



METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON AIR QUALITY COMMITTEE (MWAQC)

May 28, 2025
12:00 P.M. – 2:00 P.M.
Virtual Meeting

Chair: Tom Dernoga, Prince George's County

MEETING SUMMARY

MWAQC MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES

- Tom Dernoga, Prince George's County (Chair)
- Alan Hew, City of College Park (Vice Chair)
- David Snyder, City of Falls Church
- Tom Ballou, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
- Virginia Burke, Maryland Department of Transportation
- Naomi Cohen-Shields, District Department of Transportation
- Andrew Debraggio, District of Columbia
- Jason Groth, Charles County
- Dawn Hawkins-Nixon, Prince George's County
- Joseph Jakuta, District Department of Energy and Environment
- Keith Levchenko, Montgomery County
- Kristin Mink, Montgomery County
- Lauren Paulet, City of Frederick
- Yolanda Pensmith (Office of Supervisor Glass), Loudoun County
- Tom Peterson, City of Fairfax
- Amalia Pleake-Tamm, Calvery County
- Jim Ponticello, Virginia Department of Transportation
- Wanda Rogers, City of Bowie
- Evandro Santos, Prince William County
- Julius D. Spain, Sr., Arlington County
- Roger Thunell, Maryland Department of the Environment

- Sonia Vasquez Luna, City of Manassas
- Bill Washburn, Air and Climate Public Advisory Committee Chair
- Kristen Weaver, City of Greenbelt
- Jenny Willoughby, City of Frederick

OTHERS

- Henry Frishman, District of Columbia
- Tiara Lester, Frederick County
- Matt Meyers, Fairfax County
- Regina Moore, Virginia Department of Transportation
- Catherine Salarano, Maryland Department of the Environment
- Danielle Simms, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality

COG STAFF

- Alissa Boggs, COG Department of Environmental Programs
- Leah Boggs, COG Department of Environmental Programs
- Heidi Bonnaffon, COG Department of Environmental Programs
- Robert Christopher, COG Department of Environmental Programs
- Robert d'Abadie, COG Department of Transportation Planning
- Jen Desimone, COG Department of Environmental Programs
- Jeff King, COG Climate, Energy, and Air

- Program Director
- Sunil Kumar, COG Department of Environmental Programs
- Wyetha Lipford, COG Department of Environmental Programs
- Tim Masters, COG Department of Environmental Programs
- Mark Moran, COG Department of Transportation Planning
- Wanda Owens, COG Department of Transportation Planning
- Jane Posey, COG Department of Transportation Planning

1. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD, APPROVE MINUTES, CHAIR'S REMARKS

Tom Dernoga, MWAQC Chair

Chair Tom Dernoga called the meeting to order. The February MWAQC meeting summary was approved without any changes.

2. COMMITTEE REPORTS

MWAQC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) – Joseph Jakuta (DOEE)

MWAQC-TAC held a call on May 6:

- At the last TAC meeting, COG staff presented an ozone season summary. Both ozone and PM2.5 levels have been in good to moderate range, with no exceedances of either standard.
- Committee members discussed the status of the 2015 Ozone NAAQS Redesignation Request (RR)/Maintenance Plan (MP) Inventory, and inventories for the two plans for milestone years 2017, 2022, 2032, and 2038.
- Members were briefed on EPA's final rule published recently concerning the Determination of Attainment by the Attainment Deadline (DAAD), Clean Data Determination (CDD), and Exceptional Events (EE) Waiver. EPA suspended the need to submit an attainment plan for the 2015 ozone standard. The EE Waiver allowed the ozone design value of the District and the Washington region to drop from 71 parts per billions (ppb) to 70 ppb allowing the region to attain the 2015 ozone standard.
- Members discussed the annual American Lung Association's (ALA) report, which uses a different methodology to characterize ozone and PM2.5 data in the region.
- Members were briefed on changes made to the 2025 air quality forecast protocol. Updated forecasts will be issued for the current day in the morning if air quality is expected to become worse (code orange or higher) than the forecast issued on the previous day.

