

AIR QUALITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2009

- North Carolina had its lowest ozone levels in 2009 since it began monitoring air quality back in the early 1970s. Statewide, ozone levels exceeded the new ozone standard of 0.075 ppm (adopted by EPA in 2008) on only six days -- compared to 27 days in 2004, the previous lowest year. Over the past 10 years, the new ozone standard was exceeded 51 days per year on average.

http://www.ncair.org/news/pr/2009/ozone_wrapup_10052009.shtml

- In March, DAQ and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources awarded \$1.4 million in grants for projects to reduce air pollution from motor vehicles. This year's grants included 21 projects from 14 counties. The projects included purchases of electric vehicles, retrofitting school buses with controls to curb diesel emissions, expanding biodiesel storage and distribution equipment, and re-powering construction and railroad diesel equipment.

http://www.ncair.org/news/pr/2009/mobile_grants_winners_2009.shtml

- DAQ administered the distribution of nearly \$2 million in federal grants to reduce emissions from diesel-powered trucks, equipment and ships. Grant funds were provided from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009 as well as the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act of 2008.

http://www.ncair.org/news/pr/2009/leader_grants_07312009.shtml

http://www.ncair.org/news/pr/2009/diesel_emissions_08112009.shtml

- North Carolina submitted recommendations in March for areas that appear not to be meeting the new ozone standard that EPA adopted in 2008. The recommendations propose that EPA designate non-attainment areas for 24 whole counties and parts of 17 others. However, EPA has postponed the designation process while it reconsiders whether a more stringent ozone standard should be adopted.

<http://www.ncair.org/news/pr/2009/o3nonattdesig.shtml>

- 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 all of the state's metro areas, except Charlotte, have achieved compliance with the old 0.08 ppm ozone standard. In addition, the entire state is now meeting the fine particle standard (PM 2.5). However, large portions of the state may be out of compliance with the new 0.075 ppm ozone standard that EPA adopted in 2008, and the federal agency is considering making the standard even more stringent.

- 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 and DENR continued to work closely with the Legislative Commission on Global Climate Change, which is dealing with issues such as whether North Carolina should set a cap or goal for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. DAQ staff made presentations to the legislative panel and served as liaisons between the commission and CAPAG.
- 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.
- DAQ began including greenhouse gases in its emissions inventory program for permitted air sources for the first time on a voluntary basis. The division was set to require mandatory reporting, but has decided not to pursue rule-making due to the new EPA regulations for reporting greenhouse gas emissions.
- DAQ continued its involvement in VISTAS, Visibility Improvement State and Tribal Association of the Southeast, a regional effort to reduce haze and improve visibility in pristine natural (Class I) areas.
- DAQ continued working with the Division of Motor Vehicles to put in place its new sticker-less inspection system for cars and trucks. The system will synchronize motor vehicle registration renewals with safety and emissions inspections, so that they are all due at the same time each year. The phase-in for sticker-less inspections began November 1, 2008.