

Progress Report

Columbia Gorge Air Quality Project

Southwest Clean Air Agency
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

July 29, 2004

Summary

Since our last report to the Commission, Oregon and Washington air quality agencies have made good progress in implementing the revised technical study plan and the causes of haze assessment. A new appropriation from congress has allowed us to extend the timeframe of the current monitoring study to gain a better understanding of air quality processes in the Gorge. This report will update the Commission on the technical work accomplished to date, the next steps for the technical study, and the timeline for initiating the public outreach and strategy development process.

Last year, the Commission concurred with the redesigned technical study, and asked the air quality agencies to return in a year with more detail regarding the use of the study information and a clearer description of how the strategy development process will be implemented. The Commission requested assurance that the study results will be evaluated by the public and will lead to a decision about Gorge air quality.

Results of the current air quality study will be evaluated by the public as part of the strategy development process. The status of key project elements is highlighted below and is discussed further in this report.

- Public Outreach (early stages of strategy development): Between now and summer 2007, the agencies will hold a series of public meetings to update the public, stakeholders, and the Tribes on the technical study's progress. In the coming months, the air agencies will work with a third-party facilitator to design the schedule and content of the public outreach meetings. The spring 2006 public meeting will be an opportunity for the public to review the results of the first-phase monitoring study report.
- Strategy Development Process: Oregon and Washington air quality agencies will initiate a public strategy development process in the summer of 2007. This is the original advisory committee process described on pages 16-18 of the 2003 work plan addendum. The process will be lead by a third-party facilitator. Because of the extended technical study, the overall project timeline has also been extended by about one year.
- Resource constraints/Issues to be resolved: It is the intent of DEQ and SWCAA to convene the bi-state advisory committee process described in the project work plan. However, there are several important issues that must be addressed first. Over the next 12 to 18 months, DEQ and SWCAA will work to resolve the following issues:

- **Staff Resources:** It is unclear today if DEQ will have sufficient staff resources available to support the planned committee process. DEQ will have a better picture of available resources toward the end of the 2005 Oregon legislative session (anticipated in the summer/fall of 2005).
- **Committee Funding:** Full funding for the advisory committee/strategy development process is still needed. Some initial funding has been secured and will allow us to make good progress. DEQ and SWCAA have provided information on the Gorge project to Senator Wyden's office and are hopeful for an additional congressional appropriation to support the committee work. We will learn more about the potential for a new appropriation in the coming months.
- **Washington Department of Ecology** remains disinvested from the project. This is not an issue that DEQ or SWCAA can resolve. DEQ and SWCAA will proceed with the strategy development process in the absence of WDOE. However, it is our preference that Ecology re-join the project at some level.
- **Funding:** DEQ and SWCAA have secured \$100,000 to begin the public outreach and advisory committee process. While additional funding will undoubtedly be needed to complete the strategy development process, this \$100,000 will allow us to make considerable progress through approximately 2007/2008. DEQ and SWCAA will have a better idea of available resources after the 2005 Oregon legislative session and after the next round of congressional appropriations are made. If at that time, DEQ and SWCAA believe that there are insufficient resources to support the strategy development process described in the project work plan, the agencies and the third party facilitator will evaluate other options for proceeding and provide a recommendation to the Gorge Commission.
- **2004 Public Update:** Aside from the extension of the monitoring study, there is no new information to report to the public on the project. Therefore the agencies determined that there was no need to hold a separate public progress meeting in 2004. The project's status has been posted to the project website, and the Gorge Commission meeting offers a forum to update the public and stakeholders. This report has been mailed to the project's interested parties list.

Oregon DEQ and the Southwest Clean Air Agency remain committed to a public process for reviewing the technical study results and evaluating strategies to protect air quality in the Gorge.

Technical Study Update

The first phase of the revised technical work plan involves conducting special monitoring studies during key summer and winter periods in the Gorge, when visibility impairment is at its worst. The measurement program is designed to support three main objectives: a) determine the causes of haze in the Gorge, b) support the development of predictive air quality modeling, and c) track long-term haze trends. In the winter of 2003, monitoring equipment was placed throughout the Gorge to capture the movement and patterns of air pollution inside and outside the Scenic Area. A map of the monitoring network is included as Attachment A. The monitoring program includes the measurement of visibility impairment and air chemistry to help identify the causes

of haze. The first of these seasonal intensive monitoring studies began in December 2003 and ran through February 2004. The summer “intensive” study began in July and will run through November 2004. The Southwest Clean Air Agency is managing the flow of congressional funds for the study and leading the technical work, with support from Oregon DEQ.

