

Sea Grant Extension
Telephone: 251/438-5690
November 12, 2008

By: Jody A. Thompson, Environmental Extension
Alabama Sea Grant/Auburn Marine Center

Alabama's waterways are polluted. According to the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, 224 water segment in Alabama were not meeting the water quality requirements for their use classification. This included 43 waterbody segments in Mobile and Baldwin counties, with causes ranging from bacterial pathogens to nutrients to mercury. But what is being done to improve water quality?

Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act requires states to identify polluted, or "impaired" waterbodies, and to determine the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for each waterbody. The TMDL is a tool that establishes the amount of a particular pollutant that a specific water can accumulate without causing the waterbody to become impaired. That amount of the pollutant is then allocated to point and nonpoint sources within that watershed.

Inputs of contaminants for waterbodies listed on the Alabama Impaired Waterbodies List (also known as the 303(d) list) must be reduced to meet the allocations determined by the TMDL in order to restore our waterways to their designated uses.

TMDLs are being developed by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, and must be approved by the EPA. The public may view and comment on the TMDLs on ADEM's website (www.adem.state.al.us) under the Water Quality

Division link. You can also become involved in water quality locally. Grassroots groups are working to implement water quality improvement projects in Mobile and Baldwin counties. The Alabama Water Watch program trains volunteers to monitor water quality. Alabama People Against A Littered State provides tools for groups to Adopt-A-Stream and clean up litter there. Get involved in water!