



NEWS

Four Corners Air Quality Task Force



Colorado Department
of Public Health
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Public Perspectives Panel Discussion to Highlight Upcoming Four Corners Air Quality Task Force in Durango

Durango, Colorado – A panel discussion entitled “Public Perspectives on Four Corners Air Quality” will be featured when the Four Corners Air Quality Task Force reconvenes on **Wednesday, February 7** at Fort Lewis College in Durango.

Panel participants will include representatives from the San Juan Citizens’ Alliance and the American Lung Association of the Southwest.

“It’s important for the Task Force to hear from citizens, and groups that represent their interests,” said Michael Silverstein, deputy director of the Colorado Air Pollution Control Division. “Regulators and the industries we regulate talk continually about reducing emissions and complying with state and federal air quality standards. We must remember, though, that such efforts are driven by a common goal: achieving better health for those living in the Four Corners area. We’re really looking forward to the panel.”

The task force will meet for five hours (1 p.m. to 6 p.m.) at Fort Lewis’ Memorial Student Lounge, with whole group sessions planned to open and close the meeting. The intervening hours will be dedicated to smaller work group meetings.

A field trip to an air quality monitoring site on the Southern Ute Indian Reservation is planned for the morning following the meeting (Thursday, February 8). Those interested in participating in the field trip should contact Mark Jones of the New Mexico Environment Department at 505-327-6854 (mark.jones@state.nm.us). Space is limited.

“The Southern Ute Indian Tribe has graciously agreed to host this field trip,” said Silverstein. “Tribal representatives have been active within the Task Force, and it’s a great opportunity to see and discuss what activities are occurring on tribal lands.”

Field trips are a regular feature of the quarterly meetings. Past field trips have included visits to oil and gas development sites in New Mexico; air monitoring sites in Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado; a tour of the Four Corners Power Plant, one of the largest coal-fired generating stations in the United States, located on Navajo land in Fruitland, New Mexico (about 25 miles west of Farmington); and the Williams Field Services Co.’s Milagro Cogeneration Plant near Bloomfield, New Mexico.

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The Four Corners Air Quality Task Force is made up of federal land managers, federal and state environmental regulators, representatives from industry and tribal nations, and interested residents. Originally convened by the states of New Mexico and Colorado, the task force held its' first public meeting in November 2005 to discuss the impacts that oil and gas production, existing and planned coal-fired power plants, growth and other factors are having on air quality in the area.

Five task force work groups are focusing on issues related to oil and gas development; power plants; other air pollution emission sources; cumulative effects; and air quality monitoring. The ultimate goal is to combine the products of each work group into the full Task Force Report that is due by the end of 2007. The full report will identify options for policymakers to consider for addressing air quality issues and concerns in the region.

Much of the focus of the task force's work during the remainder of 2006 and 2007 will be expanding and refining the draft of the full Task Force Report. The draft report already is available for review on the task force website at: <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/aqb/4C/DraftTaskForceReport.html>.

The draft report is a compilation of mitigation option papers written so far by members of the Four Corners Air Quality Task Force. The agencies involved have not reviewed or adopted these options. The options will be considered following the completion of the task force's work.

All task force members and any other interested parties are invited to review the draft report. Individuals may review all or any part of the draft report at any time. Review on a quarterly basis of new products being developed and added to the draft report is encouraged to aid in its on-going development.

Guidelines have been established by which the draft report should be reviewed. The guidelines can be viewed at the task force website.

"The first half of 2007 will be dedicated to tightening up the draft report and finishing the remaining mitigation option papers," said Mary Uhl, bureau chief for the Air Quality Bureau of the New Mexico Environment Department. "The second half of the year is when the review process, although on-going, really kicks in and becomes the focus. We will need to maintain a high energy level throughout 2007. Everything culminates this year."

As mentioned earlier, the upcoming meeting will follow a familiar format. A brief introductory session is planned for the entire task force before work groups break out for concurrent sessions. The entire task force will reconvene for a plenary session before the meeting is adjourned.

Individuals wanting to learn more about the Four Corners Air Quality Task Force should contact either Christopher Dann (Colorado residents) at 303-692-3281 or christopher.dann@state.co.us, or Mark Jones (New Mexico residents) at 505-327-6854 or mark.jones@state.nm.us. Information also may be obtained by visiting the Task Force's website at <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/aqb/4C/index.html>.

The next regular quarterly meeting of the Four Corners Air Quality Task Force after the February Durango meeting is slated for the afternoon of Wednesday, May 9, 2007, in Farmington, New Mexico.