

Proposed Approach to Develop Regional Tree Canopy Management Plan

Project Objective:

Respond to a commitment in the 8-hour ozone State Implementation Plan (SIP) to develop a regional tree canopy management plan.

Respond to a goal in the region's Climate and Energy Action Plan and the National Capital Region Climate Change Report to develop a plan to increase tree canopy in the region.

Background

The MWAQC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Local Government Voluntary Initiatives Subcommittee formed a workgroup to develop regional tree canopy recommendations and approach for the 8-hour ozone SIP. The final SIP included a variety of commitments from local governments to implement and track tree planting and canopy management initiatives. The plan also called for development of a regional tree canopy management plan.

The region's Climate, Energy and Environment Policy Committee is implementing the recommendations of the *National Capital Region Climate Change Report*. One of the regional priority tasks is to develop a plan to increase tree canopy in the region.

Scope of Work and Outcome

Form a Regional Tree Canopy Workgroup (RTW) to develop regional plan framework and recommendations. Develop the required Regional Canopy Management Plan and its attendant elements for input into the next ozone SIP.

Task Group Structure and Composition

Proposed chair: Mike Knapp, Fairfax County Forester

Voting Members: Representation will be drawn from DC and jurisdictions in MD/VA that are part of Washington, DC/MD/VA ozone non-attainment area. Anticipate approximately 15 voting members. Invitation letters can be sent by COG on behalf of Chair Knapp (or could be appointed by members of MWAQC and CEEPC). Core members would include local government staff with responsibility for green infrastructure and forestry planning and program implementation.

Stakeholders: It will be important to include non-governmental stakeholders on the RTW. The voting members of the RTW in collaboration with MWAQC and CEEPC leadership will identify key regional stakeholders to invite. A roster of potential candidates includes: Maryland, DC, and Virginia state forestry department representatives; state level air quality planner members; private forest owners; Pinchot Institute (Bay Bank/ Eric Sprague); regional nursery/landscaping

industry; conservation and non-profit tree groups; federal agencies that manage forested lands within SIP area; regional land use planners; and representative of USFS Urban and Community Forestry Program (Keith Cline, Acting Director).

Other Organizational Resources: The Center for Chesapeake Communities was instrumental in facilitating the development of the current approach in the air quality SIP and has volunteered to help coordinate this effort as a voluntary in-kind cost share.

COG Staffing: MWAQC Technical Advisory Committee support staff and COG's urban forestry staff are available to support this effort.

Technical Approach

The RTW will be responsive to the current adopted 2007 DC Metro Region Air Quality SIP voluntary Urban Heat Island Mitigation/Tree Planting/ Canopy Management measure.

In collaboration with local governments and other appropriate stakeholders the RTW will examine the feasibility of increasing regional canopy levels over a twenty to thirty year period (2015-35) through various practices that influence tree conservation, tree planting, and land development processes. If canopy expansion is found feasible by the RTW it will develop a plan and implementation strategy to enhance tree conservation and planting and to encourage jurisdictional actions.

The RTW will draw on the data elements described in a White Paper entitled "Tracking, Monitoring, and Reporting Procedures for the Tree Planting and Canopy Expansion Measures in the Adopted Washington Regional Air Quality Plan (SIP)." The RTW will frame the issues for a strategy to achieve an overall expansion of tree canopy in the Metro region by at least 5% and recommend an action strategy to accomplish these objectives together with the parameters of an internet accessible database for tracking future canopy expansion. Working with partner forestry agencies and regional air quality planners the RTW will also recommend the resources needed from state, federal, and local sources to provide continuity to these efforts for SIP reporting and involvement of public and private landowners, stakeholder organizations and businesses for 2015 and beyond.

Timeline

Date of kick-off meeting to be determined, but will be held on a date this summer. RTW meetings and associated assignments are anticipated to involve a 12 to 14 month timeframe. Consider final report in the October 2012 timeframe.