In 2004, Wasco County Commissioner Dan Erickson was instrumental in working with Oregon Senator Ron Wyden to obtain an additional congressional appropriation of \$422,500 for the project. This new funding allows the monitoring study to be extended to collect more information for the causes of haze assessment. The ability to expand the initial study through “add-on” projects is discussed in the redesigned technical study work plan (July 25, 2003). Pages 12 and 13 of the redesigned technical study discuss potential “add-on” components that could be pursued if additional funding becomes available. Add-ons components could include additional new measurement or additional periods of measurement (e.g. new types of measurement, extension of the intensive monitoring study periods, or new year-round measurement). Add-on elements support the overall purpose of the technical study to provide information that will help decision-makers develop an air quality strategy for the Scenic Area consistent with the direction in the Gorge Management Plan.

The project’s technical consultants reviewed preliminary data from the winter monitoring study to identify any data gaps and evaluate the best use of the new funding. The extended study includes additional monitoring over a longer timeframe to better understand air quality processes during the important summer and winter periods. This includes continuing the seasonal intensive monitoring program through February, 2005, as well as additional data and chemical analysis, and additional meteorological measurement. The extended study will provide the advisory committee a more complete picture of air quality process in the Gorge, and will therefore allow the committee to have a more informed discussion regarding contributing emission sources and air quality strategy options.

The technical study will also include an initial modeling evaluation of future air quality trends in the Gorge. Initial monitoring results will become available in late 2005 or early 2006; however the trends modeling will not be completed until late 2006 to early 2007. DEQ and SWCAA do not consider the current study complete until the trends modeling assessment is completed. The table below compares the schedule of main study elements for the 2003 redesigned study plan and the extended study timeframe.

Schedule Changes Due to Additional Funding/Measurements

| ACTIVITY | Redesigned Study Plan 7/25/03 | Extended Study Timeframe 6/15/04 |
|--|--|--|
| Monitoring | Monitoring Period | Monitoring Period |
| Conduct measurements with two seasonal monitoring studies (winter and summer “intensives”) Summer study extended by two months. Second winter study added from December 2004 to February 2005 | 12/03 thru 9/04 <u>Winter (completed)</u> Dec. 03 –Feb. 04 <u>Summer</u> July-Sept. 04 | 12/03 thru 2/05 <u>Winter (completed)</u> Dec. 03-Feb. 04 <u>Summer</u> July-Nov. 04 <u>New Winter Study</u> Dec. 04 – Feb. 05 |
| Validate data, report data, perform haze assessments | 12/04 thru 6/05 | 3/05 thru 12/05 |
| Provide draft and final report on causes of haze | 6/05 and 9/05 | 12/05 and 4/06 |
| | | |
| Modeling | Analysis Period | Analysis Period |
| Evaluate models – select/refine for use | 12/03 thru 6/05 | 7/04 thru 12/05 |
| Refine emission inventory for model use | 6/04 thru 12/04 | 6/04 thru 6/05 |
| Run base case modeling for current and future years | 6/05 thru 12/05 | 12/05 thru 7/06 |
| Provide draft and final modeling report | 1/06 thru 4/06 | 8/06 thru 1/07 |

Strategy Development

Public Outreach: 2005-2007

In the 2005 to early 2007 timeframe, DEQ, SWCAA, and a third-party facilitator will lead a series of public/stakeholder meetings to explain the study activities to date. These meetings will provide a forum for questions from the public and promote a better understanding of air quality in the Gorge. This educational groundwork is important for a successful committee and public process. The first meeting will be held in the spring of 2005. Follow-up meetings will be held approximately every six months thereafter, or as milestones in the study program are reached. These meetings may offer an opportunity to get early public input on air quality goals, values, and priorities for Gorge area communities. This type of information would be useful to the advisory committee when it convenes in 2007. In the coming months, the air agencies will work with a third-party facilitator to design the schedule, content, and goals of the public outreach meetings.

Results of the monitoring portion of the study will be summarized in a report called “Causes of Haze in the Gorge”, estimated to be complete in early 2006. The spring 2006 public meeting will be an opportunity for SWCAA and DEQ to present the Causes of Haze report to the public. The monitoring data will also be used to develop the trends modeling portion of the study, which is expected to be complete in early 2007.

