



**North Carolina Division of Air Quality  
2011-2013 Strategic Plan**

**October 3, 2011**

## **Our Mission Statement**

To Protect and Improve the Outdoor Air Quality of North Carolina

The Division of Air Quality (DAQ) works with the state's citizens to protect and improve outdoor, or ambient, air quality in North Carolina for the health, benefit and economic well-being of all. To carry out this mission, the DAQ has programs to operate a statewide air quality monitoring network to measure the level of pollutants in the outdoor air, develop and implement plans to meet future air quality initiatives, assure compliance with air quality rules, and educate, inform and assist the public with regard to air quality issues.

## Our Guiding Principles

- **Integrity** – We are truthful, ethical and lawful in carrying out our mission.
- **Accountability** – We are responsible for our decisions and reliable in producing results.
- **Commitment** – We meet the department’s mission and vision and the needs of our customers.
- **Respect** – We regard everyone with dignity and provide consistent services to each other and our customers.
- **Quality** – We effectively and efficiently provide services and products that serve the department’s mission.
- **Transparency** – We use the expectations of our customers and partners as the focal point for communicating, educating setting priorities, developing programs and executing our business processes and services.
- **Professionalism** – We meet our mission by always conducting ourselves with the highest standards of professionalism.
- **Teamwork** – We are a valued and integral member of the team of departments that comprise North Carolina state government.
- **Communication** – We communicate clearly and effectively, and exchange ideas freely with our staff, customers, partners, and throughout state government.
- **Work Ethic** – We honor our roles as public servants by demonstrating hard work and productivity in the public trust.

## **Our Vision**

To have a program that:

- Has a motivated staff that shares a common vision of providing clean air for all of the citizens of North Carolina
- Is highly effective; achieves its goals expeditiously
- Is highly efficient; provides maximum product for minimum cost and effort
- Creates a place where staff wants to make a career-long commitment by rewarding high achievers and offers cross-training or rotational experiences that support employee education and career growth opportunities
- Fosters the development of strong managers who have the respect and support of their staff

## **Areas Where Continuous Attention and Improvement are Needed**

- Intra-divisional and inter-divisional communication
- Employee career development and training
- Employee retention
- More widespread understanding of our goals by all of our employees
- An acceptance of the “big picture” of what we need to accomplish vs. a much narrower unit-by-unit vision of our purpose
- Consistency across the Division
- Metrics for tracking productivity

## **Our Priorities**

- **Operate a Statewide Air Quality Monitoring Network to Measure the Level of Pollutants in the Outdoor Air**
- **Develop and Implement Plans to Meet Future Air Quality Initiatives**
- **Assure Compliance with Air Quality Rules**
- **Provide Education and Outreach to the Citizens of North Carolina**
- **Strive for Organizational Effectiveness**

## **Operate a Statewide Air Quality Monitoring Network to Measure the Level of Pollutants in the Outdoor Air**

The backbone of our air quality program is the Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Network. The DAQ operates a statewide network of scientific instruments to monitor an array of outdoor air pollutants. When you consider air quality in NC, the first question to ask is “How clean is the air?” and for the answer you go to the Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Network. You’ll turn to different groups to answer subsequent questions such as “Is that clean enough?” and “What actions are needed to make it cleaner?” But eventually you’ll ask “Did those actions work?” and you’ll return to the Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Network.

### **Supporting Actions:**

- Determine which pollutants need to be monitored where, and how.
- Develop effective and consistent standards of instrument operation and maintenance, sample collection, and data analysis.
- Train and maintain an effective and highly efficient team to operate, maintain, and repair the instruments.
- Enhance information sharing, standardization and resolution of differences through the Ambient Monitoring Workgroup.
- Collect the air samples and perform scientific analysis.
- Compile and quality assure the data and provide reports to internal staff and the public in a variety of ways including the DAQ web site.
- Perform special studies as necessary.
- Be alert to special conditions that can impact the collected samples, such as fires.
- Provide data in real-time to the public.

## **Develop and Implement Plans to Meet Future Air Quality Initiatives**

The USEPA establishes national standards that are the same for all states. With the ambient air quality monitoring network results in hand, it's time to compare our air with the federal standards and ask "Is that clean enough?" If not, the DAQ develops air quality rules and plans to address those air quality problems that impact human health, welfare and the economic well-being of all. To answer the question, "What actions are needed to make it cleaner?" air pollution control strategies are identified and evaluated based on multiple factors including pollution reduction potential, cost and ease of implementation. In addition to addressing the current federal standards for a variety of pollutants, DAQ also evaluates emerging programs to improve the state's or region's air quality. Specifically, anticipated federal or state rules and legislative actions to reduce emissions of air toxics, greenhouse gases, mercury, nitrogen and ammonia are evaluated and assessed to determine the benefits and impacts to all affected groups in NC.

### **Supporting Actions:**

- Ensure air quality rules and plans are developed within the statutory framework provided.
- Meet all deadlines established by the Clean Air Act, USEPA, or the State of NC.
- Work closely with Federal, State and Local governments, local air quality programs, and all other stakeholders to develop action plans to improve air quality.
- Develop an emissions inventory of sources of pollutants.
- Partner with appropriate stakeholders to effectively reduce mobile source emissions from cars and trucks.
- Evaluate regulatory programs for potential duplicative or outdated programs and recommend changes where appropriate.
- Continue to be a leader in regional organizations aimed at improving ambient air quality.
- Initiate appropriate greenhouse gas mitigation measures as federal or state rules or legislative actions require.

