rollback Air Standards In Front of Standing-room-only Crowd!

Regulatory agencies that are charged with protecting human health and the environment should show extra caution during this time of poor air quality. Instead EPA and ADEM proposed to approve a relaxation of an important Alabama air pollution regulation. In a letter from Governor Riley to the Administrator of EPA he wrote: "On Tuesday, June 2, representatives of EPA Region 4 asked ADEM to reconsider additional changes to Alabama's proposed SIP revision related to opacity...I urge you to finalize EPA's proposed approval without delay."

At this summer's last Environmental Management Commission meeting, we witnessed a roll-back of Alabama's air protection regulations. In a unanimous decision, commissioners were in favor of adopting the changes that ADEM had proposed. As we have continued to articulate, Alabama's Opacity regulations are not the strictest in the nation, not even in the Southeast, and this rollback will weaken these regulations. ADEM should have done the modeling needed to prove that there would be no negative impact on air quality. They have stated that this will strengthen the Clean Air Act. We are waiting to see EPA's response. This regulation was being pushed by the regulated polluters, and was not brought about because of rule-changes at the federal level. We met individually with Congressman Artur Davis and several Commissioners—to no avail. This was a bad decision, and we were disappointed with each Commissioner's choice.

The silver lining in this unfortunate decision was the tremendous support that the Alabama Environmental Council saw from our friends. The hearing room was packed with a standing room only crowd. We had 50 "Clean Air" buttons and a dozen or more citizens did not receive one. It has been a long time since we have seen that kind of

citizen support at an EMC meeting and we greatly appreciate everyone's support. We are confident that industry, ADEM, and Commissioners took note of the rally around protecting Clean Air and other issues before the Commission.

ADEM's Lack of Enforcement Should Not Be Codified: *the Highway Patrol Analogy*

Air Division Chief Ron Gore justifies the proposed rule change as simply a "codification of our existing enforcement practices." He compared ADEM's enforcement efforts to the decision of a state trooper to look the other way if a speeder goes slightly over the limit. This analogy is useful, but does not support ADEM's position in the least. If Highway Patrol data showed that under current speed limits and enforcement practices, an unacceptable number of speed-related accidents were occurring, it is unlikely that the Highway Patrol would be seeking to raise the speed limit, yet that is essentially what is occurring here. Given that five Alabama counties are failing to meet air quality standards, something is clearly amiss. A relaxation under the circumstances is inappropriate, and Mr. Gore admits that ADEM is undertaking this rulemaking effort because TVA, Alabama Power, and other industrial polluters asked for it. Given the nonattainment situation in Alabama, ADEM should be devoting its time and energy to enforcing the laws on the books, not repealing them.

AEC will continue to follow this issue closely and we'll keep you updated on our next steps. Our attorneys David Ludder, George Hays and Chip Moore continue to provide strong leadership on this issue. Thanks to those of you who attended the EMC meeting. Our standing room only crowd sent a powerful message to our state regulatory agency and the board that oversees them.

Update from our friends at Eating Alabama

From board member Joe Brown

Some of y'all know that hurricane Gustav dropped 10 inches of much needed rain on



our fair state. One positive externality of this situation is this

Sparassis herbstii, which is a choice mushroom the size of a football that sprang up right out of the ground. So it's going in the soup pot.

I've been getting more and more interested in foraged food, ever since I read an excerpt of *Stalking the Wild Asparagus* by Euell Gibbons in a 30-year old copy of *Mother Earth News* (we've got a big stack of them and they're my favorite reading material at the breakfast table). So far, I've made Sara eat cattails and thistle (to not very much acclaim) and experimented with wapato. We gathered lots of wild garlic and ginger this Spring, which really helped us make do when our spices were limited. On the fruit front we've had blackberries, mulberries, plums, pears, figs, black cherries, and now muscadines - all of which we've gathered wild and enjoyed thoroughly.

Take a look around and enjoy the harvest, just make sure you really know what you're doing. My man John Cage liked to hunt mushrooms as well - a few of his dinner guests ended up in the hospital at one point.



Thank You to Our Contributors:

These contributions were received from June through August 20, 2008.

Sandra Robert & Colin Austin
Therese Avant
Bill & Mollie Barrett
Brian & Krys Barrett
Royce & Shirley Beckett
Richard & Martha Beschi
Bethany & Phillip Bobo
Rupert & Libby Bodden
Betty Brislin
Molly Burns
Mr. & Mrs. Lowndes Butler
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Greater Birmingham
Sojourns
Star Recycling, Inc.
U.S. Dept Of HUD
World Wildlife Fund

AEC: Here we grow again!

We are thrilled to announce that we are continuing to grow our small staff so that we can do the important work we are charged with in the state. Please join us in welcoming not one, but 2 Johns to the Birmingham Recycling Center!

John Lyda and Jon Paolone will be helping us manage the Center, the

Recycling Hotline, assisting patrons and working with haulers to make sure the bins are emptied in a timely manner. Be sure to stop by and introduce yourself the next time you're in Birmingham!



John Lyda

AEC partners with the Alabama Rivers Alliance on the Save Energy, Save Water, Save \$\$ Campaign

Saving energy and saving water are great for the environment, but they are also great for your bank account. In Alabama, when you save energy and water, you are reducing your demand for coal-burned electricity production. Remember also, that when you save water, you are saving energy that was used to extract, filter, pump, and discharge that water.



Visit our friends the Alabama Rivers Alliance at www.AlabamaRivers.org for more details. You can also find the Energy and Water saving tips on AEC's website at www.aconline.org

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The AEC has made big changes in order to save paper! Membership information is available on our website. New members will continue to receive our full membership packet!

continued from front cover

forced to stay indoors on bad air days or to take their at-risk family members to the hospital as a result of air pollution. We see declines in asthma, learning disabilities, cancer and other health problems triggered by pollution, especially among children.

TARGET:

Alabama will have air that is free of toxics to human and ecological health as well as decreased industrial pollutants resulting in clean air to pass down to future generations.

IMPROVED WASTE REDUCTION

Alabamians have meaningful opportunities to lessen their impact on the waste stream and energy consumption through reducing,

reusing and recycling. Alabama has an infrastructure built around waste reduction and industries that process materials locally providing employment opportunities and a healthy economy. Industries in Alabama are motivated to be good neighbors using innovative methods to transform waste products into valuable resources to be used in the industrial processes.

TARGET:

Alabama has waste reduction practices that provide opportunities and incentives for reducing, reusing and recycling its waste products.



Protecting Alabama's Natural Heritage Since 1967

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