TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE AIR QUALITY IN MIDDLE GEORGIA

MIDDLE GEORGIA CLEAN AIR COALITION

Thursday, February 8, 2024

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Middle Georgia Regional Commission

175 Emery Highway, Suite C | Macon, GA 31217

We will act now to reduce NOx and Ozone in the Middle Georgia Community to ensure that we protect the region's public health, maintain a robust economic growth, and show leadership in environmental sustainability.

4:00	Call to Order / Approval of Minutes	Ed Barbee, Chair
4:05	Financial Reports	Sam Kitchens, Treasurer
4:10	Update on PM 2.5 Standards	Greg Boike
4:30	Recap of 2024 Goals	Greg Boike
4:35	Climate Pollution Reduction Grants	Greg Boike
4:50	Discussion	MGCAC Members
5:00	Adjournment	Ed Barbee, Chair

Next Meeting Date:
Thursday, March 14, 2024, at 4:00 p.m.
Middle Georgia Regional Commission

MEETING MINUTES
MIDDLE GEORGIA CLEAN AIR COALITION
REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, January 11, 2024, 4:00 pm
Middle Georgia Regional Commission

Executive Board Members Present:

Mayor John Harley, City of Centerville*
Councilman Clifford Holmes, City of Warner Robins*
Former Chairman Ned Sanders, Houston County *
Dr. Henry Ficklin, Macon-Bibb County*
Commissioner Sam Kitchens, Jones County*
Commissioner Wade Yoder, Peach County*
Commissioner Jackie McCowan, Crawford County*
Chairman Dan Perdue, Houston County

Other Local Officials, Staff, and Stakeholders Present:

Mike Greenwald, Macon-Bibb Planning and Zoning
Cassandra Cox, Georgia Power
Jameson Hamilton, Georgia EPD
Bryan Jones, Robins Air Force Base
Kelly Sheckler, EPA Region 4

***Denotes Voting Member or Local Government Staff Proxy for Voting Member**

Support Staff Present

Greg Boike, MGRC Director of Planning and Public Administration
Alex Smith, MGRC Environmental and Land Use Planner
Kim Stanton, MGRC Executive Assistant

Welcome/Call to Order

Chairman Ed Barbee called the January meeting of the Middle Georgia Clean Air Coalition to order at 4:00 pm and welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was determined that a quorum was present, and the committee was able to conduct business.

Approval of Minutes

There were no corrections to the minutes of the November 16, 2023, meeting; they were unanimously approved on a motion by John Harley and a second by Sam Kitchens.

Financial Report

Sam Kitchens provided the Financial Report beginning November 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023. Revenues included bank interest and member contributions totaling $57,731.06 and expenditures in the amount of $5,000.00; the ending balance as of December 31, 2023, was $207,924.76.

The Financial Report was unanimously approved on a motion by Clifford Holmes and a second by Ned Sanders.

Updates on Clean School Bus Projects

Sam Kitchens reported that Bibb County School District was one of five schools in Georgia that was selected to receive grant funds of $6,275,000.00 to purchase over 25 clean school buses by the Environmental Protection Agency, accelerating the transition to low- and zero-emission vehicles, these awards will improve air quality for children and their families and advance environmental justice.

Review of Goals and Plans for 2024

a. Existing Goals from 2023

After further discussion, the coalition reviewed and agreed to continue the goals of 2023, removing the 20-year commemoration, with minor updates and new prioritization for 2024.

b. New Priorities

MGCAC members prioritized areas of focus for the development of a 2024 action plan.

At the conclusion of this discussion, the MGCAC presented Chairman Ed Barbee with a plaque of appreciation recognizing his work with the Middle Georgia Clean Air Coalition in efforts to address air quality as part of the coalition's 20-year celebration.

c. Climate Pollution Reduction Grants

Greg Boike reported that the Georgia EPA has a new funding source, Climate Pollution Reduction Grants. Mr. Boike stated that the MGRC can assist with these grants. More information on examples of different types of projects for which grant applications could be submitted are available online at www.drawdownga.org.

Clark Group Contract Update

Greg Boike reported on the recommendation from Ray Clark that the contract with The Clark Group be updated with a stipend and expenses.

