

**For Immediate Release:** September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009

**Contact:** Cindy Lowry, Executive Director, Alabama Rivers Alliance  
[clowry@alabamarivers.org](mailto:clowry@alabamarivers.org) (205) 322-6395

Matt Rota, Gulf Restoration Network  
[matt@healthygulf.org](mailto:matt@healthygulf.org) (504) 377-7840

## **ALABAMA GETS A D+ FOR WATER QUALITY PROTECTIONS**

*Gulf Restoration Network Report Card Reveals Poor Water Quality Policy Gulfwide*

BIRMINGHAM, AL- Today the Gulf Restoration Network released its **Clean Up Your Act! report card** for Gulf State water quality protections. Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas have received unsatisfactory grades for their failure to implement the Clean Water Act into state water quality protections. The report grades the Gulf States on issues such as water quality standards, policies to prevent Dead Zone-causing pollution, public health protection, and facilitating public participation in the policy-making process.

**The Clean Up Your Act! report card** indicates that Alabama, along with the other states along the Gulf Coast, has neglected its responsibility of maintaining healthy water policies in the Gulf region.

**Matt Rota of the Gulf Restoration Network** remarked that the report card grades “reflect a critical shortcoming in Gulfwide water protection. The Clean Water Act should be fully incorporated into state water quality policies, and this report card indicates that we are a long way from that goal.” The combined grade for all Gulf states was a D+.

The report card points out that Alabama has failed to develop criteria aimed at the reduction of nitrogen and phosphorus pollution, and has failed to use the best water quality tests to protect the public from disease-causing organisms. Public involvement in state-level compliance with the Clean Water Act has been kept at a minimum. Additionally, Alabama allowed a federally mandated deadline for public hearings to lapse for six months before meeting to review state water policies, limiting the public’s involvement in key clean water protections.

Alabama received an overall grade of D+ in the areas assessed by the report card. The report assigned the state an F in the area of Nitrogen and Phosphorous Pollution Standards, due to the failure of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management to implement policies that set specific criteria for nitrogen and phosphorous pollution. This pollution is responsible for harmful algal blooms that dead zones and create hazards for human health, as well as aquatic wildlife.

According to **Mitch Reid of the Alabama Rivers Alliance**, “The failure of the State to act to limit nitrogen and phosphorous is strangling our rivers, lakes, and bays and is turning our Gulf coast into a wasteland. The algal blooms which form when fertilizers and other nutrients runoff into the water has the same effect on our marine wildlife as putting a plastic bag over your head.

It's really hard to combat the effects of other types of pollution when the animals in the water can't even breathe."

Additionally, much of the nitrogen and phosphorous pollution in Alabama water bodies comes from sewage treatment facilities, and the report cautions that ADEM should limit the nutrient pollution allowed into waterways from such facilities. Reid notes that "This is an easy fix. Our treatment facilities are already under state regulation, and there is no reason for us to be failing in this area. ADEM should take the lead in calling for an immediate adoption of the EPA's recommended standards and then work to ensure that those standards are enforced."

Finally, Reid observes, "There is no excuse for not getting an A on this report card. This grade is not about how clean our water is or how well ADEM is protecting us from harmful pollution. This is much more basic. It's about whether the Alabama has even implemented the policies required under the Clean Water Act. Clearly a D+ suggests that we are seriously behind. How can we ever get around to the business of protecting public health and water quality when we don't even have the laws in place to work with."

The full report can be reviewed at the Gulf Restoration Network's website, [healthygulf.org](http://healthygulf.org).

###

The Alabama Rivers Alliance is a non profit organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of Alabama's rivers, streams, bay's and Gulf Coast. To do this ARA advocates smart water policy, organization at the grassroots level, and education focused on teaching citizens how they can protect their water. ARA's goal is to achieve healthy rivers, healthy people, and a healthy system of government for the state of Alabama.

The Gulf Restoration Network is a diverse network of individuals and local, regional, and national groups committed to uniting and empowering people to protect and restore the natural resources of the Gulf region for future generations. Founded in 1994, the GRN has members in each of the five Gulf States.