



METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON AIR QUALITY COMMITTEE (MWAQC)

February 26, 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
- Michele Blair, City of Laurel
- Kenny Boddy, Prince William County
- Virginia Burke, Maryland Department of Transportation
- Naomi Cohen-Shields, District Department of Transportation
- Sophia Cortazzo, Maryland Department of Transportation
- Jason Groth, Charles County
- Joseph Jakuta, District Department of Energy and Environment
- Amy Knesel, City of Greenbelt
- Meagan Landis, Prince William County
- Keith Levchenko, Montgomery County
- Maribeth Guarino (Office of Councilmember Sayles), Montgomery County
- Rachel McQuillen, City of Fairfax
- Kristin Mink, Montgomery County
- John Morrill, Fairfax County
- Lauren Paulet, City of Frederick
- Yolanda Pensmith (Office of Supervisor Glass), Loudoun County
- Jim Ponticello, Virginia Department of Transportation

- Evandro Santos, Prince William County
- Maria Sinner, Virginia Department of Transportation
- 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
- Jenny Willoughby, City of Frederick

OTHERS

- Tauhirah Abdul-Matin, AECOM
- Kate Daley, Fairfax County
- Jennifer Fioretti, Arlington County
- Henry Frishman, District of Columbia
- Kat Lockwood, Calvert County
- Matt Meyers, Fairfax County
- Regina Moore, Virginia Department of Transportation
- Steve Raabe, OpinionWorks
- 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
- Sushanth Gupta, 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
- 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 December 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 February 11:

- At the last TAC meeting, members discussed the 2015 Ozone NAAQS, focusing on the Redesignation Request and Maintenance Plan. The EPA's responses to the committee's questions about these items were reviewed in detail.
- Updated emission inventories are being developed for various sources using the latest MOVES5 model and EPA's 2022 National Emissions Inventory (NEI) data.
- The group reviewed a revised timeline for completing the Redesignation Request and Maintenance Plan.
- EPA's final guidance on contingency measures for nonattainment areas was also reviewed to prepare staff for potential future SIP requirements.

Air and Climate Public Advisory Committee (ACPAC) – William Washburn (ACPAC Chair)

ACPAC held a webinar meeting on January 27:

- William Washburn (District of Columbia), 2025 Chair of ACPAC, introduced himself to the committee. He was voted in as ACPAC Chair at the January 27 ACPAC meeting, along with William Marsh (Fairfax County), the new Vice Chair.
- ACPAC's new roster was approved at the February 12 MWAQC Executive Committee meeting. No new members were added to the roster as the three committee members wanted to stay on the committee for another term, so ACPAC's membership remains the same.
- The next ACPAC meeting will be a special meeting. General members of the public or community will be invited to the first listening session for input on the Environmental Justice (EJ) Toolkit. This is an update or refresh of the EJ Toolkit that ACPAC published in 2017. The focus is on outreach and communication strategies for climate-, energy-, and air-related EJ issues. It's a two-pronged approach – reaching out to local governments that work on outreach and EJ issues, as well as community members and organizations.
- The next ACPAC meeting is March 17, 2025.

Clean Air Partners – Jen Desimone (COG Staff)

Clean Air Partners have been involved in the following:

- Clean Air Partners is in the process of planning this year's summer campaign. The campaign will

be kicked-off during Air Quality Awareness Week (the first week of May), with the announcement of a gas-powered lawn equipment exchange. The exchange will take place during the weekends of May 24/25 and June 7/8 when residents can bring gas-powered equipment into participating Ace Hardware stores in exchange for new electric equipment. Available equipment for exchange will include lawn mowers, weed trimmers, and leaf blowers. The gas-powered equipment will be taken to a recycling partner to be disposed of.

- The exchange will also be accompanied by Clean Air Partners backyard bubble events, which includes an exhibit to educate the public about ways to reduce emissions related to lawn and gardening. Event locations are in the process of being confirmed, but there will be events in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia.
- 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. More details to come.