The current contract is $5,000 per month, $2,500 from I-75 CCC and $2,500 from the MGCAC. The proposal would clarify and add travel costs, expenses would include:

Mileage up to $150 (300 mile x 2 (roundtrip) x .25 a mile.
Hotel up to $300 per night.
A $150 stipend.

The total expenses and stipend would be costs up to $500.

The motion to adopt the travel stipend/reimbursement was unanimously approved on a motion by Dan Perdue and a second by Clifford Holmes.

Discussion

Ned Sanders discussed the latest news and progress about electric vehicles, solar power, and technology independence. This included articles on efficient street lighting.

Adjournment

A motion to pay all bills was unanimously approved on a motion by Clifford Holmes and a second by John Harley. There being no further business, the January MGCAC meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

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It was announced that the next meeting of the Middle Georgia Clean Air Coalition will be held on February 8, 2024, at the Middle Georgia Regional Commission.

DRAFT

Middle Georgia Clean Air Coalition

Financial Report
As of January 31, 2024

Beginning Balance -December 31, 2023			$ 207,924.76
Revenues			
Bank Interest	$ 7.96		
Member Contributions	433.00		
Total Revenues			$ 440.96
Subtotal			208,365.72
Expenditures			
20 year celebration expenses	2,470.29		
Ray Clark	5,716.00		
Total Expenditures			8,186.29
Ending Balance -January 31, 2024			$ 200,179.43

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EPA finalizes stronger standards for harmful soot pollution, significantly increasing health and clean air protections for families, workers, and communities

Stronger standard will yield up to $46B in net health benefits, save lives, and build healthier communities, while supporting economic growth across America

February 7, 2024

Contact Information
EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov)

WASHINGTON — The Biden-Harris Administration on Wednesday finalized a significantly stronger air quality standard that will better protect America's families, workers, and communities from the dangerous and costly health effects of fine particle pollution, also known as soot. By strengthening the annual health-based national ambient air quality standard for fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$) from a level of 12 micrograms per cubic meter to 9 micrograms per cubic meter, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's updated standard will save lives — preventing up to 4,500 premature deaths and 290,000 lost workdays, yielding up to $46 billion in net health benefits in 2032. For every $1 spent from this action, there could be as much as $77 in human health benefits in 2032.

Today's action is based on the best available science, as required by the Clean Air Act, and sets an air quality level that EPA will help states and Tribal Nations achieve over the coming years — including through complementary EPA standards to reduce pollution from power plants, vehicles, and industrial facilities, paired with historic investments under President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. These actions bolster the U.S. economy by deploying billions of dollars and creating good-paying jobs across the transition to cleaner technologies. This strategy will make Americans healthier and more productive, while underpinning a manufacturing resurgence in America. Since 2000, $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations in the outdoor air have decreased by 42% while the U.S. Gross Domestic Product increased by 52% during that time.

"This final air quality standard will save lives and make all people healthier, especially within America's most vulnerable and overburdened communities," **said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan**. "Cleaner air means that our children have brighter futures, and people can live more productive and active lives, improving our ability to grow and develop as a nation. EPA looks forward to continuing our decades of success in working with states, counties, Tribes, and industry to ensure this critical health standard is implemented effectively to improve the long-term health and productivity of our nation."

Along with strengthening the primary annual $PM_{2.5}$ standard, EPA is modifying the $PM_{2.5}$ monitoring network design criteria to include a factor that accounts for proximity of populations at increased risk of $PM_{2.5}$-related health effects to sources of air pollution. This will advance environmental justice by ensuring localized data collection in overburdened areas to inform future NAAQS reviews.

Particle pollution is of great concern to those with heart or lung disease and other vulnerable communities, including children, older adults, and people with health conditions like asthma, as well as already overburdened communities, including many communities of color and low-income communities throughout the United States. Strengthening the Clean Air Act standard for fine particle pollution improves air quality nationally for everyone, ensuring that communities that are overburdened by pollution are not left behind.

