



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ENHANCEMENTS FY 2004-05

October 2004

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WORKPLAN FOR 2004-05

The FY 2004-05 workplan consists of elements that build upon the experience obtained to date and needs of the community. In order to obtain additional feedback when the proposed workplan was under development, a series of public consultation meetings and EJ workshops were held throughout the AQMD jurisdiction in July and August 2004. Staff also reviewed the proposed enhancements with environmental and community groups, business groups, trade associations, local governments and several AQMD Board committees and advisory groups.

The following is a description of the enhancements for FY 2004-05 as approved by the AQMD Governing Board, consisting of 13 elements, including public comments received during summer 2004:

Category I: Further-Reduced Health Risks

I-1 Prepare a school site guidance document, including the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) and other statewide efforts, and conduct outreach to area public and private school districts

AQMD has faced many issues arising from incompatible school site selection, with school children being impacted by air pollution and toxic air emissions. In a separate action, the Board approved issuance of a Request for Proposal to develop a guidance document for air quality issues for school districts to use when siting new schools. This document will be reviewed by stakeholder groups and is intended to assist school districts in siting new schools or in expansion of existing schools. In addition, this document will reflect statewide efforts. Staff will also work with stakeholders regarding new risk assessment guidelines developed specifically for school siting by the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment.

The Guidance Document will serve as a “general framework” document that identifies overall environmental concerns, including environmental justice awareness; air quality and asbestos exposure.

This initiative will also direct AQMD staff to conduct outreach to school districts within our four-county region to distribute the guidance document and provide an overview on how it can be used effectively by local school districts.

Public Comment:

Staff is encouraged to conduct a comprehensive outreach program to educate and involve school personnel for greater utility of this product.

Response: Agreed

I-2 Include emissions data on AQMD’s web site for AB2588 program

AB2588 is a program that requires certain facilities to report toxic emissions. Larger emitters may also be required to provide Health Risk Assessment (HRA) information and a risk reduction plan. At this time, reported information on the AB 2588 program includes Health Risk Assessment (HRA) data only. Staff is proposing to include other emissions data on toxic compounds for facilities that are subject to the AB 2588 reporting requirements.

Public Comment:

Staff is requested to provide a complete picture of the planned improvements and recent enhancements to toxics emissions data under different AQMD programs such as Rule 301 and AB 2588.

Response: A new report will be developed to include the requested information, which will be reviewed with interested parties in the future as part of this enhancement.

Administrative Committee Direction:

Directed staff to bring emissions data to Stationary Source Committee for review prior to going “live” with the data.

I-3 Continue to support Community Health Air Pollution Information System (CHAPIS) at the state level by populating the database with latest available information

The CHAPIS program maintained by CARB provides communities with a tool to identify geographically facilities that are sources of emissions and provide information on their emissions. The usefulness and reliability of this tool depends on the quality and timeliness of the data supplied by local agencies. Staff will be including specific information for sources such as dry cleaners, gas stations, plating facilities and other specific sources.

Administrative Committee Direction:

Directed staff to report to the Stationary Source Committee before such data is sent to CARB.

Category II: Greater Community Access & Involvement

II-1 Provide Community Residents with Smoke School Training for determination of Opacity and Potential Violations

AQMD staff and other regulatory agency staff are trained in “smoke schools” to observe and determine opacity of smoke as part of their compliance training. It is proposed to offer such trainings to local residents so that they can gain knowledge and become informed regarding smoke and opacity at such locations as locomotive crossings, rail yards, and freight terminals. Such training is also expected to improve the recognition of problematic sources for more accurate complaint resolution.

Public Comment:

Business representatives expressed concern about enforcement authorities and potential costs associated with this item.

Response: No delegation of AQMD staff’s enforcement authority is implied or being made as part of this initiative, nor is it intended to have the local residents acting as agents of AQMD. However, it is in AQMD staff’s and operating industry’s best interest to increase the level of knowledge among complainants so that attention can be focused on real problematic sources. AQMD receives over 10,000 complaints per year regarding air quality problems on an on-going basis. Finally, minimal costs are expected in regard to this item, as staff expects to take advantage of existing facilities and on-going activities at the state and local levels.

Public Comment:

Community representatives requested that classes be held in their community or that transportation be provided to class sites outside their area.

Response: Staff will work with environmental justice groups to identify convenient locations for classes and will address transportation needs with the Board’s approval.

Public Comment:

Community representatives inquired as to whether the training is intended to help residents to gather information for enforcement purposes.

Response: Staff will work with environmental justice groups to identify convenient locations for classes and will address transportation needs with the Board’s approval.

Public Comment:

It was suggested that training on odors be included.

Response: Please see first response on this item.

II-2

Conduct an assessment of the current document management and imaging process at AQMD and begin to provide images of permits on the web site

Community groups have often requested information regarding AQMD permits that are available under public information. Information can be made available by providing images on the web site.

In order to improve public accessibility to AQMD documents, an assessment will be made on the current practices and procedures for document management and imaging. This effort may point out enhancements and changes that will provide the public with easier and greater access to AQMD documents.

Public Comment:

If documents are available on the AQMD website, paper copies may not be necessary, resulting in cost savings. This would be a useful tool for both staff and the public. Furthermore, staff should consider providing assistance to the public to review the technical information contained in permits and ensure that all information provided is up-to-date.

Response: Staff is happy to facilitate public access to documents; however providing technical assistance for permit review requires staff resource. This request needs to be reviewed in view of other program needs and available budget.

Public Comment:

Concern has been expressed about putting approximately 30,000 permits on the web site, the associated resources, and the criteria to be used to list the permits. Security and confidentiality must also be ensured in this process. If permit fees are to be used to support these activities, then the permit applicants should receive comparable services in view of what is proposed to be offered to the public.

Response: Staff will evaluate these concerns during the assessment phase, before implementation begins.

Administrative Committee Direction:

Directed staff to bring any proposed funding proposals necessary for implementation to the Administrative Committee for review. Any anticipated costs should be presented to the Board for approval.

II-3 Web Casting District Meetings

Assess the feasibility of Web casting at the District and begin with web casting the monthly Governing Board meetings. AQMD Governing Board meetings can be viewed via web cast, which allows anyone with a computer and internet access to view and listen to Board meetings. An outreach effort is needed to inform the community about this potential opportunity.

Public Comment:

Requested clarification on whether computers and other resources need to be procured by AQMD and whether the community residents will have access to similar equipment to utilize these features.

Response: The feasibility study will address any additional software and hardware needs beyond what is available at AQMD. Additional resource needs will be brought back to the Board for approval, as appropriate.

Administrative Committee Direction:

Directed staff to bring any proposed funding proposals necessary for implementation to the Administrative Committee for review. Any anticipated costs should be presented to the Board for approval.

II-4 Create an Air Quality Institute

In order to address the environmental justice education needs of newly elected or appointed officials, an Air Quality Institute will be created. The Institute would focus on community education as well as training for new policymakers. Programs and curricula will include information on environmental justice issues, land use decision making process, and other air quality-related topics, etc. During 2004-5, an advisory group will be formed, instructors and topics will be identified, and a course schedule for 2005-6 will be developed. Partners in the course design and delivery could be organizations such as the League of California Cities, Volunteer Center of Orange County and others.

Recognizing the advantages of “piggybacking” on efforts already underway, programs could include offerings of existing programs, as well as workshops and seminars developed by local environmental justice groups and/or regulated business.

Public Comment:

Recommend integrating this effort with similar programs at the League of California Cities, Councils of Government, and other bodies so that efforts will not be duplicated and funds can be economized.

Response: Agreed.

Administrative Committee Direction:

Review program proposal with a Board Committee prior to implementation.

II-5 Develop an Environmental Justice Electronic “Action Alert”

Currently, AQMD produces a bi-monthly environmental justice newsletter called the Voice which is mailed to members of the Clean Air Congress. The newsletter is also distributed at the appropriate community outreach and educational events. In order to provide more timely information to Clean Air Congress members and others who are interested in getting informed on a regular basis, an electronic “action alert” system will be developed.

