

REGIONAL AIR QUALITY PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY

Thursday, February 27, 2025 – 10:00 A. M.

Houston-Galveston Area Council

Virtual Teams Meeting

<u>MEMBER PRESENT</u> Fort Bend County – Joel Patterson Harris County – Winifred Hamilton City of Houston – Nguyen Ly Harris County – Doug Peterson Houston Advanced Research Center – Ebrahim Eslami Port Houston – Trae Camble Air Alliance Houston –Jennifer Hadayia East Harris County Manufacturers Association (ECHMA) –Mary Jane Mudd	<u>ALTERNATE PRESENT</u> Port Houston – Kenneth Gathright Metro –Vincent Sanders City of Houston – Darryl Tate Air Alliance Houston – Inyang Uwak Environmental Defense Fund – Phillip Martin League of Women Voters – Katie Campbell
<u>OTHERS PRESENT</u> Tricon Energy – Elizabeth Carlson Rachel Melton Emily Wagoner Jesus Gutierrez Yue Zhang Kenneth McGaughey	<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 – Carlos Lugo Houston-Galveston Area Council – Monique Johnson Houston-Galveston Area Council – Sydni Ligons Houston-Galveston Area Council – Ayo Jibowu Houston-Galveston Area Council – Qun Zhao TCEQ – Vanessa DeArman TCEQ – Alison Stokes TCEQ – Denine Calvin EPA – Jeffrey Riley

BRIEFING

Overview

- RAQPAC Members and Alternates were presented with agency reports (EPA Update, TCEQ Update, TERP Update, and Regional Air Quality Monitoring update), and the meeting concluded with no information items and 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

Joel Patterson called the meeting to order, and members were introduced.

ITEM 1B. Approval of Meeting Summary (3/28/2024, 4/25/2024, 6/27/2024, 7/25/2024, 10/31/2024, 12/12/2024 & 1/30/2025 & 02/27/2025)

Meeting summaries held for quorum.

AGENCY REPORTS

ITEM 2A. EPA Update – (Jeff Riley)

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

On January 20th, the White House issued an Executive Order (EO) titled “Regulatory Freeze Pending Review” ([Executive Order](#)), and the memo was published in the Federal Register January 28th ([FR](#)). The EO is not exclusive to EPA, it affects all executive departments/agencies of the federal government, establishing a 60-day review period for regulatory activities. The EO instructs departments/agencies to not propose or issue any rule until the newly appointed head of the department/agency reviews and approves the rule. The EO also postpones the effective dates of rules already published in the Federal Register as of January 20th and instructs departments/agencies to withdraw any rules submitted to the Office of the Federal Register for publication but not published as of January 20th.

The EO also contains language directing department/agencies to consider, where appropriate and consistent with applicable law, opening a comment period to allow interested parties to provide comments about issues of fact, law, and policy raised by the rules postponed under the EO, and to consider re-evaluating pending petitions involving such rules.

Issuance of this 60-day regulatory freeze pending review is consistent with past changes of administrations. For EPA, we anticipate more clarity on the agency’s path forward for air quality rulemakings and related matters once the 60-day review period concludes and policy/regulatory briefings for new agency leadership are completed.

More information about EPA’s review of the Secondary NO_x/SO_x/PM NAAQS can be found at:

<https://www.epa.gov/so2-pollution/secondary-national-ambient-air-quality-standards-naaqs-nitrogen-dioxide-no2-and>

ITEM 2B. TCEQ Update – (Vanessa DeArman)

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

2024 Primary Annual Fine Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}) NAAQS

On February 7, 2024, EPA finalized its revision of the annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS to 9.0 µg/m³ and published in the *Federal Register* on March 6, 2024.

On February 7, 2025, the governor’s office submitted state designations to EPA. The governor designated all counties within the State of Texas with regulatory monitors and complete data meeting the 2024 PM_{2.5} NAAQS as attainment, and all remaining counties will continue to be designated as attainment/unclassifiable.

On February 7, 2025, TCEQ submitted PM_{2.5} exceptional events demonstrations for Harrison, Kleberg, and Travis Counties to EPA.

For more information, please visit the [Air Pollution from Particulate Matter](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/sip/criteria-pollutants/sip-pm/#latest) webpage (<https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/sip/criteria-pollutants/sip-pm/#latest>). The PM_{2.5} exceptional events demonstrations are available on the [Exceptional Event Demonstrations for Particulate Matter](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/monops/pm_flags.html) webpage, (https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/monops/pm_flags.html). For questions, please contact Alison Stokes at alison.stokes@tceq.texas.gov.

Annual Reports are Due by March 31, 2025 for the Mass Emissions Cap and Trade (MECT) and Highly Reactive Volatile Organic Compounds Cap and Trade (HECT) Programs

Annual Reports for 2024 compliance with the MECT and HECT Programs are due by March 31, 2025, and can be submitted through the State of Texas Environmental Electronic Reporting System (STEERS).

For more information, please visit the Emissions Banking and Trading webpage (<https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/banking>) and for questions, please contact ebt@tceq.texas.gov.

TCEQ's Environmental Trade Fair and Conference (ETFC) is in San Antonio, June 3-4, 2025

Agency experts will lead over 100 courses during the ETFC. TCEQ's educational tracks will cover topics ranging from air and water permitting, oil and gas, industrial and solid waste management, compliance and enforcement, remediation programs and new initiatives happening in Texas.