"The Biden administration is taking life-saving action to protect people and rein in deadly pollution," **said Abigail Dillen, President of Earthjustice**. "The science is crystal clear. Soot, otherwise known as fine particle pollution, is a killer. It is driving heart disease, our asthma epidemic, and other serious illnesses. The people who suffer most are children and older Americans who live in communities of color and low-income communities. This federal standard will ensure that states respond to the ongoing public health and environmental justice crisis, saving thousands of lives and avoiding 800,000 asthma symptom cases every year."

"Administrator Regan and President Biden deserve thanks for taking this vital step to curb soot pollution - a dangerous and even deadly pollutant that has taken an oversized toll on underrepresented and overburdened communities less equipped to deal with its severe health impacts," **said Dr. Doris Browne, 118th President of the National Medical Association**. "This new standard of 9 micrograms per cubic meter will save lives based on scientific evidence. That is the bottom line. And as a physician, an advocate for clean air, and the past president of the National Medical Association representing physicians, our ultimate goal is health equity."

"President Biden and EPA Administrator Regan's new soot pollution limits will save thousands of lives and slash air pollution for people across the country, especially those disproportionately impacted by deadly particle pollution," **said Margie Alt, Director of the Climate Action Campaign**. "This standard makes meaningful progress toward protecting our health and addressing the administration's environmental justice commitments."

"Particle pollution is a killer. In the United States alone, it cuts thousands of lives short, taking a staggering toll. Children's bodies are uniquely vulnerable to the harms of soot pollution," **said Dominique Browning, Director and Co-Founder of Moms Clean Air Force**.[1] "Moms Clean Air Force commends EPA for taking a significant step forward in strengthening the annual standard for particle pollution, also known as soot, to 9 micrograms per cubic meter from its current level at 12. EPA's new national health standard for particle pollution is the first improvement in over a decade. Soot is associated with increased infant mortality, hospital admissions for heart and lung diseases, cancer, and increased asthma severity. EPA's finalized protection is an important step towards cleaner, healthier air for all children."

"I applaud U.S. EPA Administrator Michael Regan for today's action to reduce fine particle pollution and protect communities. These standards will build upon the significant progress already made in improving air quality throughout New York and help prevent the many serious health effects plaguing our most at-risk populations," said **New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Basil Seggos. "**Last year, historic smoke plumes from wildfires across Canada increased New Yorkers' awareness of how fine particulate pollution from natural and man-made sources affects the air we breathe, particularly for the most vulnerable among us."[2]

In June 2021, EPA announced it would reconsider the December 2020 decision to retain the 2012 standards because the available scientific evidence and technical information indicated that the standards may not be adequate to protect public health and welfare. EPA considered the available science and technical information, as well as the recommendations of the independent advisors comprising the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee and CASAC PM expert panel when making the decision on whether to strengthen the PM standards.

Based on the scientific evidence, technical information, recommendations from CASAC, and public comments on the 2023 proposed standards, EPA has set two primary standards for $PM_{2.5}$, which work together to protect public health: the annual standard, which EPA has revised, and a 24-hour standard, which the agency retained. EPA also retained the current primary 24-hour standard for PM_{10}, which provides protection against coarse particles. EPA is also not changing the secondary (welfare-based) standards for fine particles and coarse particles at this time.

A broad and growing body of science links particle pollution to a range of serious and sometimes deadly illnesses. Many studies show that these microscopic fine particles can penetrate deep into the lungs and that long- and short-term exposure can lead to asthma attacks, missed days of school or work, heart attacks, expensive emergency room visits and premature death.

Due to the efforts that states, Tribes, industry, communities, and EPA have already taken to reduce dangerous pollution in communities across the country, 99% of U.S. counties are projected to meet the more protective standard in 2032, likely the earliest year that states would need to meet the revised standard. That's even before accounting for additional actions on the horizon to implement the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act investments and to update source-specific emission standards.

