



SOUTH COAST AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

**ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE PROGRAM
ENHANCEMENTS
FY 2005-06**

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PROPOSED WORK PLAN FOR 2005-06

This year, staff proposes to study ways to assess the effectiveness of AQMD's Environmental Justice (EJ) Program Enhancements, following the Chairman's initiative over eight years ago. Many of these practices and procedures, such as townhall meetings, multilingual translations, greater community participation in policy decisions and enhanced protection through toxic compound reduction and controls, are now part of the agency's work ethics and working policy. Public comments have been received at both advisory group committee meetings and Board meetings, for development of tools or methodologies to gauge the impact of EJ initiatives and EJ enhancements on the public. Staff will evaluate this issue and meet and confer with the public in response to this question.

In addition, the following items are logical extensions or continuations of previous EJ Work Plans and are recommended for further consideration in FY 2005-06.

1. School Site Selection Guidance Document Outreach

Since the School Site Selection Guidance Document is complete, staff will conduct a comprehensive outreach program throughout the four-county region to inform school personnel about the document and encourage them to reference it to consider air quality issues and how to best protect students from the harmful impacts of air pollution and toxic air emissions as they select school site locations.

As part of the outreach, AQMD staff will distribute the document and provide an overview on how local school districts can use it effectively.

Public Comment:

- a. Staff is encouraged to include local governments and planning agencies as part of the planned outreach program to better inform these groups of the Guidance Document and its recommended actions.

Response: Agreed.

2. Enhanced AB 2588 Air Toxics Website

Toxic compounds emission data is now accessible on the AQMD website. The public can search for a summary of emission data by facility, zip code, or facility ID number by making sequential menu selections www.aqmd.gov/Community/EJ/AB2588.

Based on comments from AQMD advisory group members, staff will expand the information available to include information on health risks of the most common air toxics and links to other websites for related information.

3. Enhanced Permit Information Access on AQMD's Website

This enhancement from the FY 2004-05 EJ Work Plan involved posting approximately 500,000 active and inactive permits on the AQMD website. While staff initially planned to provide the information via basic search capabilities, advisory group members requested more expanded capabilities to access the permits.

Staff plans, in the coming year, to provide expanded search capabilities to improve public access to permits and Hearing Board information on the web.

Public Comment:

- a. When the Public Notices and Draft Permits are placed on the website, will the requestor be required to know the facility identification number in order to view the permit information?

Response: No. The search fields will include search by zip code, by company name, by city, by county and also within a specific timeframe.

- b. How will staff ensure that no expired or inactive permits are posted on the website?

Response: Staff will consider this comment as part of the development effort. Only equipment-based permits will be posted (no RECLAIM or Title V) at this time.

- c. It would be good to have a Users Guide for the public to use as part of the Public Notices so that they have a better understand of the notice language and actions.

Response: Staff will investigate available guidance and information for the public to accompany this page.

4. MATES III Study Community Outreach

Due to the unusual amount of rain last fall and winter, the Governing Board approved the continuation of the MATES III sampling period through March 2006. After the data is analyzed and the results are available, staff will begin a series of community briefings at several monitoring site locations to inform residents of findings within their neighborhoods.

Community meetings will be coordinated through the host city in order to advise and involve local government leaders as AQMD staff informs constituents about the comprehensive study and the potential implications, such as new control

strategies or plans that may be developed in response to the MATES III results. The meetings also will offer the opportunity for community input regarding the study and efforts to improve local air quality.

Public Comments

The draft document was released for public comment in September 2005. Presentations were made to the Environmental Justice Advisory Group, Local Government and Small Business Assistance Advisory Group, Ethnic Community Advisory Group and the Home Rule Advisory Group.

Staff also met with representatives of environmental justice organizations throughout the four-county region. Comments received on specific topics from these meetings have been summarized in the attached draft workplan. In addition, general comments received are also recorded below for completeness.

Environmental and Community Group representatives expressed support for AQMD's overall EJ Program. The business groups agreed that it is good policy to take stock of what has been done and reevaluate goals based on programmatic needs. It is important to have integrated program elements and qualitative analysis. Business groups asked about the criteria to be used by AQMD to determine the effectiveness of the Environmental Justice initiatives. Staff will consult with all intended parties in this effort.

Staff was requested to provide the School Site Guidance Document to local governments and city planning divisions so that they are also aware of the document and the recommended actions. Staff plans to implement this in 2006.

Community members requested expanded search capabilities for Notices of Violation listed on the web site. Currently, searches are limited to 90-day windows. To facilitate searches community members have requested that the search period be expanded to 12 months or at a minimum by quarters. It was also recommended that possibly placing all the requested data search fields under one large umbrella would assist the public in locating the requested information and also facilitating the use of these databases. Staff plans to make the suggested improvements in 2006.

Residents also suggested that more attention and effort should be focused on activities that reduce health risks or exposure to pollution rather than public information or education. It was mentioned that EJ programs need to be ingrained in the annual agency budget; to make EJ a true core value.

Community members suggested that budget allocations should be increased to reflect community service needs, and clearly shown in the budget to fulfill AQMD's responsibility under H&SC 40448 which clearly states that "...AQMD...is to provide administrative and technical services and information to the public".

Community members felt that AQMD needs to set benchmarks to assess progress since not all EJ workplan elements may have benefited EJ communities – such as website improvements, which benefit all. They also suggested enhanced and innovative outreach to stakeholders who are not currently involved, such as County Health Departments, churches, and other community-based groups working on health and social justice issues.

Environmental group leaders suggested that mini-grant programs that could benefit the impacted communities be made available on an on-going basis, without relying on a one-time funding stream from penalties.

Specific recommendations were made to make permit notices more relevant to impacted communities, by highlighting information so that the public understands the potential impacts from this facility. Community representatives maintained that AQMD notices are still overly technical and are not understood by the majority of affected people. It was suggested that Title V Hotline and Public Notification arrangements could be improved for easier access to information, including multi-lingual translation based upon the demographics of the community where the facility is located.

A Commitment Assessment Criteria was submitted by environmental groups and community representatives for staff's analysis and implementation efforts.

Many comments were received from residents living near refineries and ports regarding the importance of reducing toxic emissions and protecting the children in such areas.

Staff will consider all of the above comments as they implement the 2005-06 work program and develop programs for further implementation.

Administrative Committee Recommendation

In response to public comment, the Administrative Committee directed staff to review the accomplishments, effectiveness, and results of implementation of previous annual environmental justice program enhancements. The review should also attempt to address benefits to the public, business community, the environment, and the economic growth of the region, in relation to the cost of the programs. The Committee further recommended that staff identify the source of funding for the implementation of the EJ enhancements in the past.