

Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee

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April 25, 2012

Andrew Baldus
NOAA Budget Director
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Budget Office - Room 6111
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Mr. Baldus:

I am writing on behalf of the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC) to urge you to continue support for the National Air Quality Forecast Capability (NAQFC) program.

MWAQC staff relies a great deal on the ozone and fine particulate matter forecasts provided by the National Air Quality Forecast Capability (NAQFC) program for developing its own local forecasts for the metropolitan Washington region for the two pollutants. The NAQFC program has proven to be extremely valuable over the years to improving the accuracy of our air quality forecasts. The process of air quality forecasting is quite complex and can best be studied using a sophisticated model such as the one used for the NAQFC program. It is very important that this program be maintained so that the forecasters in the mid-Atlantic area can continue using the program to develop reliable, local scale forecasts and health alerts.

MWAQC is certified by the governors of Maryland and Virginia and the mayor of the District of Columbia to develop regional ground-level ozone and PM_{2.5} air quality plans and strategies for the Washington, DC-MD-VA non-attainment area. Air pollution is an important public health issue. It causes respiratory problems and affects young children, the elderly, and those with chronic respiratory diseases in particular. For this reason, the MWAQC staff develops and provides ozone and fine particulate matter forecasts for the metropolitan Washington region to warn the general public about any expected bad air quality days ahead. These air quality forecasts and health alerts provided by the MWAQC staff and colleagues in Virginia and Maryland have proven valuable to metropolitan Washington area residents and, in particular, young children, the elderly, and those with chronic respiratory diseases.

MWAQC appreciates the contribution provided by NOAA through its NAQFC program towards the issue of public health since 2004. We urge you to preserve funding for the NAQFC program to maintain the accuracy and reliability of the air quality forecasts for the region.

Sincerely,

Phil Mendelson, Chair
Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee