

Air Quality Public Advisory Committee

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

The Air Quality Public Advisory Committee (AQPAC) is an advisory body to the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC).

March 20, 2007

Dear MWAQC:

This winter, AQPAC began reviewing and discussing climate change in the context of air quality in our region. Based on our preliminary discussions, *we recommend that MWAQC actively engage itself in the issues of climate change and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as they affect air quality and potentially the health of the residents of the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia.*

In January 2007, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) held a climate change meeting hosted by George Nichols and Stuart Freudberg, which some AQPAC members attended. The rest of the committee received a briefing at our meeting in February from COG staff. We understand that COG is considering the inclusion of climate change in its Energy Resources Management section. We also note that several local government organizations in the Washington DC area are discussing the impact of climate change and options for reducing the emission of greenhouse gases.

Air quality management is closely linked to climate change. For example, an increase in average temperature of a few degrees may increase the production of ozone and other pollutants in the region. In many cases, initiatives that reduce GHG emissions will also reduce criteria air pollutants, especially fine particles. Because of the close association and potential co-benefits of emissions reduction, AQPAC believes both MWAQC and AQPAC should include climate change issues in our discussions and considerations of clean air improvements.

We believe that the subject of climate change will require a broad and vigorous approach by COG, the various COG boards and committees, and most certainly, its constituent local governments. We believe that MWAQC should be "front and center" in this COG effort. The menu of what the MWAQC can and should do is extensive. Strategically, the MWAQC should be participating strongly in the following:

- Lead and conduct a *regional-scale emissions inventory* of GHG emissions.
- Model and *assess the impact of climate change on air pollution*, such as increased ozone formation due to the expected increase in average temperatures in the region.
- In partnership with the Transportation Planning Board, *review Transportation Emission Reduction Measures* to determine how these measures might be modified or expanded to deal with climate change, particularly with regard to the abatement and reduction of GHG emissions.

- In partnership with the Energy section of COG, *investigate, model, and support initiatives that promote renewable energy sources and energy efficiency*, which will reduce both GHG and criteria air pollutant emissions.
- Work closely with other COG bodies to develop joint programs to *evaluate the suite of potential adaptation and mitigation measures*, cutting across land use, transportation, energy security, and air quality.

The regional-scale emissions inventory is the immediate first step. AQPAC recommends that COG adopt existing standards for the reporting of GHG emissions. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency and its partner States and Tribes have general data standards (<http://www.envdatastandards.net/>) and the Greenhouse Gas Protocol is an international accounting tool for tracking greenhouse gas emissions (<http://www.ghgprotocol.org/>). These or similar standards could be used for documenting greenhouse gas emissions in the region, which may become mandatory if reporting to EPA becomes required under new Federal laws. In addition to facilitating the exchange of information, the use of environmental data standards would also assist with the use of common definitions and data collection to help assess progress in reducing region-wide GHG emissions.

Over many years, MWAQC and its subcommittees and staff have been engaged in and responsible for a complex and important task—namely, understanding the sources of air pollutants in the region, monitoring and modeling the change in ambient air pollutant concentrations over time, promoting and implementing control measures, and responding compliantly to complex regulations. All these technical and organizational skills will be needed as we embark on responding to climate change.

We think it is vital that MWAQC and COG, in concert with other regional organizations and local and state governments, play an important role in advancing the cause of climate change-related preventive and adaptive actions. Within COG there should be a major effort across land use, transportation, energy security, and air quality functions. We further urge that the MWAQC be a primary lead actor in this exceedingly important effort. *As your public advisory committee, we are prepared and willing to assist you in addressing the issues related to climate change in our region.*

Please contact me if you have any questions, or if the AQPAC can otherwise be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Jill Engel-Cox, Ph.D.
AQPAC Chair

cc: AQPAC members
Stuart Freudberg, Joan Rohlf, George Nichols, DEP, COG