

Air and Climate Public Advisory Committee

Suite 300, 777 North Capitol Street, N.E. Washington, DC 20002-4239 (202) 962-3360 Fax: (202) 962-3203
<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, April 19, 2010
Room 1
5:30 P.M.-7:30 P.M.

AQPAQ members: Larry Zaragoza, Sally Kane, Caroline Petti, Bill Butler, Beverly Fourier, Jennifer Peterson, Julie Crenshaw Van Fleet, Linda Murphy, Rick Reiss

Staff: Joan Rohlf, Anne Mariani

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

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 pm by Dr. Larry Zaragoza, Vice-Chair. The agenda and the minutes of March 15, 2010 were approved with no change.

2. Environmental integrity Project (EIP): Report on Mercury emissions from power plants – Jen Peterson

Jen Peterson presented the findings of an analysis conducted by EIP on mercury emissions from power plants. EIP decided to address this issue because mercury is very persistent in the environment and mercury contamination can have dramatic impacts on public health and ecosystems. Studies have showed that mercury concentration in water is above the level considered safe by EPA in 50% of American rivers. Power plants are the main sources of mercury air pollution and represent 40% of total emissions.

The data analyzed in the report come from EPA's Toxics Release Inventory and Clean Air Markets database. The study identifies the 50 biggest polluters, in absolute value and per GWh. The report finds that emissions have not decreased over the past eight years, although control technologies are available and can reduce emissions by 70 to 90%. Half of the top 50 emitters have actually increased their emissions over this period of time. The biggest emitters are in Texas, then Pennsylvania and Alabama. Constellation's Fort Smallwood complex is top polluters in the DC-MD-VA region and ranks 37th.

EPA is expected to release a long-awaited mercury emission rule in 2011. In the meantime, industries are not willing to take any action.

Sally Kane asked about the impact on emissions of the fuel used by power plants, and about the cost of control technologies. Jen said that the report only deals with coal power plants. Regarding the cost, she said it is about \$1-3 per MWH. This cost should be compared to the impacts on public health costs.

Bill said that EPA had initially proposed a trading scheme, similar to the CAIR rule for NO_x, for mercury emissions. The proposal was vacated in court for non-compliance with the Clean Air Act. An alternative rule is awaited ever since. Some initiatives have been taken at the state level though (for example in Maryland).

Julie said that this issue has also been discussed at the State level in Virginia a couple of years ago but the electric power industry was strongly opposed to any kind of regulation on mercury emissions. She asked if it was possible to see on a map the concordance between biggest polluters and rivers contamination. It would also be useful to know where DC, MD and VA stand, comparatively to the “acceptable” level of mercury in the environment. Linda added that an analysis of economic impacts is also needed (correlate exposure and public health costs).

Based on this additional information, Caroline and Larry proposed that a letter be sent to MWAQC in the coming months to sensitize them to this mercury issue before EPA comes out with a rule next year.

Larry asked that the letter not only be focused at power plants but consider all emission sources. The letter should also consider to what extent power plants have localized impacts on surrounding communities (vs global pool of pollutant).

EIP report can be accessed at:

http://www.environmentalintegrity.org/news_reports/documents/DirtyKilowatts-Top50MercuryPowerPlantReport.pdf

3. Fairfax County air quality monitors issue: comment letter

Larry drafted a letter to MWAQC to comment on the proposed changes to Virginia’s monitoring network. VDEQ proposal includes shutting down four air quality monitors out of five in Fairfax County. Only the Lee Park monitor would be retained, although it is the Mount Vernon monitor that has historically reported the highest ozone value. VDEQ comes out with this proposal for budgetary reasons, but the choice of this particular monitor might also be guided by land property issues.

Larry mentioned that Fairfax County Environmental Advisory Committee on which he sits drafted a similar letter to be examined by the County Board soon.

Joan said that COG staff has prepared an analysis of this issue that will be shared with ACPAC members. VDEQ’s main argument is that the Metropolitan Washington region is over-monitored (3 monitors required, 18 installed).

Rick asked if the values measured at the Lee Park and the Mount Vernon are statistically different over the past years. Larry answered that such analysis is missing in the document. There’s no real justification of the State’s choice to retain one monitor instead of another. Rick proposed to run statistical tests on data that Joan will send.

Larry added that Fairfax counsel believed the State won’t be allowed to remove a monitor in a non-attainment area. Joan was she was doubtful about that argument.

Bill asked if Mount Vernon is the design value monitor for Northern Virginia. The answer is yes, which implies that the State will have to clearly demonstrate that the Lee Park and the Mount Vernon monitors are strictly equivalent.

MWACQ meets Wednesday, May 28. By this date, Joan asked Beverly to edit the draft letter and Rick to send the results of the statistical tests.

4. Committee Update: MWAQC / CEEPC

Joan Rohlfis provided an update on MWAQC and MWAQC-TAC. At the last TAC meeting, MWCOG Department of Transportation Planning presented its study of what is needed in the Washington region to meet the GHG emission reduction goals in the transportation sector – the “What would it take” study. This study considers various scenarios for gas price, Federal and local policies, and analyses their impacts on GHG emissions. The findings will also be presented at the May 26 CEEPC meeting.

TAC also discussed the incorporation of energy efficiency and renewable energy measures on the next round of SIPs due in 2013. There is a regional consensus that these measures should be considered in the “weight of evidence”, which is the non-quantified part of the SIP.

Larry suggested that ACPAC be consulted on that issue. Joan said that the consensus in the region is to be cautious because SIPs are federally enforceable. She gave the example of some localities that have committed to in-State renewable energy purchase in the current SIP and are not able to sustain their commitment for budgetary reasons.

The agenda for next MWAQC was also discussed. It includes an update on the status of the SIPs in the Washington region. The Ozone and PM plans have been submitted to EPA but haven’t been approved yet. One reason for the delay is that EPA wants to develop a national procedure to ensure national consistency in the Ozone SIP approval process. Besides, a new PM standard should be developed next year, which doesn’t make examining the current PM plans a priority.

ACPAC also discussed two power plants projects in Prince Williams and Loudon County.

Larry asked if the future growth of energy demand is known for the region. Joan said this information must be part of Pepco and Allegheny submissions for construction of new transmission lines in Virginia. Bill said that these two projects have been postponed because of the economic crisis that lowers energy demand.

Larry said that these kinds of power plants projects should be examined by CEEPC since they potentially have an impact on regional GHG emissions.

Anne Mariani also gave an update on CEEPC. The committee met on March 24 and discussed work priorities for 2010. The top priority actions are to have 100% jurisdictions complete a GHG inventory, to develop a system to track progress toward regional energy and climate goals, and to implement a regional outreach campaign.

5. Energy Outreach and education: WJLA Home Energy Makeover Contest

WJLA plans to launch a regional contest to win a whole home energy retrofit by the end of April (see handout).

The main sponsors are DOE/EPA Energy Star, PEPCO as well as business sponsors.

Caroline asked how winners would be selected. Anne said that a sponsors committee would be set up and would pick up three “typical energy hogs”.

6. New business

Clean Air Partners RFP for Education Program Manager

Clean Air Partners has a RFP open to hire a contractor to conduct outreach activities in schools and other audiences. Applications are due by May 12. More information is available on COG website.

Topics for next meetings

ACPAC members suggested the following issues to be put on the agenda:

- Future energy needs in the region, renewable energy potential and how it can contribute to meet regional energy demand,
- Obstacles to renewable energy deployment (zoning ordinances, HOA rules etc.)

7. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Next meeting: May 17 – 5:30pm – Room 1