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 January 22:

- CEEPC discussed its strategic outlook for 2025, identifying priority interest areas for the year.
- The committee began its mid-course review of climate goals, with Maia Davis (COG Staff) presenting the technical approach to evaluating regional progress before proposing new targets.
- Members were briefed by PRR and ICF on a survey of existing climate outreach and education initiatives to inform future regional campaigns.
- Discussion also focused on stakeholder engagement for the ongoing development of the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP), set for completion by the end of 2025.
- The meeting concluded with updates from committee members, highlighting efforts to align climate action across local jurisdictions.

Federal Updates – Jen Desimone (COG Staff)

- COG staff reported that while no new federal actions have been announced specifically for air quality, they are closely monitoring ongoing developments.
- Most recent federal activity has focused on the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) program rather than new air quality-specific policies.
- Updates on relevant funding opportunities and regulatory changes will be provided at upcoming MWAQC meetings as more information becomes available.

3. LOCAL AND STATE UPDATES

Local Members and State Air Agencies

- Joseph Jakuta (District Department of Energy and Environment) said that DOEE has made a lot of progress with auto control regulations. Staff also launched stakeholder engagement sessions to share hyperlocal mobile air quality monitoring data collected with Aclima, covering 30 square miles of DC, including recent outreach in Wards 1–8.
- Roger Thunell (Maryland Department of the Environment) said that MDE has been focused on the Maryland legislature and following the climate-related bills. Their comment period is now over for the five-year update to the Regional Haze 5-Year Progress Report.

4. CLEAN AIR PARTNERS PUBLIC AWARENESS SURVEY

Jen Desimone, Clean Air Partners Managing Director

Clean Air Partners conducts a public awareness survey every three years to assess Baltimore-Washington residents' attitudes toward air pollution and their willingness to adopt behaviors that promote cleaner air. The survey helps evaluate the effectiveness of outreach campaigns, informs future messaging, and provides insight into actions residents may take to improve air quality.

Steve Raabe, OpinionWorks

Steve Raabe presented results from the 2025 Clean Air Partners Public Awareness Survey, based on over 2,400 responses across the Baltimore-Washington region. The survey revealed that public concern about air quality and climate change remains high, with 68 percent reporting a personal impact from poor air quality and over 70 percent acknowledging that pollution disproportionately affects certain communities. Transportation was widely cited as the leading cause of worsening air quality. While willingness to adopt clean behaviors is strong (over 70 percent for most surveyed actions) actual adoption lags significantly, particularly for actions like planting trees or switching to solar energy. The gap between willingness and action suggests opportunities for targeted outreach. The public trusts public agencies and wants clearer “why” messages and visible leadership from local governments. Motivating factors include health, climate change, and saving money. While urgency is understood, positive messaging and visible peer behaviors are more effective for driving engagement. Strategies like community norming and emphasizing low-cost, accessible actions were identified as key for increasing public participation in air quality improvement.

Discussion:

- Tom Ballou (VDEQ) emphasized that despite an increase in vehicle numbers, vehicles are getting cleaner over time. He noted that air quality has significantly improved over the past decade, even if that progress has slowed. Raabe responded that public perception often lags behind scientific reality, similar to awareness of Chesapeake Bay improvements, highlighting the need for more communication of success stories to shift public understanding.
- In response to a question from John Morrill (Fairfax County), Raabe confirmed that respondents recalled the Canadian wildfire smoke from the previous summer. This event had a lasting impression and reinforced public concern about climate change, showing how high-impact environmental events can drive awareness and engagement.
- Raabe explained significant differences in air quality perceptions between inner-city residents and those in outer jurisdictions. Inner areas report more concerns, especially in DC and Baltimore. African American and Hispanic communities, as well as older residents, are more likely to report health impacts like asthma. However, concern about air quality is broadly distributed across demographic lines.
- Responding to Heidi Bonnaffon (COG Staff), Raabe explained that declining trust in TV meteorologists correlates with reduced viewership of local TV news. Although meteorologists remain trusted voices, their influence is waning among younger audiences. However, platforms like the Capital Weather Gang are still effective, and weather professionals remain key partners for public messaging.
- David Snyder (City of Falls Church) asked how air quality ranks among broader public concerns. Raabe noted that while this survey didn't compare it directly with issues like inflation or crime, past surveys show that air and water quality consistently rank high. In Virginia, clean air and water were nearly on par with cost-of-living concerns, validating their importance for public messaging and policymaking.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE SUBCOMMITTEE AND ACTION PLAN

