

## **OUR VIEW: Although Alabama has not always led the way on environmental accomplishment, the state can point to a number of achievements over the past year, a new report shows**

**By Birmingham News editorial board**

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Alabama has not always been the best environmental steward, but the state isn't bereft of "green" accomplishments, either.

The Green Resource Center for Alabama lists a number of those accomplishments -- from chemical weapons destruction in Anniston, to Hoover's efforts to recycle municipal wood waste for automotive biofuel -- in its "green report" for 2009. It's the second year the Homewood-based Green Resource Center has produced such a chronicle.



Some of the listings for 2009 are particularly promising.

After all, if Honda and Mercedes can successfully build cars without sending so much as a scrap of waste to a landfill, surely more of us running a household can find a way to send much less garbage to be buried in the ground.

If Alabama prisons can become more energy efficient and self-sufficient -- such as by converting food waste and used cooking oil for kitchen fuel -- surely, the rest of us can find a better alternative than dumping our Fry Daddy drippings down the drain.

But what is most impressive, really, is the breadth of the efforts that are being made to preserve and protect Alabama's precious natural resources:

The move to expand recycling programs in smaller cities. The increased federal dollars to help weatherize poor Alabamians' homes. The cleanup of an enormous tire dump in Attalla. The safe destruction of the Army's most dangerous old chemical weapons in Anniston. The campaign to get parents and bus drivers to turn off engines while waiting to pick up or drop off children at school. The preservation of more land for recreation and wildlife (see editorial below). The construction and retrofitting of buildings for greater energy conservation. The newfound interest in more sustainable designs for cities. The expanded use of biofuels and nongasoline-powered vehicles. The list literally goes on and on.

And it's an admirable list, whether or not you consider yourself an ardent environmentalist.

You don't have to be alarmed by global warming to appreciate the basic benefits of a greener lifestyle. You don't have to be losing sleep over the future of the planet, for instance, to recognize it makes more sense to recycle and reuse materials and scraps rather than send them to fill up expensive landfill space.

Besides, when you get right down to it, the idea of finding ways to stretch our limited resources isn't a radical new idea. It's the way many of our ancestors lived before we became a throwaway society.

Alabama can't claim credit for all the movement in a greener direction. Much of it is possible or even required because of the federal government. But much of it, too, can be traced to a growing grassroots recognition that things such as conservation, alternative fuels and pristine habitats might not just pay off for the environment but for our wallets as well.

Talk about going green . . .

## GREEN SHOOTS

Here are just a few of the past year's environmental achievements in Alabama:

- The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs announces rebates of up to \$150 on energy-efficient household appliances.
- Congress expands Little River Canyon National Preserve and Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge.
- Alabama Power partners with Ford Motor Co. and others to test a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle.
- More than 4,400 volunteers take part in an Alabama coastal cleanup, collecting 93,000 pounds of litter.
- Forever Wild announces plans to add 500 acres to the Walls of Jericho preserve in Jackson County.
- Various groups collaborate on a program to collect and recycle fishing line in the Tennessee River valley.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposes designating 13 miles of the Turkey Creek watershed in Jefferson County as critical habitat for the endangered vermilion darter.

*Source: Green Report 2009 by the Green Resource Center for Alabama*