



# THE FORGE

Newsletter of the Birmingham Branch of ASCE

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## Meeting Information for October

*THE MEETING LOCATION HAS CHANGED...*

As many of you may know, the location has changed to the Altadena Valley Golf and Country Club off of the Acton Road exit on I-459. The meeting will be at 11:30 am as always and will proceed in a similar fashion as before.

The Branch will be responsible for lunch now, so we need an accurate head count a week before the meeting which mean we have to let the club know the Thursday before each meeting. The price is \$10.95 plus tax and gratuity which you can pay to the Branch Secretary/Treasurer at the meeting.

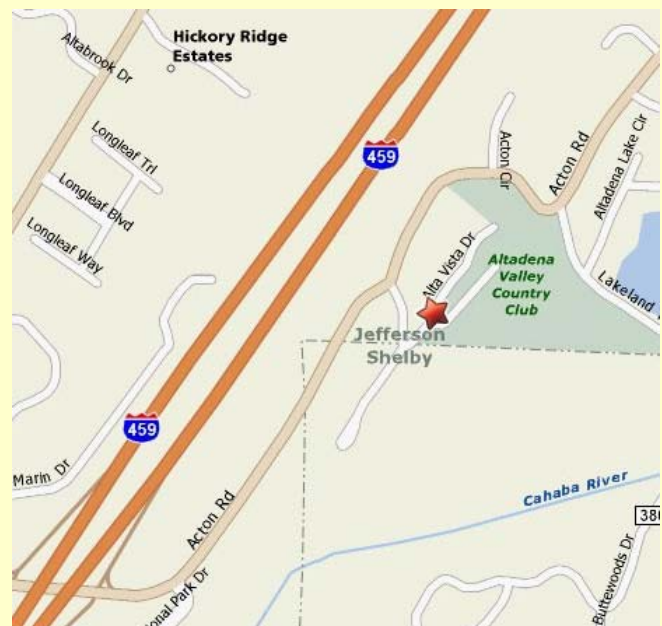
The Club's address is 2651 Alta Vista Drive, Birmingham, Alabama 35243 and can be reached from the Acton Road exit just west of Highway 280 on I-459. The club's phone number is 205.967.5322.

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## Presenters Lined Up So Far

Month	Speaker	Topic
October	Ron Bane	??
November	Jodi Saiia	BARD
December	Brain Davis	ALDOT Projects



## A Message from the President

By Jonathan Byrd



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*“At first, you ignore it, and then it gets worse, maybe you run the wipers - that really only causes it to come back with a vengeance.”*

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Have you ever driven an older car on a muggy morning? Newer cars have the same problem, but older cars seem to have it worse; especially during the dog days of autumn, we are now experiencing. The air conditioning is on to remove the humidity, but it causes the windshield to fog up. It starts low around the wiper blades, and then builds. At first, you ignore it, and then it gets worse, maybe you run the wipers - that really only causes it to come back with a vengeance. Before you know it, half the windshield is fogged up, and you start to panic. You turn the defroster on, change the temperature control to hot and the fan to high. Again, this problem is worse in older vehicles, but after a minute or so the windshield clears and looks as pristine as can be.

Most of the time, we find ourselves in a little bit of trouble and we think if we ignore it, it will go away. We may start to react to it and actually worsen the problem, until finally there is no course of action but to call in the cavalry. It is not often we ask for help when the issue is containable. When we do, everything is better.

At our last meeting we voted to change our meeting place. This is a part of a few initiatives to make the branch more than just a once a month meal. I like to think that we are catching the issue before it becomes a problem, but our new meeting place itself contains a potential view-fogging issue. We need a count of people that plan on attending the Friday before our meeting (this month that means 28 September) in order to get the kitchen staff prepared for the right sized group. This has the potential to be a defroster on high, windshield wipers wiping problem, but it does not have to be. I am calling for help before it becomes an issue.

While it may not be entirely visible at our first meeting at Altadena Valley, it will become obvious within a few meetings that the officers and past officers of the Birmingham Branch have chosen to make the branch a place where we can get as much or more than we give. The future is bright, the windshield is clean, and the open road is stretched out before us. Hop in for the ride, let's make it work together.

And I promise I'll buy a newer vehicle next time to keep from having these odd anecdotes.