Most Counties with Monitors Already Meet the Strengthened Particle Pollution Standard
(Based on 2020-2022 Air Monitoring Data)

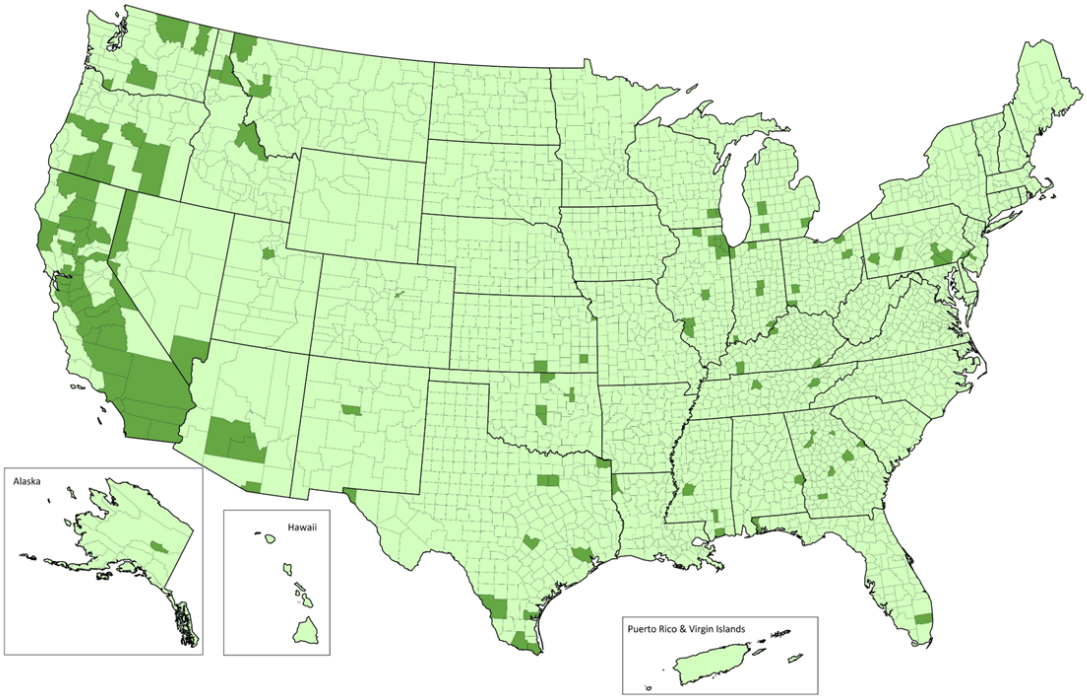

Figure 1: Based on 2020-2022 air monitoring data, the dark green areas on the map indicate counties that do not meet the annual PM2.5 standard of 9 ug/m3. View the data (pdf) <https://epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-02/table_annual-pm25-county-design-values-2020-2022-for-web.pdf>. (courtesy U.S. EPA)

Note: The map above reflects monitored counties with complete monitoring data. Future final designations of attainment/nonattainment will not be based on these data, but likely on monitoring data collected between 2022 and 2024. Of the 119 counties with 2020-2022 design values above 9 ug/m3, 59 counties are totally or partially contained in nonattainment areas for current PM2.5 standards. In years 2021 and 2022, EPA is aware that some states have already identified possible exceptional events that may have impacted air quality in the U.S. and may be relevant to designations decisions. (This information is provided for illustrative purposes only and is not intended to predict the outcome of any forthcoming designations process.)

See projected progress in 2032 <https://epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-02/2024-pm-naaqs-final-2032-projections-map.pdf>.

EPA is also revising the Air Quality Index to improve public communications about the health risks from $PM_{2.5}$ exposures.

Some PM is emitted directly from combustion sources, construction sites, industrial processes, and older diesel engines, while other particles are formed in the atmosphere in complex chemical reactions with other pollutants such as sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides that are emitted from power plants, gasoline and diesel engines, and certain industrial processes. Particle pollution from industrial processes and other sources is controllable, with readily available and cost-effective technologies to manage emissions, and EPA will build on decades of experience in providing flexible options to states and Tribes across the implementation process.

EPA carefully considered extensive public input as it determined the final standards. The agency held a virtual public hearing and received about 700,000 written comments before finalizing today's updated air quality standards.

See more information on today's final standards at Final Reconsideration of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter <https://epa.gov/pm-pollution/final-reconsideration-national-ambient-air-quality-standards-particulate-matter-pm>.

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[1]An earlier version of this release misspelled Moms Clean Air Force. It is "Moms Clean Air Force" not "Mom's Clean Air Force."

[2]This release was updated to include a quote from New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Basil Seggos.

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LAST UPDATED ON FEBRUARY 7, 2024