

REGIONAL AIR QUALITY PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY

Thursday, July 31, 2025 – 10:00 A. M.

Houston-Galveston Area Council

Virtual Teams Meeting

<u>MEMBER PRESENT</u> Harris County – Winifred Hamilton Harris County – Doug Peterson Port Houston – Trae Camble American Lung Association – Charlie Gagen Air Alliance Houston – Jennifer Hadayia Greater Houston Partnership– Glen Austin Environmental Defense Fund– Grace Lewis Houston Advanced Research Center – Ebrahim Eslami East Harris County Manufacturer Association–MaryJane Mudd Harris County Pollution Control–Latrice Babin City of Houston–Nguyen Ly TXDOT–Qing Li METRO–Vincent Sanders Waller County–Brooke Bacuetes	<u>ALTERNATE PRESENT</u> Port Houston – Kenneth Gathright Air Alliance Houston–Inyang Uwak City of LaPorte–Johnny Morales
<u>OTHERS PRESENT</u> Houston Regional Monitoring – Steve Smith Shaun Auckland Doug Peterson Meghan Riley	<u>STAFF PRESENT</u> Houston-Galveston Area Council – Andrew DeCandis Houston-Galveston Area Council – Pharr Andrews Houston-Galveston Area Council – Cassandra Marshall Houston-Galveston Area Council – Ben Finley Houston-Galveston Area Council – Vinny Polignano Houston-Galveston Area Council – Yetunde Oyewale Houston-Galveston Area Council – Marcus Tucker Houston-Galveston Area Council – Bennie Chambers Houston-Galveston Area Council – Carlos Lugo Houston-Galveston Area Council – Pamela Grady Houston-Galveston Area Council – Jackie Pittman Houston-Galveston Area Council – Ayo Jibowu Houston-Galveston Area Council – Rania Mohamed Houston-Galveston Area Council – Ariane Martins Houston-Galveston Area Council – Rosa Harris Houston-Galveston Area Council – Monique Johnson Houston-Galveston Area Council – William Matthews EPA – Jeff Riley TCEQ – Vanessa DeArman TCEQ – Alison Stokes TERP–Ron Heiser TCEQ – Emily Wagoner TCEQ – Denine Calvin

BRIEFING

Overview

- RAQPAC Members and Alternates were presented with agency reports (EPA Update, TCEQ Update, and Regional Air Quality Monitoring update), and the meeting concluded with information items and no announcements.
- Go to <http://www.h-gac.com/board-of-directors/advisory-committees/regional-air-quality-planning-advisory-committee/meeting-material.aspx> to view the meeting materials for this meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

ITEM 1A. Introduction

Grace Lewis called the meeting to order, and members were introduced.

ITEM 2A. Approval of Meeting Summary (06/26/2025)

Meeting summary approved.

ITEM 2B. RAQPAC Officer Elections

- Chair-Grace Lewis
- Vice Chair-Qing Li

AGENCY REPORTS

ITEM 2A. EPA Update – (Jeff Riley)

A representative from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) briefed the committee:

2024 Annual PM2.5 National Ambient Air Quality Standard – Designations/Implementation

On March 12th, EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin issued an [announcement](#) that the agency will undertake 31 deregulatory actions affecting a variety of sectors of the economy. Among the 31 deregulatory actions identified:

- Reconsideration of [EPA’s February 7, 2024, strengthening of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter \(PM NAAQS\)](#), setting the level of the primary (health-based) annual PM2.5 standard at 9.0 micrograms per cubic meter to provide increased public health protection, consistent with the available health science.

The Administrator’s announcement represents a statement of agency priorities for this administration, and a “path forward.” Since the March 12th announcement, EPA has issued no policy statements, press releases or other communications on status of the 2024 PM2.5 NAAQS.

A lawsuit filed in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit (DC Circuit) by Kentucky’s attorney general and 23 other state attorneys general in March 2024 to block implementation of the strengthened NAAQS could soon provide a status update on the NAAQS. The case has been fully briefed on both sides, and oral argument was back in December 2024.