Air and Climate Public Advisory Committee (ACPAC) – Leah Boggs (COG Staff) on behalf of William Washburn (ACPAC Chair)

ACPAC held a webinar meeting on May 19:

- ACPAC hosted its final community listening session on the new EJ Toolkit at its May 19 meeting. Equival Partners presented preliminary feedback received from engagement with community members and organizations across the region. A few areas of concern are energy costs and reliability issues, data center impacts on air quality, prolonged heat events and flooding. Equival will continue its community outreach through June and finalize their findings by the end of June.
- ACPAC received an update from ICF on EPA's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) requirements and draft details on the data center measure, including greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory and projections.
- ACPAC launched its annual Climate and Energy Leadership Awards Program on Earth Day. This

is the 12th year of the program that recognizes climate stewardship projects and programs that engage and serve the region's underserved communities. This year five awards will be presented:

- Two in the Government category – one for small jurisdictions with populations less than 90,000 and one for large jurisdictions with populations over 90,000;
- There will be two awards in the NGO category – one for non-profits and one for for-profits, and finally;
- One award in the Educational Institution category, which includes K-12, public, private, or higher education.

All applications are due by June 30.

- The next ACPAC meeting is July 21, 2025.

Clean Air Partners – Jen Desimone (COG Staff)

Clean Air Partners have been involved in the following:

- Clean Air Partners kicked-off their summer campaign during Air Quality Awareness Week (the first week of May), with the announcement of a gas-powered lawn equipment exchange. Residents were able to sign-up to bring gas-powered equipment into participating Ace Hardware stores in exchange for new electric equipment. Available equipment for exchange includes lawn mowers, weed trimmers, and leaf blowers. The gas-powered equipment will be taken to a recycling partner to be disposed of. Clean Air Partners anticipate exchanging approximately 450 pieces of equipment and currently have a waitlist of over 1,500 registrants. The exchange will take place the weekends of May 24-25 and June 7-8.
- The campaign was also accompanied by a number of Clean Air Partners/sponsor pop-up and backyard bubble events, which includes an exhibit to educate the public about ways to reduce emissions related to lawn and gardening. These events were/will be held at the locations and dates below:
 - Eco City Festival with the City of Alexandria – May 10
 - Fairfax County Events (Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination/VDEQ)
 - Reston Farmers Market – May 17
 - Lorton Farmers Market – May 18
 - Fairfax Ace Hardware – May 24
 - Healthy Together Fairfax – June 8
 - Frager's Hardware with DOEE – May 25
- The month of August will be designated as Ozone Action Month. To heighten awareness during the hottest time of the summer, Clean Air Partners will be traveling around the Baltimore-Washington region with an interactive Eco-Driving exhibit (car bubble) to educate residents on how to reduce vehicle emissions.
- Clean Air Partners are working with the City of Alexandria to host a mini lawn tool exchange for their residents in August.

Climate, Energy, and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC) – Jeff King (COG Climate, Energy, and Air Program Director on behalf of CEEPC leadership)

CEEPC held a webinar meeting on May 28:

- CEEPC voted to adopt the FY26 Work Program and Budget.
- Legislative updates were provided on the recently concluded Virginia and Maryland sessions.
- The committee directed staff to draft a letter to the Senate supporting the federal investment tax credit for renewables.
- Transportation Planning Board (TPB) staff gave a presentation on the National Capital Trail Network and regional bike and pedestrian planning, focusing on reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the region.
- COG staff shared early findings from a local government survey for the 2030 Climate and Energy Action Plan (CEAP) Mid-Course Review.