## For Whom the Road Tolls

Governor Bob Riley is looking for ways to increase highway construction without raising the state gas tax and says toll roads will likely play a major role in his plan. Riley has ordered the state Transportation Department to study the feasibility of getting private firms to build -- or to partner with the state -- on some new roads that would use tolls to cover construction costs.

Riley says there are four or five projects right now that are needed. But he says if the state waits on the federal government to fund them, it will be 15 or 20 years from now.

He says if the state can find a toll solution to some of these, he will probably pursue that.



Transportation Department spokesman Tony Harris says the department is studying the feasibility of using tolls for:

- \* a southern bypass in Huntsville
- \* an elevated highway where heavily congested U.S. 280 approaches Interstate 459 at Birmingham
- \* and a limited-access highway connecting Dothan with Interstate 10 in the Florida Panhandle.

Harris says the department's research has already ruled out the feasibility of a toll road for Montgomery's proposed outer loop.

State Transportation Director Joe McInnes is optimistic about where the research will lead.

Riley says another option he is considering is using revenue from natural gas wells in state-owned waters along the Alabama coast to build a hurricane evacuation route in Mobile or Baldwin counties.

Are toll roads the best option for us? Let me know what you think.

## Riverkeeper Sues two Alabama Companies

U.S. Water News Online

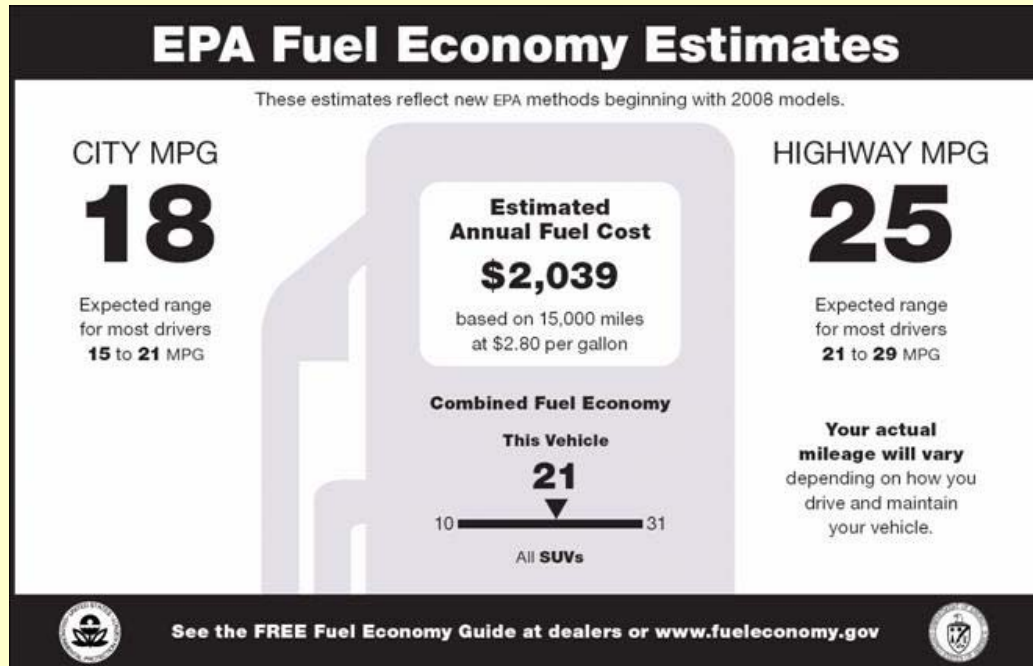
BIRMINGHAM, Ala. -- The environmental organization Black Warrior Riverkeeper Inc. has filed federal lawsuits against two Alabama companies, claiming the firms have polluted waterways.

Riverkeeper filed a lawsuit against Alabama Biodiesel Corp. of Moundville, contending the company discharged grease and vegetable-based oil about 20 times between June 2006 and August 2007.

See Riverkeeper on page 5

## New EPA Fuel Economy Guide

By Andy Faulk



*New EPA Fuel Economy Label for Cars and trucks*

In December of 2006 the EPA finalized new test methods for calculating the fuel economy estimates, which are posted on window stickers of new cars and trucks. This new rule makes three important changes:

1. The new methods will bring the estimates closer to what consumers actually achieve by including higher speeds, quicker accelerations, air conditioning and driving in colder temperatures.
2. The EPA will require fuel economy labels on heavier vehicles up to 10,000 pounds (GVW), such as large SUV's and vans. These will be required by the 2011 model year.
3. The label itself is changing the convey information more effectively. The new labels will be required on vehicle produced after September 1, 2007.