More recently, on June 23, 2025, EPA filed a motion to the Court requesting an additional 30-day abeyance in the PM2.5 NAAQS litigation. On July 14, the DC Circuit granted EPA’s request to keep this case in abeyance for an additional 30-days, so EPA will need to either file a motion to govern or seek a further abeyance by August 13, 2025. The Court has directed EPA to include information about the progress of the PM NAAQS reconsideration, and a timetable for EPA’s decision. The Court also can issue an opinion at some point even if EPA continues to seek an abeyance.

EPA will share information on reconsideration of the 2024 annual PM2.5 NAAQS as it becomes available.

Confirmation of Aaron Szabo as Assistant Administrator of EPA’s Office of Air & Radiation

On July 23, the U.S. Senate confirmed Aaron Szabo to serve as Assistant Administrator of EPA’s Office of Air & Radiation (OAR). Mr. Szabo has been with EPA since late-January 2025, serving as a Senior Advisor to Administrator Zeldin; during that time, Mr. Szabo has been engaged with OAR discussions/briefings on agency goals & priorities under the current administration, including EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin’s [March 12, 2025, deregulatory actions](#)

[announcement](https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/senate-confirms-president-trump-appointee-aaron-szabo-assistant-administrator-epas). For more information: <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/senate-confirms-president-trump-appointee-aaron-szabo-assistant-administrator-epas>

Reconsideration of the 2009 Endangerment Finding and Greenhouse Gas Vehicle Standards

Along with the announced PM NAAQS reconsideration, reconsideration of the 2009 Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Endangerment Finding and the associated GHG vehicle standards were included in Administrator Zeldin's March 12 announcement.

On July 29, 2025, EPA proposed to rescind the 2009 GHG Endangerment Finding and repeal all GHG emission standards for light-duty, medium-duty, and heavy-duty vehicles and engines. The Endangerment Finding is a prerequisite for regulating emissions from new motor vehicles and new.

ITEM 2B. TCEQ Update – (Vanessa DeArman)

TCEQ staff gave an update to the members on the latest information:

TCEQ Launches Opportunity for Public Notice of Permit Applications by Email

As part of the Sunset Commission recommendations supported by the 88th Legislature to expand public notice access, TCEQ is now providing an opportunity for the public to receive notice of permit applications by email.

Individuals can fill out an online form to receive email notices by permit number, county, or ZIP code. Receiving notices by ZIP code is a new option. Prior to this, the public only had the opportunity to receive notices for a specific permit or an entire county.

The option to receive notices of [permit applications by email](https://ctaep.tceq.texas.gov/PNE/) (<https://ctaep.tceq.texas.gov/PNE/>) is a part of the [TCEQ Commissioners' Integrated Database](https://www14.tceq.texas.gov/epic/eCID/index.cfm?clear=Y) (CID) (<https://www14.tceq.texas.gov/epic/eCID/index.cfm?clear=Y>). When a notice is provided in the CID and mailed out to the formal mailing list, the notice will also be emailed to applicable individuals signed up to receive notices of permit applications by email.

Texas Voluntary Marginal Conventional Well Plugging (TxMCW) Program Opens Request for Information (RFI) from Industry Stakeholders

The TxMCW program has issued an RFI to enhance TCEQ's understanding of the technologies, practices, pricing structures, and challenges associated with methane measurement and the plugging and abandonment of marginal conventional oil and gas wells.

Access to the full RFI document can be found at the [Smart Buy webpage](https://www.txsmartbuy.gov/esbd/582-25-00333) (<https://www.txsmartbuy.gov/esbd/582-25-00333>). Responses are due by August 29, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. CST. Additional submission requirements and guidelines can be found in the posted RFI.

For additional information and to sign up for updates, please visit the [TxMCW webpage](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/txmcw/well-plugging-grants) (<https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/txmcw/well-plugging-grants>). For questions, please contact TxMCW at 512-239-4950 or at TxMCW@tceq.texas.gov.