Public Comment:

Notices of funding opportunities should be included as part of the electronic alert so that communities, local governments, and businesses can be aware of such opportunities.

Response: Agreed, and will be implemented, as appropriate.

Administrative Committee Direction:

Directed staff to bring any proposed funding proposals necessary for implementation to the Administrative Committee for review. Any anticipated costs should be presented to the Board for approval.

II-6 MATES III Community Briefings

In February 2004, AQMD staff began an intensive one-year study of urban air toxics. The Multiple Air Toxics Exposure Study III (MATES III) follows the landmark urban toxics monitoring and evaluation study, MATES II, conducted in 1998-99. MATES III will monitor for 21 toxic air contaminants and four other substances at 10 sites across the South Coast Basin. In addition to the fixed sites, AQMD will use moveable monitoring stations to sample at several neighborhood sites near toxic emission sources or in areas where community members are concerned about health risks from air pollution.

Staff proposes to hold community meetings at several sites to provide area residents with information on sampling that will be conducted in each neighborhood as well as explaining the monitoring results. Community meetings would be coordinated through the host city in order to advise and involve local government leaders in informing their constituents about this comprehensive study and the potential implications, such as new control strategies or plans may be developed in response to the MATES III study and community input.

II-7 Provide web-based air quality classes targeted at multiple education/knowledge levels and topics

Many community members have requested additional training and information regarding specific industry operations such as gas stations, spray painting, etc. AQMD staff has developed many such training classes for compliance staff and others. Videos of such classes can be made available on the web for residents, businesses and others for education and information.

A second phase of this program may include general classes and even certification on the web, depending on staff assessment and community response.

II-8 Reinstate the Environmental Justice Advisory Group

Form an environmental justice advisory group comprised of representatives of the environmental justice and business community. This group would meet two or three times per year to review the status of the current environmental justice workplan and provide input in the development of the next year's plan.

Public Comment:

Include environmental organizations, community groups, land use planning and local government groups, and trade or industry organizations in this advisory group as they are key stakeholders.

Response: Agreed.

Public Comment:

What will the selection process be for the Environmental Justice Advisory Group?

Response: If the Governing Board approves reinstatement of the Environmental Justice Advisory Group, staff will provide recommendations to the Administrative Committee, who will review the list of proposed members.

Administrative Committee Directions:

Directed staff to utilize existing AQMD advisory groups for input on workplan, and review proposed membership of the Environmental Justice Advisory Group with the Administrative Committee.

II-9 Improve Opportunities for Public Participation in Permit Decisions

Members of the public have raised concerns about being excluded from the District’s permitting process. Staff will review the permitting process to (1) identify opportunities to improve the timeliness and distribution of public notices about permit applications and proposed permit decisions, (2) provide even more timely and complete access to permit applications and related documents consistent with state law, and (3) notify those who comment on permit applications about their right to appeal permit decisions to the Executive Officer and Hearing Board.

Public Comment:

Concern was expressed by business representatives whether this would slow down the permitting process and the relationship of this initiative to the Permit Streamlining Task Force which is being reinstated by the Board as part of the deliberations on budget issues.

Response: This initiative is intended to facilitate the public participation process consistent with Title V and other AQMD rules and regulations including New Source Review and Rule 212. Staff will also bring this item to the attention of the Permit Streamlining Task Force for a comprehensive review.

II-10 Prepare an annual summary of AQMD’s EJ program efforts and proposed enhancements for the following 12 months

Each year, staff prepares a summary of the annual EJ program for Board review. A reporting calendar is developed with performance checkpoints and assignments to the designated lead staff in the respective offices and status reports are made before advisory groups and Board committees.

Staff will circulate a draft work plan for the following year and hold local public consultation meetings to seek input from the public, industry and other stakeholders on the proposed work plan; based on these comments, staff will refine the proposed work plan and recommend Board approval to proceed.

Public Comment:

Request was made to include itemized cost and staffing for program implementation.

Response: Staff will look into the feasibility of tracking actual costs incurred by different offices for implementing various EJ initiatives approved by the Board. FTE’s required for implementing the proposed FY 2004-05 EJ Enhancements have been estimated by item and included in this proposal for public review.