

AIR QUALITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2011

- North Carolina in 2011 recorded the second-lowest ozone annual ozone levels since the state began monitoring air quality in the early 1970s. Statewide, ozone levels exceeded the ozone standard of 0.075 ppm (adopted by EPA in 2008) on 26 days – the same number as in 2010 -- compared to about 50 days per year on average over the past 10 years. The lowest year on record was 2009, when weather conditions were much more favorable for air quality and only six days exceeded the ozone standard. Overall, ozone levels continue to decline in the state due to ongoing implementation of various emissions control programs, resulting in improved air quality and better protection of public health. (Chart attached.)
- In April, DAQ and the Department of Environment & Natural Resources awarded \$511,574 in grants for projects to reduce air pollution from motor vehicles. This year's grants included nine projects from nine counties, including: replacing a fire equipment truck, other trucks, and construction equipment with newer vehicles; repowering of fishing vessels with cleaner engines; and funding biodiesel incentive projects.

http://daq.state.nc.us/motor/ms_grants/

- DAQ administered the distribution of \$291,268 in federal grants to reduce diesel emissions by offering Auxiliary Power Unit/ Idle Reduction Device Rebates to long-haul truckers with sleeper berths. Grant funds were provided from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act of 2011.

<http://daq.state.nc.us/motor/DERG/>

- DAQ launched a multi-year grants program to encourage voluntary actions to increase energy efficiency at North Carolina's manufacturing facilities. Staff members from DAQ, the Division of Environmental Assistance and Outreach, and other partner organizations are conducting free to low-cost energy assessments to identify ways plants can reduce electricity and fuel usage, saving them money and reducing their emissions to the atmosphere.

http://www.ncair.org/monitor/eminv/gcc/Boiler_Workshops_Flyer_with_Registration.pdf

- DAQ worked with the Department of Environment & Natural Resources in quantifying the agency's carbon footprint and identifying options for reducing energy consumption by its buildings and motor vehicles.
- DAQ continues to conduct air quality modeling and develop plans for bringing areas into compliance with the federal ozone and particle pollution standards. Monitoring shows that most of the state's metro areas have achieved compliance with the 0.075 parts per million (ppm) ozone standard that EPA adopted in 2008.

The Charlotte metropolitan area is still exceeding the 2008 ozone standard, but has demonstrated compliance with the older 1997 standard. In addition, the entire state is now meeting the fine particle standard (PM 2.5).

<http://daq.state.nc.us/planning/attainment.shtml>

- DAQ continued its air quality forecasting program for six metro areas across the state: Asheville, Charlotte, Fayetteville, Hickory, the Triangle and Rocky Mount. DAQ also worked closely with Forsyth County Environmental Affairs Department, which handles air forecasts for the Triad metro area. Forecasts are issued for ozone in all seven areas from May through September, and for particle pollution year-round in all of metro areas except Rocky Mount (which lacks a PM monitor). DAQ also issued numerous special particle pollution forecasts for areas affected by smoke from several large wildfires during the summer of 2011 and developed a visibility guide so citizens can relate smoke levels with the severity of air pollution.

<http://xapps.enr.state.nc.us/aq/ForecastCenter>

- DAQ worked with the Utilities Commission to submit the annual progress report on the Clean Smokestacks Act in June. The act requires North Carolina's coal-fired power plants to reduce their ozone, haze and particle-forming emissions by three-fourths by 2013.

http://www.ncair.org/news/leg/2011_Clean_Smokestacks_Act_Report.pdf

- Visibility is improving across the state due to reductions in haze-forming emissions from coal-fired power plants under the N.C. Clean Smokestacks Act of 2002. DAQ continues to monitor progress in achieving the state's goals in reducing haze through its involvement in VISTAS, Visibility Improvement State and Tribal Association of the Southeast, a regional effort to improve visibility in pristine natural (Class I) areas.
- DAQ, at the direction of the Attorney General's Office, was the first state air quality program to implement the 112(j) section of the Clean Air Act. The rule requires states to enforce federal hazardous air pollutant standards for industry categories that the EPA has failed to develop under statutory deadlines. DAQ has issued 112(j) permits for all affected sources. The permits provide certainty for both the environment and the regulated community while final federal standards are still being considered.