The Henry B. Gonzalez Exhibit Hall will showcase over 300 companies excited to share their goods and services. The TCEQ and Take Care of Texas booths will also be on the exhibitor floor.

For more information, please visit the [ETFC](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/p2/events/etfc/etf.html) webpage (<https://www.tceq.texas.gov/p2/events/etfc/etf.html>) and sign up for the [subscription list](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/TXTCEQ/subscriber/new?qsp=TXTCSEQ_202021) (https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/TXTCEQ/subscriber/new?qsp=TXTCSEQ_202021).

The Texas Environmental Excellence Awards will be at the Bob Bullock Museum on June 10, 2025.

For more information, please visit the [EBT](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/banking) webpage (<https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/banking>) and for questions, please contact ebt@tceq.texas.gov.

ITEM 2C. TERP Update (*Nate Hickman*)

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

Texas Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Plan (TxVEMP) Program

Currently Accepting Applications:

- [TxVEMP All-Electric Grant Program](#) (through August 31, 2025) has over \$30 million remaining 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
 - 75% 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.

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.
- Outreach and program development in Spring 2025.

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)

Andrew DeCandis reviewed ozone concentration data, indicating a notable exceedance at the Galveston 99th Street monitor in February 2025 compared to the previous year. He acknowledged the impact of weather on these readings and noted that PM 2.5 data was limited due to missing records from certain monitors. Dr. Winifred Hamilton raised concerns about the absence of long-term PM 2.5 data, stressing the importance of chronic exposure metrics for health assessments.

ITEM 2E. Health Impacts Subcommittee– (Maggie Isied)

Pharr Andrews shared that the Health Impacts Committee is planning to meet soon and is looking to recruit additional members from RAPPAC for the health impact subcommittee.

ACTION ITEMS

ITEM 3A. RAQPAC Officer Elections (Joel Patterson)

Elections held for Quorum.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

ITEM 4A.

1. 2026 Houston World Cup Sustainability Plan Overview- (Elizabeth Carlson, Tricon Energy)

Elizabeth Carlson gave an overview on how FIFA comes in and gives you the funds and we as a city must put these resources up and facilitate all the different services and activities that are required to host these big events with the idea that they'll bring economic return to the city. So that's kind of the business case of putting up the bid to host a sporting event. Because we have a series of matches, their spread across different cities and just the magnitude and scale of the World Cup is really beyond what we're used to. It's one of the largest or it is the largest sporting event in the world. And literally billions of eyes watching the host cities through the tournament. So, all, FIFA contracts with the host committee, which is based out of the Houston, the Harris County Houston Sports Authority, and then that host committee set up a series of subcommittees to help deliver on the objectives that we commit to with FIFA. We have hundreds of people in our distribution list. Discussion continued with some of you very open and inclusive to giving updates and keeping the community engaged, and then from that sort of larger stakeholder engagement standpoint, we have narrower project or work streams, so smaller groups of people who are tackling a specific topic.

It was also discussed that with the air, water, nature, waste and circularity, low carbon transportation, are all interrelated. The more cars we have on the road, that affects our air quality, that affects our carbon emissions. We want the event to minimize its impact on air pollution. We started in 2023 with some requirements from FIFA, brought people together from universities and education, from NGOs and civil society, from various government entities and from business to put together the sustainability plan. Then we took that high level plan and started looking at detailed objectives. And then that got us into sort of what we're calling project execution. And that's the stage where we are now. For positive impact, overall economic, environmental, social and so on. So, this is a key piece of just setting up the institutional tools that different entities would be able to use to make their events more sustainable.

2. Micro -and Nano Plastic Particles from an atmospheric perspective – (Yue Zhang, Ph.D., Texas A& M University)

Yue Zhang presented findings on micro and nanoplastics, noting their rising significance as pollutants in the atmosphere. He explained that while plastic production is increasing exponentially, research on airborne microplastics is still limited compared to studies in oceans and on land. Zhang pointed out that these particles

can travel long distances and may affect cloud formation, but their sources and concentrations in the atmosphere remain poorly understood.

The discussion also highlighted a collaborative project involving institutions like UC San Diego and the University of Michigan. The team is utilizing advanced instruments for real-time air sampling, achieving a detection sensitivity of nanograms per cubic meter. Their findings indicate significant exposure levels of polystyrene nanoplastics in the air, particularly linked to nearby trash incineration activities.

Zhang discussion also included mobile sampling efforts in Houston, focusing on micro nanoplastics emitted from a trash incineration plant. The research aims to understand the sources, distribution, and atmospheric lifetime of these particles, which can range from five days to over two months. Zhang also highlighted the potential climate impact of micro nanoplastics and invited community members to engage in outreach efforts related to this research.

INFORMATION ITEMS

ITEM 5A.

1. **Tuesday, February 18-Board of Directors Meeting -10:00a.m.-11:00a.m.**
2. **Friday, February 28 -Transportation Policy Council -9:30a.m.-11:30a.m.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ITEM 6A.

None

NEW BUSINESS

ITEM 7A.

Next meeting: March 27, 2025

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 11:19 A.M.