## **Assure Compliance with Air Quality Rules**

Up to this point, we've monitored the air and we've identified strategies for protecting and improving air quality. Now we get those solutions installed so that the process of cleaning up the air can begin. The DAQ informs the regulated community on air quality rules, assists regulated entities in understanding how the rules apply, and performs periodic inspections to ensure ongoing compliance. Some sources are required to be permitted, while others are not. Permits establish regulatory requirements and operating parameters for a facility to demonstrate compliance and for the DAQ field staff to verify compliance with applicable rules. Ultimately, if a regulated entity violates an air quality rule, the DAQ compliance assurance team has the responsibility of pursuing appropriate enforcement actions.

### **Supporting Actions:**

- Ensure compliance with air quality rules through inspections, assistance, education and outreach.
- Consistently develop clear and enforceable permits.
- Streamline permitting requirements as rules allow and promote continuous improvement in the permit issuance process.
- Perform timely permit reviews to increase customer service satisfaction.
- Develop and maintain an effective and highly efficient team of permit writers and compliance inspectors through education, on-the-job training and information sharing.
- Enhance information sharing, standardization and resolution of differences through the DAQ Workgroups. Ensure that all staff has access to each of these workgroups and understands their roles in improving DAQ's effectiveness.
- Ensure that violations of rules are managed effectively through timely issuance of clear, unambiguous and correct Notices of Deficiency, Notices of Violation and enforcement actions, when appropriate. Continuously monitor this process and seek changes through the appropriate workgroup.
- Address citizen inquiries and complaints in a timely and professional manner.

## **Provide Education and Outreach to the Citizens of North Carolina**

It's common for people to assume that an air quality problem is caused by big factories with billowing smokestacks – and to discount their OWN contribution. Small things can add up to be a major problem; things like not maintaining one's car, wasting energy, or failing to properly dispose of household items. The DAQ strives to fully inform, educate and involve the public with regard to air quality issues through our publications, web site, public meetings, hearings, notices and news releases. Communication should be a two-way street with the division striving to inform and educate the public about air quality issues while seeking input from citizens, local governments, regulated sources, business and industry, environmental groups and other stakeholders. Due to the complex and ever-changing nature of air quality issues, DAQ has a responsibility to inform, educate and involve the public about air pollution problems and regulatory efforts aimed at solving those problems. Such outreach should be accomplished through a range of efforts including: brochures and other publications, the DAQ web site, public notices, news releases, public meetings and hearings, email notification lists and social media.

### **Supporting Actions:**

- Develop and update brochures and other publications dealing with key air quality issues. Update existing publications as needed to incorporate new information and regulatory changes. Develop new publications to deal with emerging issues.
- Maintain a web site that is comprehensive, organized and simple to navigate. Post new information as soon as possible, particularly information about public meetings, news releases, calendar events, rule changes and real-time monitoring data.
- Actively involve the public and stakeholders in air quality issues by seeking their input through public meetings, notices, hearings, email notification lists, social media and other means.
- Provide ready access to news media about air quality issues through interviews, press releases, Web site, public meetings and information requests.
- Operate an Air Awareness Program aimed at educating and informing the public about air quality problems and encouraging voluntarily actions to reduce air pollution.
- Enhance the air quality forecasting program, as determined by changes in air standards, population, non-attainment areas and emerging issues.
- Continue efforts through the Open Burning Outreach Team to achieve better public awareness and compliance with outdoor burning rules.
- Develop exhibit and promotional materials that reflect key air quality issues for use at public meetings and events. Participate in events such as the State Fair that can reach large numbers of people.

## **Strive for Organizational Effectiveness**

The process is a cycle and at some point you want to know “Did those actions work?” So, it’s back to the ambient air quality monitoring network to see how the air is responding to those actions and whether additional measures are needed. But even once the air attains the standard, we can’t declare victory and go home. There are always more people moving in, driving more cars, and building more stuff. And, scientists are always conducting studies to see if the standards should be lowered even more – so what’s considered “clean” today may not be good enough tomorrow.

The previous pages have discussed “what” we do, but there is also concern for “how well we do it”. The DAQ’s actions, services and products should be of high quality, and serve the Division’s mission and vision through continuous improvement, optimum efficiency, effectiveness and customer satisfaction in all operations. By providing opportunities in career development and staff training, the division strives to provide a rewarding and challenging workplace for all of our employees. The DAQ supports DENR’s initiatives to lead by example and become a model for other state agencies. We approach all of our program decisions in a pragmatic and realistic manner to ensure that our mission is executed in a responsible and cost effective manner.

### **Supporting Actions:**

- Periodically evaluate current Division structure, staffing levels and processes and determine how we can operate more efficiently and effectively in response to changing regulatory environments and budget constraints.
- Strengthen current customer service through continued communication, education, and outreach activities.
- Regularly review all our current policies to reduce costs and eliminate redundancy.
- Support DENR’s initiatives related to climate change mitigation.
- Provide opportunities for employees to participate in cross-training opportunities or temporarily rotate across sections or regional offices to obtain alternative types of work experience.
- Provide opportunities for employees to obtain higher education, training, and other means of career development when budgets allow.
- Recognize and reward employees that are consistently performing at higher levels and contributing greatly to the success of the division’s mission.
- Create an atmosphere of openness in fostering broad communication among all levels of staff.