

Air and Climate Public Advisory Committee

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<http://www.mwcog.org/environment/committee/>

The Air and Climate Public Advisory Committee (AQPAC) is an advisory body to the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC) and the Climate, Energy, and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC)

Draft Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 15, 2010
Room 1
5:30 P.M.-7:45 P.M.

AQPAQ members: Sally Kane, Caroline Petti, Bill Butler, Lee Keshishian, Beverly Fourier, Jeanne Comeau
+ on Conference Call: Julie Crenshaw Van Fleet, Linda Murphy

Staff: Joan Rohlf, Anne Mariani

1. Call to Order, Adoption of Agenda, Approval of Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 5:40 pm. In the absence of Deron Lovaas, Larry Zaragoza chaired the committee. The minutes of February 22, 2010 were approved with no change. Members agreed to discuss VDEQ's proposal to remove four of the county's five monitor on the agenda. Dr. Zaragoza welcomed the newest member, Jeanne Comeau from Virginia.

2. Tree Canopy/ urban heat island mitigation planning efforts in the Metropolitan Washington region (Gary Allen – Center for Chesapeake Communities)

Gary Allen provided an overview of the benefits of tree canopy to limit water run off, improve water quality, modifying local climatic conditions, reduce heat island effect, and thus improve air quality. He reported that more and more local governments in the Washington region have tree canopy plans and goals.

With regard to air quality, a new round of SIPs is due in 2013. This will create new opportunities to foster the role of urban forestry measures in air quality plans.

In the current Washington region SIP, tree canopy measures are part of a bundle of non-creditable voluntary measures. To move urban forestry measures to become a creditable measure, several issues need to be addressed, especially:

- Modeling issues: air quality models don't "react" below 5% increase in tree canopy.
- Baseline issues (need to demonstrate that programs perform better than what would have occurred under the "business as usual" scenario),
- Reporting and tracking issues,
- Maintenance issues (50% of trees that are planted die).

To address these, it will be critical to develop web-based reporting tools and benefits assessment tools (such as the I-Tree Eco software developed by the US Forest Service: <http://www.itreetools.org/eco/index.php>). A regional plan is also needed to engage non-profits and private land-owners as well as governments.

ACPAC members expressed interest and support to increased consideration of tree canopy measures in the next round of SIP.

Lee Keshishian confirmed that from his experience with carbon offset markets, the question of data tracking is critical. He asked if there was any “white tag” tracking system that would enable to track and trade the environmental benefits of tree planting (similarly to RECs for renewable energy). Gary said that I-Tree Eco could on the long-range provide an answer.

Caroline asked to what extent this effort also includes preservation of existing canopy and not only tree planting. Gary agreed that preservation is crucial. He added that most local governments adopt goals that go beyond preservation and aim at increasing total tree canopy.

Sally asked about electric utilities involvement in these initiatives. A lot of trees are removed under power lines for security reasons. Utilities such as PEPCO are not very good at working with the community to avoid tree removals that are not essential or to discuss tree replanting. Sally proposed to provide Gary with a contact inside PEPCO and asked for his support in lobbying utilities on that issue.

In response to Beverly’s question on what species to favor, Gary answered that even if low-VOC species are preferred, any tree was better than no tree. The critical issue is how these species resist in an urban environment.

Lee Keshishian asked about the methods used to conduct tree inventories. Different methods are available: satellite imaging can be used, but tends to underestimate tree canopy. “On the ground” inventories can also be conducted. For example, Casey Tree in DC trains volunteers to go on streets and count trees.

Sally asked if Casey Tree could be invited to give a presentation to ACPAC. There was no consensus on this.

Website resource on the Governor of Maryland’s tree canopy initiative: <http://www.trees.maryland.gov/> .

Gary Allen can be contacted with additional questions at: gallenbay@aol.com .

3. Committee Update:

Joan Rohlf provided an update on MWAQC and MWAQC TAC. At the last TAC meeting, the MD Department of Atmospheric Sciences presented the findings of a research project on the impacts of urbanization in DC area on air quality in Baltimore. This study concludes that under southwesterly wind, the higher ozone concentrations observed in Baltimore compared to DC result from the exacerbated urban heat island effects by upstream urbanization. This result must be taken cautiously though, since the scenario studied in this project is pretty extreme (the entire DC urban area being replaced with open land).

MWCOG draft regional protocol on integration of energy-efficiency and renewable energy (EERE) measures with air quality and climate plans was also presented and discussed at this meeting. Development of this protocol and a dashboard to calculate CO₂ and NO_x benefits from EERE measures were supported by the US DOE (contact for more information: Jeff King).

Joan reported that several scenarios would be modeled to establish the baseline inventory for the next SIP, including a scenario with EERE measures.

Joan Rohlf also gave an update on CEEPC. The committee will meet on Wednesday, March 24 and discuss work priorities for 2010, which may include home energy retrofits and outreach and education programs, among others.

Friday, March 26, MWCOG will host a GHG inventory workshop on transportation emissions. MWCOG department of transportation staff will give an overview of how their travel demand model works. They will also present the results of the 2008 household travel survey update.

ACPAC members are welcome to attend (Joan will send out the meeting notice).

4. Energy and Climate Outreach and Education:

The 2012 work plan adopted in January 2010 by CEEPC calls for regional education and outreach programs to be developed and implemented. This item is on next CEEPC meeting's agenda. An ad hoc work group will be appointed to develop a proposal and a funding strategy.

Anne Mariani gave an overview of community energy and climate challenges that are already being implemented in the Washington area and other regions. Key-elements to consider in program design were also highlighted.

Sally Kane recommended working with schools and use social media and new technologies to set up an inter-schools challenge.

Bill said it will be necessary for the ad hoc workgroup to limit the field of potentialities and decide from the beginning what message they want to convey.

Lee Keshishian insisted that outreach programs must be tied to the local level and provide an incentive to participate. His advice is also to rely on what already exists on the web to spread information about the program (blogs, social media etc.). He gave the example of Clean Current's Green Neighborhood Effect program (<http://www.cleancurrents.com/index.php/Green-Neighborhood-Effect>). As an incentive to switch to green power, Clean Currents donates \$10 per household signing-up to be used for a community greening project. Larry said the program should focus on energy savings as a way to save money and emphasize the fact that as a consumer, a choice is possible.

ACPAC offered to review the ad hoc workgroup proposals.

5. Other business: AQ monitors in Fairfax County

Because of budget constraints in Virginia, VDEQ recently released its plans to propose shutting down four air quality monitors out of five in Fairfax County. Joan reminded that having so many monitors is not a requirement but had been decided by the County on a voluntary basis. Therefore, EPA is not likely to object. It is still regrettable because having more monitors enables better air quality forecasting in the area.

Larry expressed strong disagreement with VDEQ proposal, especially since the Washington region is a non-attainment area and the monitors that are planned to be removed are the ones with highest values. He said he even wondered if it is legally possible to make such a decision. He added removing monitors will have an impact on the design value, thus making it easier for the area to meet air quality standards.

ACPAC members will draft a letter of comment, to be presented to MWAQC and send to VDEQ. ACPAC will have to be authorized by MWAQC to comment directly.

Joan will circulate all useful documents, including the deadline to submit comments and the letter prepared in 2009 on the same issue when Fairfax County decided to stop its air quality monitoring activities.

6. Next Meeting: April 19, 2010

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm.