



# The Power of One

Numerous Programs Expand the Reach of One Guardian Affiliate Team

## Groundwater Guardian Featured Result Oriented Service

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As a Groundwater Guardian Affiliate, the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) provides assistance and guidance to communities in developing groundwater protection programs. The team is comprised of representatives from the ADEM Groundwater Branch and the Office of Education and Outreach as well as from the Alabama Rural Water Association, Legacy, Inc., a nonprofit environmental education organization in Alabama, and the Tusculum Groundwater Guardian team. The team meets quarterly to review and discuss ways to implement its Result Oriented Services (ROS) and to help communities protect their drinking water. Program support includes promoting the Groundwater Guardian program; publishing an Alabama Groundwater Guardian newsletter; providing financial and technical assistance in the delineation of source water areas and potential contaminant inventories; implementing the Alabama Groundwater Festival program; assisting communities in developing wellhead protection programs and hosting recognition ceremonies for designated Groundwater Guardian Communities and communities who have completed the wellhead protection (WHP) program.

The WHP program is perhaps the motivating force behind most community action, as well as the promotion of the Groundwater Guardian program. The Groundwater Guardian program has a structured format that focuses WHP teams and motivates them to

continue protection efforts after the initial WHP plan is approved. ADEM works cooperatively with the Alabama Rural Water Association to provide assistance to communities to complete all five steps of the WHP program and then urge the communities to apply for Groundwater Guardian designation. Over the last five years, financial assistance through the state revolving fund was also available to



municipalities to conduct delineation studies and to inventory potential contaminant sources. Communities that have an ADEM approved Wellhead Protection Plan are given technical and educational materials as well as road signs that are constructed according to the Department of Transportation specifications for state highways. The signs are mounted on major roads and at the perimeter of the source water areas. The communities are also recognized at the annual Alabama Rural Water Association awards banquet and receive a framed certificate of achievement.

In addition to meeting with individual communities to promote and discuss the Groundwater Guardian program, an annual Groundwater Conference and a quarterly Alabama Groundwater Guardian newsletter were



implemented. The newsletter is placed on ADEM's website, sent to all municipalities that utilize groundwater, as well as to Soil and Water Conservation Districts and

Regional Planning Commissions of approximately 700 recipients. It provides a review of the Groundwater Guardian program, highlights specific community activities, and reviews different protection strategies that communities can implement. The Groundwater Conference includes technical and educational presentations as well as a breakout session for the Groundwater Guardian program and a recognition ceremony for the designated communities. The breakout session focuses on informing and assisting communities in the Groundwater Guardian application process as well as answering questions about the program. The conference generally attracts approximately 150 attendees.

The Groundwater Festival program is perhaps ADEM's most successful ROS. The program concept is

to develop a committee that consists of water utilities and officials in the county, the Natural Resources Conservation Survey and Soil and Water Conservation committee, county Cooperative Extension agents, school

board personnel, and active citizens in the county to work together to organize a groundwater festival for their county. The committee is guided through the first year of organizing and hosting the festival by a facilitator. The following year the committee is self-sufficient and the facilitator then moves to other counties. All county committees that have been trained through this program have continued to host a yearly festival.

The festival program began in 1997 for 1,200 students from a single county. In 2003, 17 counties will host festivals for over 15,000 4<sup>th</sup> grade students. Since 1997 over 30,000 students have participated. The festival program is supported primarily through EPA 106 and 319 grants and by the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries. In 2002, Legacy, Inc. awarded the Department an \$8,000 grant as seed money for five new festivals. In addition, a groundwater festival fund was established through the nonprofit Alabama Water Environment Association. The fund will provide grant support to counties hosting festivals and seed money to new festivals. Funds for the account are raised through solicitation and grants.