

Northwest New Mexico Air Quality Monitoring Network

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Abstract: The mission of the New Mexico Environment Department's Air Quality Bureau (NMED-AQB) is to protect the inhabitants and natural beauty of New Mexico by preventing the deterioration of air quality. This includes strategic planning to ensure that all air quality standards are met and maintained; issuing air quality Construction and Operating Permits; and enforcing air quality regulations and permit conditions. The Air Quality Bureau has authority over air quality in all New Mexico counties except Bernalillo County and except facilities on Tribal Lands.

New Mexico operates a network of air monitors called SLAMS, State and Local Air Monitoring Stations, throughout New Mexico to ensure that local and national standards are met. The purpose of the network is to support the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). It is designed to (1) determine highest concentrations expected to occur in the area covered by the network, (2) determine representative concentrations in areas of high population density, (3) determine the impact on ambient pollution levels of significant sources or source categories, and (4) determine general background concentration levels. Most regions in the state have one or more monitoring sites with continuous and/or non-continuous monitors. Depending on the site, parameters monitored are ozone, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5}. The continuous monitoring sites also monitor meteorological data. Some of the active sites in the network have been operational since 1974.

Air quality in northwestern New Mexico and the greater Four Corners area has been a recurring issue. The states of Colorado and New Mexico convened the Four Corners Air Quality Task Force (Task Force) in November 2005 to address air quality issues in the Four Corners region and consider options for mitigation of air pollution.

As a result of the Task Force and ongoing cooperation through the Four Corners Air Quality Group, several other monitoring projects, in addition to the State and Local network, have been initiated such as for Mercury and Ammonia.

This presentation will review some of the background air quality issues in the Four Corners with a focus on ozone, describe the Northwest New Mexico monitoring network, and also discuss some additional collaborative monitoring projects that have emerged out of the Task Force recommendations. The Northwest New Mexico monitoring network has helped inform NMED-AQB and other agencies on ambient air quality and has served as a critical planning tool. Contact Terry Hertel for more information on the New Mexico monitoring network E-Mail Terry.Hertel@state.nm.us, Phone: 505-476-4316 or visit the website: <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/aqb/monitor/airmonitoringnetwork.html>.