The 2026 Texas Environmental Excellence Awards (TEEA)

TCEQ is currently accepting applications for the 2026 TEEA. Awarded by the Governor's Office and TCEQ for more than 30 years, the TEEA is an annual awards program that honors achievements in environmental preservation and protection.

For additional information and to apply in one of 10 categories such as Civic/Community, Individual, Water Conservation, Youth, and more, please visit the [TEEA website](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/p2/events/teea/) (<https://www.tceq.texas.gov/p2/events/teea/>). Applications will be accepted through August 29.

ITEM 2C. TERP Update (Ron Heiser)

TERP staff gave an update to the members on the latest information:

Texas Emissions Reduction Plan (TERP)

- In the current Fiscal Biennium (FY 2024-2025), TCEQ has fully implemented all the TERP Programs.
- Staff are currently working to close out the FY 2024-2025 Biennium, which officially ends August 31, 2025.

- Planning has already begun for the FY 2026-2027 Biennium, which officially begins September 1, 2025.
 - 3 programs are likely to open this Fall, with the [Light-Duty Motor Vehicle Purchase or Lease Incentive Program \(LDPLIP\)](#) kicking off first. Announcements for each program's opening will be made on, or shortly before, the opening date.
- The Texas Legislature wrapped up the 89th Regular Session in early June 2025 with no impact to TERP. Visit www.terpgrants.org for the latest information on new program openings and other announcements, as well as program requirements, application forms, and project summary reports. Contact TERP staff by phone at (800) 919-TERP (8377) or by email at terp@tceq.texas.gov.

Texas Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Plan (TxVEMP) Program

Currently Accepting Applications:

- [TxVEMP All-Electric Grant Program](#) (through August 31, 2025) has approximately \$18 million remaining in available funding to upgrade or replace qualifying vehicles and equipment operating in eligible areas with new electric models. Grants can reimburse up to:
 - 100% of the cost for government entities
 - Seventy-five percent of the incremental cost for non-government entities
- Eligible project categories include the replacement or repower of:
 - Class 8 Local Freight Trucks and Port Drayage Trucks
 - Class 4-8 School Bus, Shuttle Bus, or Transit Bus
 - Class 4-7 Local Freight Trucks
 - Airport Ground Support Equipment
 - Forklifts and Port Cargo Handling Equipment
 - Applicants purchasing on-road vehicles or non-road equipment may request additional funding for electric charging or hydrogen refueling infrastructure.

UPDATE: A one-year extension to the All-Electric Grant Program is *currently pending approval*.

[Sign up for TxVEMP updates](#) to learn more about this program. Please contact us at 1-800-919-8377 or VWsettle@tceq.texas.gov with any questions. Visit www.txvwfund.org for the latest information on new program openings and other announcements, as well as program requirements, application forms, and project summary reports.

Texas Voluntary Marginal Conventional Well Plugging Program (TxMCW)

Background

- May 8, 2024: TCEQ received \$134 million in grant funding from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) – Methane Emissions Reduction Program (MERP) for Mitigating Emissions from Marginal Conventional Wells (MCWs), overseen by the Department of Energy (DOE) / National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL).

Program Description

- TCEQ is implementing the MERP grant through TxMCW, a program that will cover the costs of measuring methane emissions at participating well sites and plugging those wells.
- At an estimated \$60,000 and \$120,000 per well, TCEQ may award between 1,000 and 2,000 grants for qualifying wells in Texas over a four-year program period.
- TxMCW program development is still underway.

UPDATE:

A [Request for Information \(RFI\)](#) is currently posted to solicit feedback to enhance our understanding of the technologies, practices, pricing structures and challenges associated with methane measurement and the plugging and abandonment of marginal conventional oil and gas wells.

Access to the full RFI document can be found on the [Smart Buy webpage](#). Responses are due by Aug. 29, 2025, at 2 p.m. CST. Additional submission requirements and guidelines may be found in the posted RFI.