Because the U.S. DOT has recently ruled to integrate medium-duty passenger vehicles (MDPVs), including large SUVs and vans, into the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) program starting in 2011, EPA must now include these vehicles in the fuel economy labeling program. Thus, EPA will be requiring fuel economy labeling of certain passenger vehicles up to 10,000 lb gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR). These vehicles used to be exempt because they weighed more than the previous cut-off of 8,500 lb. Vehicle manufacturers will be required to post fuel economy labels on MDPVs beginning with the 2011 model year.

EPA's rule has no impact on the CAFE program, which is administered by DOT's National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration (NHTSA). CAFE is the required average fuel economy for a vehicle manufacturer's entire fleet of passenger cars and light trucks manufactured for sale in the United States for each model year. There are separate regulations concerning the test methods and procedures to determine the fuel economy values under the CAFE program.

## Riverkeeper, continued from page3...

It also joined Friends of the Locust Fork River in filing suit against Metro Recycling Inc., which operates a tire disposal landfill in Blount County, claiming the company discharged pollutants into Whites Creek, a tributary of the Locust Fork and Black Warrior River.

Both lawsuits ask a judge to find the companies in violation of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act and the Alabama Water Pollution Control Act. It also asks a judge to order the companies to stop polluting the rivers, and fine them \$32,500 for each day they violated the acts.

Richard Campo, vice president of Alabama Biodiesel, said he wasn't aware of the lawsuit, which was filed Aug. 20 in federal court in Birmingham. He said the company had met with the Riverkeeper group about some of its concerns and planned to meet with representatives again this week.

He also said the company has been working with the Alabama Department of Environmental Management to develop a pollution permit application, since this was the state's first biodiesel fuel facility.

Attempts to reach him were not immediately successful.

Mark Martin, an attorney for Riverkeeper, said complaints came from residents living downstream from the biodiesel plant.

"We've had a lot of complaints about oily stuff in the water," Martin said.

In the suit against Metro Recycling, which was filed Aug. 21, the environmental groups say the pollutants discharged into Whites Creek included benzene, chloromethane, ethylbenzene, toluene, vinyl chloride and xylenes.

## The Whole Nine Yards

### Upcoming Events

- The 2007 Children's Environmental Health Workshop hosted the U.S. EPA [10-Oct-07]
- **\*\*FREE\*\*** Essentials of Ethics & Professionalism for Students and Younger Members web seminar hosted by NSPE [17-Oct-07]
- 137<sup>th</sup> Annual ASCE Conference in Orlando, Florida [1-Nov-07]

### The Rest of the ...

- The Alabama Environmental Management Commission denied a petition by environmental groups that urged the state to adopt stricter standards to protect its waterways from cancer-causing pollutants. After its unanimous vote, the commission will allow a committee to review Alabama's water quality standards and report its findings in six months. "The petition has been denied, it has not been killed," said Dr. Laurel Gardner, a member of the commission. "It's still very much alive." The groups that filed the petition asked that Alabama join 28 other states that require carcinogen levels in streams to be low enough that no more than one in one million people could get cancer from them. Alabama uses a less protective risk factor that allows one in 100,000 people to get cancer. EPA allows states to use either standard, but most use the more protective one. Alabama Power Co., the Business Council of Alabama, the Alabama Coal Association and the Alabama Pulp and Paper Council all objected to stricter pollution rules. The Business Council objected to "a

*See The Rest of the... continued on page 6*

## The Rest of the... *continued from page 5*

significant financial impact on the Alabama business community" and stated that the petitioners failed to justify the additional expense on industry. Clean water advocates said they were disappointed the commission discussed the economics of regulation so much and the cost of cancer so little. *U.S. Water News Online 7/5.*

- Investigators from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) criminal division are looking into a 2005 Missouri dam failure, the Associated Press is reporting. The Taum Sauk reservoir in southeast Missouri failed in December 2005 as a result of improperly installed and maintained water-level monitors. <http://www.ago.mo.gov/newsreleases/2007/052207c.htm>.
- Nominations for the OPAL, OCEA and CEFI awards are being sought. Check ASCE's website for more information: <http://www.asce.org>.

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"I must have a prodigious quantity of mind; it takes me as much as a week sometimes to make it up." - Mark Twain

Do you have something to say? Let's hear it, and maybe your thoughts will be in the next newsletter.

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