

February 15, 2007

Editor, Washington Post

As chair of the body that prepares air quality plans for the region, the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee, I was surprised at the assertion in the article on February 13, "Deadlines that Failed," that the Washington region hasn't reduced smog after thirty years. Nothing could be further from the truth.


In actuality in 2005 the Washington region met the one-hour ozone standard by the required deadline. True, the standard had been replaced three months earlier by a new, tougher standard ("eight-hour ozone standard"). But if we're talking about meeting goals, the Washington region has in fact met air quality goals for carbon monoxide and ozone.

Actually, over the past thirty years, the Washington region has reduced air pollution dramatically. We have seen a 55% reduction in air pollution as defined by EPA in the past fifteen years alone. In the seventies the region averaged 12 Code Red Days every summer; over the past three years the region averaged one per summer. As a result, Washingtonians are breathing cleaner air than ever. This is the result of the tremendous work being done at all levels of government to reduce pollution causing emissions.

The most effective tools are created at the federal level to set national energy standards and control interstate air transport. Locally, we have placed limits on power plants, required stores to sell more environmentally friendly products, purchased cleaner vehicles and retrofitted our school buses, transit buses and trucks to reduce our own contribution to air pollution. Tests confirm that these steps are tremendously effective in keeping us on track to clean air under the ever changing federal rules.

A new air quality plan will be proposed in the next two months that will help the region meet the tougher ozone rules by 2009. I hope that your article has raised public awareness of the issues so that they will comment on the proposed plan during the public comment period in April.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Floreen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nancy Floreen
Chair, MWAQC