Visit <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/txmcw> for the latest program information, and [sign up for updates](#) to learn more about this program, or contact us directly via email, at TxMCW@tceq.texas.gov

ITEM 2D. Regional Air Quality Monitoring Update– (Vinny Polignano)

Vinny gave an overview on the regional air quality trends which revealed a notable improvement in ozone exceedance days compared to June 2024, with only one eight hour exceedance this month and 16 exceedance days year-to date, down from 23 at the same point in 2024, Conroe stood out with the highest regional mean for both ozone and PM 2.5 drawing closer, especially as calendar plots show elevated ozone concentrations last week. Although, Baytown, Clinton, Conroe, and North Lufkin are inching toward or exceeding the standard for PM 2.5 long term PM 2.5 trends display a mid-2010 dip followed by a steady rise since 2019. The AQI breakdown indicate the most days fall into the moderate category, PM 2.5 frequently being the dominant contributor and ozone rising in mid-summer, approximately 5-10 days have hovered just below the AQI threshold of one hundred, highlighted by a reading of ninety-seven on July 24, underscoring the importance of cautious interpretation of these category boundaries.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

ITEM 4A.

A. Houston Regional Monitoring- (Steve J Smith, HRM)

Steve Smith gave an overview on Houston Regional Monitoring (HRM) which has provided independent ambient air quality data for over 35 years, with a focus on Houston's east side and the ship channel industrial corridor. This discussion details the current state of our monitoring network, the pollutants we track, and recent air quality trends, particularly in ozone and fine particulate matter.

The network of monitoring sites across the region, are equipped to monitor federal criteria pollutants, while five enhanced sites utilize Photochemical Assessment Monitoring Stations. Particular attention is paid to highly reactive VOCs such as ethylene, butene, and due to their role in rapid ozone formation.

Discussion continued with long term trends in ozone data continue to show improvement. Measured exceedances have steadily declined across all standards. While 2025 has thus far shown fewer exceedance days compared to 2024, late summer remains a risk period due to meteorological conditions conducive to ozone formation. Core monitoring sites show significant reductions in both Nox and HRVOC levels since 2004. Design values indicate that most monitors are in attainment with the 84 and 75 ppb standards. However, the Conroe site remains a concern, with seven exceedance days of the 70 ppb standard, making it the primary driver of the region's continued nonattainment status. In contrast, monitors in Seabrook, Lake Jackson, and Houston Monroe are currently meeting the 70ppb standard.

It was also noted that in terms of particulate matter, PM 2.5 annual averages are elevated at a few key locations. The North Loop monitor, located along a congested freeway corridor, the Wayside monitor, located near concrete batch plant, metal recycler, and rail switchyard, also reports elevated values. Despite these localized challenges, ten of the twelve regulatory monitoring sites remain in attainment with the current annual PM 2.5 standard. It was pointed out that Seabrook and Galveston monitors report the lowest annual values. On a 24-hour basis, most sites remain below the thirty-five thresholds, though Conroe's values are increasing and will be closely watched.

In closing, HRM remains committed to providing high quality, science-based air monitoring to support a healthier and more informed Houston community.

INFORMATION ITEMS

ITEM 5A. H-GAC Update (Andrew DeCandis, H-GAC)

- **CPRG Community Engagement-**Pharr notified the members regarding the ongoing regional climate planning efforts, we're preparing to launch a series of community engagement events across our 13-county region. These meetings are designed to gather public input on the types of climate measures residents and stakeholders would like to see included in the regional climate plan. We've begun developing a public participation plan and have tentatively scheduled events for the end of this month. Counties are being grouped strategically based on similarities in their major emission sources to ensure relevant and targeted discussions. In addition to in person meetings, we will also launch an online survey to give those unable to attend a chance to share their feedback. More details, including dates and links to the survey, will be shared soon via email and through ongoing

communications. We're looking forward to working closely with community members and stakeholders and encourage your participation and support in spreading the word.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ITEM 6A.

None

NEW BUSINESS

ITEM 7A.

Next meeting: August 28, 2025

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 11:33 A.M.