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ADEM Provides \$5.8 Million for Prichard Water, Sewer Improvements

Initial funding will pay for rehabilitation of water tanks, design work for future water and sewer repairs and upgrades, and financial audits

MONTGOMERY, Ala. – The Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) is providing the court-appointed receiver of the Prichard water and sewer system \$5.8 million to help jump-start the process toward addressing serious problems plaguing the system.

From the funding, more than \$4 million will be used to rehabilitate water tanks, and \$300,000 will assist in completing audits of the water system finances. The lack of adequate audits has hampered the ability of the Prichard Water Works and Sewer Board (PWWSB) to qualify for state funding. ADEM awarded \$400,000 to the system in 2022 to conduct audits of previous years.

The \$5.8 million also includes money for design work and assistance with bidding and loan applications for future drinking water and sewer projects.

“ADEM’s goal is getting Prichard to the point where it can adequately meet the water and sewer needs of residents now and in the future,” ADEM Director Lance LeFleur said. “Extreme water losses, operation and management issues, and financial mismanagement have left the system in dire condition. We are pleased to be able to work with the receiver as he works to resolve some very challenging issues.”

John Young was appointed receiver in November by the Mobile County Circuit Court to manage PWWSB at the request of creditors after the system defaulted on bond payments.

“As the court-appointed receiver, my ultimate priority is to ensure the reliability and affordability of water and wastewater services while protecting the environment and public health of the people in Prichard and Chickasaw,” said Young. “This grant from ADEM is a strong start toward a multi-year restoration project of essential water and wastewater infrastructure that has been neglected for too long.”

PWWSB reported monthly water losses in the past year that sometimes exceeded 60 percent systemwide – six times the industry standard of 10 percent. A study performed last year said water leaks were costing the system about \$75,000 a month. In addition to leaky, corroded water lines, ADEM also identified problems with PWWSB water tanks, such as mildew and corrosion on the outside of the tanks.

Prichard's sanitary sewer system problems, including overflows, have been cited by ADEM as well.

“Both the water and sewer system in Prichard suffer from poor maintenance and the lack of capital improvements,” LeFleur said. “Resolving these issues will be a long-term effort and commitment. ADEM will continue to assist PWWSB and the receiver to bring drinking water and sewer services into compliance and to protect the health and well-being of residents.”

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