DEQ and SWCAA estimate that \$100,000 will be needed to support public and stakeholder outreach in the 2005-2007 time frame. This would also include the initial committee convening

work in 2007. \$50,000 has been reserved from the 2004 congressional appropriation to help fund this work. An additional \$50,000 is available from EPA grant funds that are being administered by Oregon DEQ. DEQ, EPA, and SWCAA have developed the necessary contracts and interagency agreements to provide the needed \$100,000 for the 2005-2007 timeframe.

Advisory Committee/Strategy Development Process: 2007 and Later

Oregon DEQ and the Southwest Clean Air Agency will begin a public advisory committee process in the summer of 2007 to evaluate the study results. This is the public decision-making process described in the 2001 Work Plan and 2003 Work Plan Addendum, both concurred upon by the Gorge Commission. The committee will be jointly staffed by Oregon and Washington air quality agencies, and will be lead by a third-party facilitator. The committee process will provide a forum for the public to discuss the study results, develop air quality strategy options, and evaluate the need for further work.

Funding for Committee Process

As we mentioned in last year's report to the Commission, the lead agencies do not currently have sufficient funding or staffing to implement the full advisory committee process envisioned in the work plan. DEQ will have a much better picture of its available resources toward the end of the 2005 Oregon legislative session. However, the \$100,000 currently available will allow us to make considerable progress on the early stages of the public outreach and advisory committee process.

It is the intention of the lead agencies to implement the advisory committee/strategy development process envisioned in the project work plan, however the following issues must be resolved: 1) ensuring adequate staff resources for the lead agencies to support the strategy development process; and 2) securing adequate funding to support other aspects of the advisory committee process throughout the strategy development phase (such as third-party facilitation).

In August 2005, the lead agencies will report back to the Commission with an update on agency resources, the outlook for funding the advisory committee process, and how these issues affect the project's timeline and expected deliverables.

Potential for additional congressional funding to support strategy development process

Funding for on-going committee support may become available through a third congressional appropriation. SWCAA and DEQ have been in contact with Senator Wyden's office, and are hopeful that a third funding request can be submitted to Congress in the next round of appropriations (anticipated late 2005). DEQ and SWCAA are available to senator Wyden's office to assist in developing a timeline and budget for the strategy development process. If awarded, this money would be used to continue the public outreach and advisory committee process beyond 2007. The money would be dedicated to two things.

- Advisory Committee Support/Public & Stakeholder Outreach/Decision-Making Process.
- Technical work (primarily modeling) to support strategy development testing for the Committee (this could also include some funding for economic analysis). The funding

would not be used for additional air quality study. If additional study is needed to clarify a specific question regarding an emission source or the effect of a potential strategy, the Committee can discuss options for additional funding.

Review of Strategy Development Process (Contingency)

As mentioned above, it is the intention of DEQ and SWCAA to convene the bi-state advisory committee process detailed in the approved project work plan. However, if sufficient resources to support the planned committee process are not available, DEQ and SWCAA will work with the third-party facilitator to explore options for alternative strategy development processes. If needed, a preferred option would be brought to the Gorge Commission for concurrence as part of a project work plan amendment. This review of available resources will occur in the early 2006 timeframe.

Washington Department of Ecology

Washington state program cuts still prevent the Department of Ecology from participating in the Gorge project, as well as other statewide visibility work. We are hopeful that Ecology will be able to rejoin the project by summer 2007. DEQ and SWCAA still believe it is very important for Ecology to participate in the project and strategy development process at some level. The Gorge air quality strategy could potentially affect areas under Ecology's jurisdiction, and assistance from the Washington state legislature may be sought for funding, incentives, or other innovative strategies. We request the Gorge Commission to re-engage the State of Washington in these efforts.

On-Going Air Quality Monitoring

Oregon and Washington air quality agencies will continue to monitor and track air quality in the Gorge after the special technical studies are complete. This long-term tracking will be used to evaluate overall air quality trends in the Scenic Area and to check the progress of any air quality strategies. ODEQ and SWCAA will continue to monitor for criteria pollutants in the Gorge (e.g. PM2.5, ozone) to evaluate compliance with public health standards, and we expect that the Forest Service will continue to operate the IMPROVE sites to monitor haze (visibility).

Next Update:

Our next scheduled update and progress report to the Commission will be in August 2005. We will report on the progress of the technical study as well as the key issues we are working to resolve.

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