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Groups React to ADEM's New Sewage Spill Notification Tools

BIRMINGHAM, AL – As part of an overall effort to improve reporting and public notification of sewage overflows, the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) has released two new tools.

The first tool is a map which allows citizens to identify the exact location of all current spills in the state. [Click here to see the map](#). The second tool is an opt-in email notification system that will inform citizens of a sewage spill in their selected county or counties.

To sign up to receive the email notifications, citizens will need to follow these steps:

1. Visit the Alabama Department of Environmental Management website: www.adem.alabama.gov
2. On the left sidebar, enter your e-mail address for ADEM email notifications, then click submit
3. Check the last box to be notified of Sanitary Sewer Overflows
4. Select the counties you live and recreate in and then click submit

These improvements come on the heels of a [petition](#) filed in March by the Alabama Rivers Alliance, Black Warrior Riverkeeper, Cahaba Riverkeeper, Choctawhatchee Riverkeeper, Coosa Riverkeeper, Friends of Hurricane Creek, Little River Waterkeeper, Mobile Baykeeper and Tennessee Riverkeeper. The petition asks the Environmental Management Commission to improve requirements for public notification of sewage spills.

“We commend ADEM’s development of a centralized notification system,” said Black Warrior Riverkeeper staff attorney Eva Dillard, who represents the petitioners. “We look forward to combining this system with other important tools outlined by our petition that will further improve public notification and better protect the citizens of Alabama from sewage overflows.”

According to ADEM, when a sewage treatment facility detects a spill, the facility is required to report it to ADEM within 24 hours. Once that electronic report is submitted, an e-mail alert will be sent out within 15 minutes to anyone who has opted in to their notification system.

“As we enter Labor Day Weekend and Tropical Storm Harvey reaches Alabama this week, we’re glad to have these useful tools for citizens to protect themselves while they’re out enjoying their lake or river,” Frank Chitwood, Coosa Riverkeeper, said. “We look forward to more progress in the public notification system and we are grateful to our many supporters who signed the petitions for improved public notification.”

[The Environmental Management Commission is currently studying the issue](#) of public notification presented by the petition. They will be conducting a stakeholder meeting regarding this issue in the coming months in an effort to find the most practicable solution for ensuring the protection of public health. To follow this issue and to learn more, please visit alabamarivers.org.

For Nelson Brooke’s high resolution photo of sewage blowing the cover off a Birmingham manhole, entering a nearby storm drain, and flowing to Village Creek, [click here](#).

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Black Warrior Riverkeeper’s mission is to protect and restore the Black Warrior River and its tributaries. The citizen-based nonprofit organization promotes clean water for the sake of public health, recreation, and wildlife habitat throughout the Black Warrior River watershed. To learn more, visit BlackWarriorRiver.org.