



ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

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For Immediate Release: October 19, 2000

EPA REGION 4 HONORS SIX ALABAMA ENVIRONMENTAL MERIT AWARD RECIPIENTS

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 4 today honored recipients of its inaugural Environmental Merit Award at the Jimmy Carter Presidential Center in Atlanta, Georgia. These awards were presented in recognition of the creative and productive activities of those outside of EPA in the Southeast who are working in their communities to sustain our natural systems and promote environmental stewardship. The Environmental Merit Awards program provides the Agency an opportunity to reach out to individuals, states, Federal partners, local governments, stakeholder groups, businesses and others who have made specific contributions in 1999-2000 to improve the environment.

“Those honored today have gone above and beyond the call of duty to address public health and natural resource protection issues of concern and, in so doing, have made this region a better place for all of us,” said John H. Hankinson, Jr., EPA Regional Administrator in Atlanta. “They have demonstrated that hard work and collaborative problem solving can bring positive environmental results.”

The Agency sought nominations of individuals and groups throughout the Southeast who have made special efforts to identify environmental problems or needs and have worked to address them by utilizing innovative techniques and/or successful collaborations with others. As a result, 47 winners were selected from more than 250 nominations. The award categories included individuals, businesses, governmental and not-for-profit organizations from EPA Region 4 (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee).

A list of the Alabama award recipients is attached. A complete list of award recipients in the Southeast is available at <http://www.epa.gov/region4/>.

2000 Environmental Merit Award Winners from Alabama

Local, State, Tribal & Federal Government

Alabama Cooperative Extension System's Radon Education Program

The State of Alabama currently has no laws or regulations pertaining to radon and the elimination of radon gases from buildings, homes and other structures. An effective outreach program is the only method

applicable to create awareness about this serious, life-threatening indoor air pollutant. Since the Alabama program's inception in October 1997, the goal in the 15 counties with high radon levels has been to create awareness about radon and its health risks and to take action to reduce its risks. This has been accomplished through a web site with links to other partnering radon-related agencies and organizations, exhibits, publications and various forms of media coverage. The Southern Regional Radon Training Center is offering a class that teaches homeowners about radon, mitigation and radon-resistant new construction. The success of this program is due to fostering partnerships and uniting homebuilders and homeowners with the common goal of reducing radon levels in Alabama.

Waste Management Team, Auburn University, AL

The Waste Management Team was formed to develop educational materials and programs to support Alabama's agricultural sector in their efforts to comply with new Animal Feed Operator/Certified Animal Feed Operator regulations. It is a multi-disciplinary team comprised of faculty from the College of Agriculture, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, and representatives from the state Natural Resources Conservation Service offices, Alabama Department of Environmental Management and the Department of Agriculture and Industries. Educational materials have been developed on Nutrient Management Planning and the Certified Animal Waste Vendor Program, both of which are targeted towards livestock and poultry producers. Numerous educational meetings and training sessions have been held to assist these groups. The efforts of this team have greatly contributed to maintaining water quality within the state of Alabama. They have been recognized throughout the state and nationally as a leader in providing the necessary guidance and training at the producer, company and state levels.

Individuals

Les Behrends, Muscle Shoals, AL

Dr. Behrends invented a new subsurface flow wetland technology that has made decentralized wastewater treatment economical for local communities and industries. This technology is able to treat industrial, domestic and animal waste stream and has been used in a North Alabama subdivision that was not located near a sewer system or receiving streams, a swine farm in Central Alabama to treat waste from the hog lagoon and a food company in Tennessee that needed a low cost wastewater treatment system. Dr. Behrends works for the Tennessee Valley Authority at the Muscle Shoals facility, which is the world's largest constructed wetlands and development facility.

Craig T. Northridge, Redstone Arsenal, AL

Mr. Northridge worked as the team leader for the Pentaborane Destruction Project, the first large scale, non-detonation treatment/disposal performed for pentaborane. For almost 40 years, approximately 1,800 pounds of pentaborane, a hypergolic rocket fuel, was stored at Redstone Arsenal undergoing evaluations for military applications. This material was considered excess, but there were no known, acceptable storage or treatment alternatives available and the material could not be moved due to its instability and explosive potential. Mr. Northridge worked with a contractor to refine a technology using remote vapor phase hydrolysis. This treatment successfully eliminated the environmental and human health risks associated with handling and storing the pentaborane. He also coordinated with federal and state officials as well as range personnel during the process of destroying the pentaborane. During this project, no safety issues occurred, the environment was not impacted and the pentaborane was completely destroyed.

Business

BP Amoco Chemicals/Decatur City School System, Decatur, AL

BP Amoco's Decatur chemical plant and the Decatur City School System have joined forces to create an environmental learning center that will educate students within a wildlife habitat. The center will be located on 500 acres at the plant site where a 2.1 mile nature trail has been built for the public to observe bottomland and wetland flora and fauna. BP Amoco will build the 4,000 square foot center with two classrooms, two aquariums, rooms for computers and video equipment and a small kitchen. The school system is providing science teachers and equipment for the center. Many interdisciplinary environmental activities will be available for K-12 students and the public. The project is part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Five-Star Restoration Program and involves the Wildlife Habitat Council.

Environmental, Community and Non-profit Organizations

Cahaba River Society, Birmingham, AL

The Cahaba River Society has had a major impact on the conservation of central Alabama's water resources. The Society took a leadership role in protecting more than 7,500 acres of threatened public lands that were transferred from the Birmingham Water Board to the City of Birmingham by establishing a diverse coalition of 22 environmental and citizen groups. Members of the coalition include the Birmingham Canoe Club, Vulcan Trails Association and the Birmingham Audubon Society. A community-wide, long-range planning process was created to address environmental issues, smart growth and control of urban sprawl. As a result of these efforts, the Birmingham City Council has agreed to return key acreage to the Water Board and is currently formulating a master plan to protect the property. The Cahaba River Society has reached across non-traditional lines to build collaborative success in facing complicated environmental and growth issues.