David Snyder, Environmental Justice Subcommittee Co-Chair

David provided an update on the Environmental Justice (EJ) Subcommittee's progress and outlined the next steps. The subcommittee has been meeting monthly and conducting extensive public outreach, including meetings with community input at both the start and end. Their work centers on equity in air quality, recognizing that pollution affects the entire region – not just EJ communities. The subcommittee

is developing a draft action plan that includes a prioritized list of strategies and voluntary agency recommendations, informed by public feedback. While the plan depends on available resources and legal authority, it also calls for expanding capacity – such as improving localized air monitoring. A final report is expected for MWAQC action at the May meeting.

Tauhirah Abdul-Matin, AECOM Project Manager

Tauhirah presented the structure and content of the EJ Action Plan draft, emphasizing that it is still open to stakeholder and public feedback. The plan includes a regional air quality overview in accessible language and visuals, a section defining equity and environmental justice in the context of air pollution, and strategies derived from listening sessions across DC, Maryland, and Virginia. These strategies include improved monitoring, regulation, public outreach, land-use planning, and emissions reduction from stationary and mobile sources. Recommended actions are categorized by priority (high, medium, low), with detailed implementation steps and challenges for high-priority actions. The final section includes a call to action directed at regional governments and agencies. Listening sessions and an open public comment period will follow, with a finalized version expected by May.

Robert Christopher, COG Environmental Planner

Robert emphasized the role of local governments in voluntarily adopting measures from the action plan. David Snyder highlighted MWAQC's continued leadership on equity in air policy and called for feedback to be submitted by March 14, as the draft undergoes final revisions and a second round of public engagement.

6. FAIRFAX COUNTY GAS LAWN TOOL EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Kate Daley, Fairfax County Office of Environment and Energy Coordination

Kate shared details about Fairfax County's collaboration with Clean Air Partners on a gas lawn tool exchange program for spring 2025. This initiative supports Fairfax County's long-standing goal of phasing out gas-powered lawn equipment due to its climate, air pollution, noise, and health impacts. The program aligns with the county's Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP) and a Board directive to electrify county operations and encourage community-wide adoption. So far, about half of the county's gas-powered leaf blowers have been replaced. Fairfax will partner with Clean Air Partners at scheduled exchange events and may host additional "pop-up" events at farmers markets, recycling centers, and health fairs. The county also plans targeted outreach to vulnerable communities using tools like its vulnerability index. Staff are considering a sliding scale voucher system based on income to ensure equitable access. They also aim to expand outreach to commercial landscaping professionals, potentially leveraging past collaborations with local nonprofits. While many details are still being finalized, the partnership seeks to reduce pollution, promote climate action, and increase awareness of the health impacts of gas-powered equipment across the community.

Discussion:

- Fairfax County allocated \$200,000 for the lawn tool exchange program, which will be used over this year and possibly into next spring.
- Residents receive vouchers distributed at outreach events that allow for a one-to-one exchange of gas-powered equipment for electric alternatives at participating Ace Hardware stores.

7. ADJOURN

Tom Dernoga, MWAQC Chair

Chair Tom Dernoga adjourned the meeting. The next MWAQC meeting is scheduled for May 28, 2025.