3. LOCAL AND STATE UPDATES

Local Members and State Air Agencies

- Jeff King (COG Climate, Energy, and Air Program Director) on behalf of CEEPC Chair Bagley (City of Alexandria) said that the City of Alexandria has recently passed a ban on gas-powered leaf blowers. He acknowledged Montgomery County and Washington, DC for their leadership on the issue. This marks yet another jurisdiction taking steps to phase out gas-powered lawn equipment in support of cleaner, more sustainable equipment.
- Tom Ballou (Virginia Department of Environmental Quality) said that the 2010 Sulfur Dioxide State Implementation Plan and related permit for a noncompliant source in Charles County are now out for public review and will be submitted to the EPA. VDEQ's second Regional Haze Plan is also available for public comment and review.

4. FY 2026 WORK PROGRAM AND BUDGET

Jen Desimone, COG Air Program Chief

The FY 2026 MWAQC Work Program and Budget outlines priorities and funding to support air quality planning in the National Capital Region from July 2025 to June 2026. A central focus is developing a Redesignation Request and Maintenance Plan (RR/MP) for the 2015 ozone standard, following the EPA's recent determination that the region has met this standard. Technical work comprising of emissions inventories, control measures, and transportation conformity will account for two-thirds of the program's \$606,555 budget. This includes coordination with TPB on mobile emissions modeling and conformity analysis, and support for local jurisdictions in identifying emissions reduction strategies.

The program also emphasizes public participation, regulatory tracking, and communication, aiming to keep both leadership and the public informed about progress and ongoing needs in air quality. Outreach efforts include media engagement, social content, and an air quality dashboard. Additionally, the plan supports MWAQC committees, member engagement, and internal program management such as budgeting and reporting. Funding is split equally among local jurisdictions, transportation agencies, and state air agencies. The draft was reviewed by the Budget and Technical Advisory Committees and presented for final approval by MWAQC.

Discussion:

- Dave Snyder (City of Falls Church) commended the work program's focus on federal policy engagement, local air quality support, and improved public communication. Kristin Mink (Montgomery County) agreed, adding that insights from the Environmental Justice (EJ) subcommittee should inform more targeted community outreach, especially to groups less likely to engage with general messaging.

Action: The committee unanimously approved the FY 2026 Work Program and Budget.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE SUBCOMMITTEE AND RESOURCE GUIDE FOR AIR QUALITY ACTION

Kristin Mink, Environmental Justice Subcommittee Co-Chair

Kristin Mink provided an update on the Environmental Justice (EJ) Subcommittee's work to develop the *Resource Guide for Air Quality Action*, aimed at helping COG members integrate equity and EJ into air quality policies, projects, and programs. This guide, voluntary in nature, was shaped by extensive public and stakeholder engagement, including monthly meetings, presentations on hyper-local monitoring projects, and feedback from community members, MWAQC, ACPAC, MWAQC-TAC, and external partners. The guide covers regional air quality conditions, equity challenges, strategies to improve air quality, prioritized recommended actions, and a call to action for members at all levels.

The guide emphasizes addressing the disproportionate impact of air pollution on historically overburdened communities, promoting inclusive policies, and enhancing public engagement. Strategies include improving monitoring, fostering partnerships, tightening air quality regulations, and increasing outreach and education. High-priority actions include stronger air quality standards, enhanced enforcement, zero-emission fleet transitions, and expanded monitoring systems. The guide highlights medium- and low-priority actions, such as hyper-local monitoring and zoning reviews. Feedback led to elevating air quality monitoring to a high priority and adding case studies to illustrate successful local initiatives. The presentation reinforced alignment with MWAQC's broader work plan and budget by supporting local jurisdictions in air quality improvements and advancing regional collaboration.

Discussion:

- Dave Snyder (City of Falls Church, Co-Chair of the EJ Subcommittee) noted that the project spanned two federal administrations with differing policies and acknowledged legal and regulatory challenges. He also emphasized that regional air quality improvements require shared solutions, particularly focused on the most polluted areas.

Action: The committee endorsed the Resource Guide for Air Quality Action with two abstentions from VDEQ and VDOT.

