

Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC)

Response to ALA's 2008 State of the Air Report

May 1, 2008

I. ALA's 2008 State of Air Report, Findings for Washington Region

The American Lung Association once again has released its annual report on the State of the Air in cities and counties around the country. We recognize the good work of the ALA and we especially appreciate the annual contribution this report makes to spreading the word about the health effects of air pollution and the importance of reducing pollution levels. The report identifies and quantifies by health risk the many people whose health is adversely affected by air pollution.

The report lists The Washington, DC-MD-VA "city" as the 9th most polluted city for ozone and the 10th most polluted for "short-term" particles (24-hour PM_{2.5}). The District and Fairfax County are singled out as the worst "counties" in terms of ozone and short-term particles. Both received failing grades.

Although ALA recognizes that the Washington DC-Baltimore-Northern Virginia area has had "markedly fewer" days of high particle pollution, they note that the region had more high ozone pollution days than in the previous years analyzed.

II. Washington Region's Air Quality Progress:

- The Metropolitan Washington Region is making tremendous progress in improving air quality but more work needs to be done.
- The ALA report states that the region does not meet the federal standards for ozone and fine particles; the report doesn't give credit for the improvement that has been made toward meeting the standards. The region meets 4/6 National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The region expects to meet the 1997 ozone and fine particle standards in 2009.
- Assigning failing grades to counties is misleading. Because air pollution is affected by weather and wind direction, it's misleading to assign responsibility for exceedances to one county.

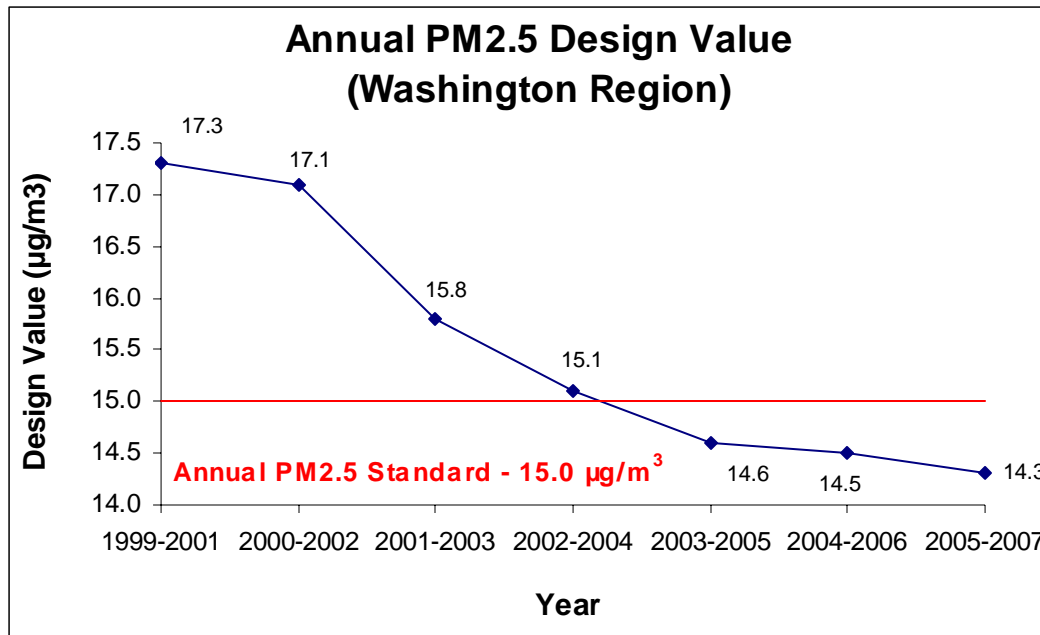
Fine Particles

- The Washington region is in compliance with the annual fine particle standard. ALA gave the region a Passing grade for annual PM_{2.5}.
- The region is making steady progress in reducing fine particle levels. ALA based their analysis on data for three years, 2004-2006. "Short term" fine

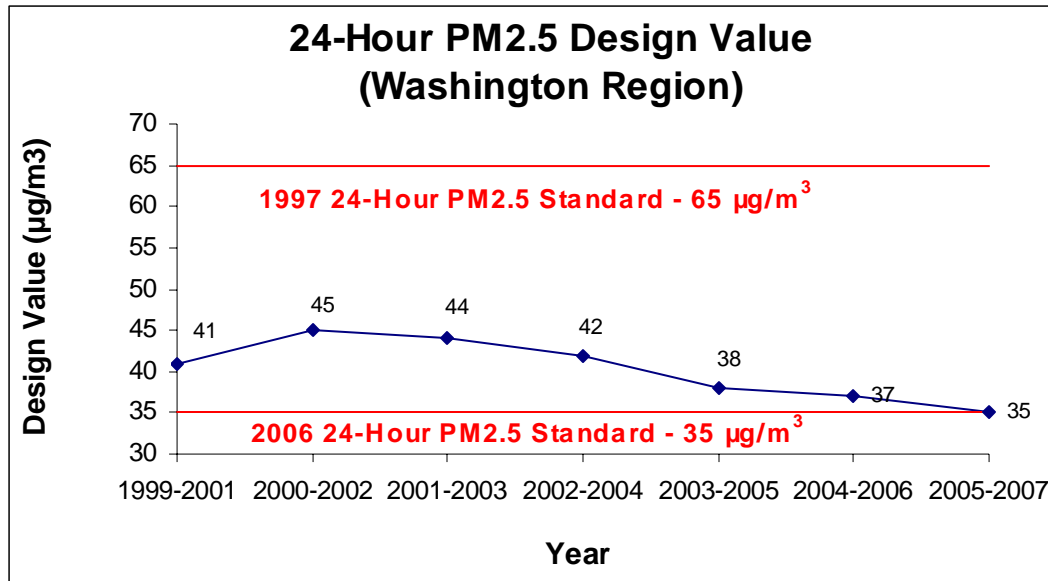
particle levels have been going down steadily every year. The data for 2007 indicates further progress. (see Graphs 1 & 2)

- In April MWAQC completed a new plan to further reduce fine particle levels. The States submitted the plan to EPA in May.
- The new plan includes measures to reduce particle pollution such as more controls on power plants (Clean Air Interstate Rule/MD Healthy Air Act), cleaner cars and buses, and cleaner, low-sulfur fuels. (state & fedl measures).
- Local governments are expanding energy efficiency programs and purchasing more wind energy to further reduce the load on power plants. They have cleaned up city and county fleets and school buses by installing diesel particulate traps, or using alternative fuels.

Graph 1



Graph 2



Ozone

- MWAQC completed a new ozone plan last year in 2007. The new plan includes controls on power plants (CAIR, Clean Air Interstate Rule, and MD Health Air Act) that will take effect in 2009. Modeling indicates that the region is likely to meet the 1997 ozone standard (85 ppb) by 2009.
- Local governments are expanding energy efficiency programs and purchasing more wind energy to further reduce the load on power plants. They have cleaned up city and county fleets and school buses by installing diesel particulate traps or using alternative fuels.
- The number of bad ozone days in the region are expected to increase this summer due to EPA's recently announced new ozone standard. EPA has raised the bar with the new standard. It's possible that the number of days over the new standard will double as a result of the new standard.

Ozone Exceedance Days (1998-2007)