6. FEDERAL REGULATION UPDATES

Jeff King, COG Climate, Energy, and Air Program Director

Jeff King provided a brief update on federal regulations and sought guidance from MWAQC members on how active the committee should be in responding to significant legislative and regulatory changes affecting air quality. He encouraged input on whether MWAQC should submit comment letters or take stronger public stances on key issues. Major concerns highlighted include the Senate's move to repeal the investment tax credit (ITC) for renewables, which could severely hinder long-term solar deployment, as well as actions to block California's clean vehicle and truck rules. On the regulatory side, the EPA plans to reconsider or roll back several air quality protections, including greenhouse gas (GHG) rules for power plants, mercury and air toxics standards, the good neighbor SIPs for cross-state pollution, regional haze requirements, and vehicle emissions regulations. Many of these rollbacks are aimed at easing requirements for coal plants, though the direct impact on the region may be limited due to the local shift toward natural gas plants.

Discussion:

- Tom Dernoga (Prince George's County) asked about the legal process for regulatory reconsideration, as agencies must follow formal rulemaking, including public comment and litigation. He proposed prioritizing key items for advocacy and questioned whether states could act independently on certain provisions, noting Maryland's possible action on truck standards.
- Jeff King (COG) confirmed reconsideration would require a formal rulemaking process with public comment and legal scrutiny. Senate actions could undermine state authority to adopt stricter vehicle standards.
- Tom Ballou (Virginia DEQ) clarified that states can adopt California's standards through Clean Air Act provisions, but without the federal waiver they lose the legal ability to enforce those stricter standards.
- Bill Washburn (ACPAC Chair) supported vigorous opposition to rollbacks, stressing air quality impacts everyone equally. He highlighted concerns about data center emissions and the risk of the US falling behind in electric vehicle (EV) production, urging regional collaboration and monitoring of EPA rulemaking.
- Kristin Mink (Montgomery County) endorsed strong advocacy, recommending regular updates include specific options for responding to regulatory weakening, such as legal strategies or state-level actions, to help jurisdictions act proactively.

- Joseph Jakuta (DOEE) emphasized prioritizing vehicle standards and particulate matter protections due to timing pressures, suggesting triage given likely regulatory flood, and raised the history of MWAQC's correspondence on such issues.
- David Snyder (City of Falls Church) suggested drafting a science-based letter to congressional delegations outlining health and cost benefits of existing protections, advocating for prompt action before regulations change.
- Tom Dernoga and Jen Desimone (COG) agreed the Executive Committee should oversee timely drafting and approval of letters during meeting gaps, confirming precedent for this process.

Action: The committee voted in favor of COG staff drafting a letter outlining concerns about federal proposals that could harm air quality, with the MWAQC Executive Committee reviewing and submitting it to members of Congress.

7. OZONE SEASON UPDATE

Sunil Kumar, COG Environmental Engineer

Sunil Kumar provided the 2025 ozone season summary, highlighting regional air quality trends through mid-May. Most days so far have fallen within the “Good” Air Quality Index (AQI) category for ozone and PM2.5, with no Code Orange or higher days reported. While the season’s peak (June through August) has yet to arrive, long-term trends show a marked decline in high ozone days compared to the late 1990s. The region’s ozone design value for 2021–2023 meets the 70 parts per billion (ppb) standard, aided by exceptional event waivers granted for wildfire-related data. Emission control programs, including vehicle standards, local inspection efforts, and clean energy initiatives, have played a vital role in reducing ozone levels.

PM2.5 levels have also shown strong improvement, with annual and 24-hour design values well below federal limits. The presentation underscores the importance of sustained monitoring, particularly at key sites that are close to the standard threshold. Continued collaboration among federal, state, and local programs is essential to maintain air quality gains. Although the region has made significant strides, the coming months will be critical in determining whether standards are maintained. The presentation calls attention to how emission reductions from regulatory programs have helped achieve these results, while emphasizing the need for ongoing vigilance, especially as hotter temperatures could elevate ozone levels during the summer.

8. ADJOURN

Tom Dernoga, MWAQC Chair

Chair Tom Dernoga adjourned the meeting. The next MWAQC meeting is scheduled for September 24, 2025.