

WORKSHOP ON AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT PLANNING FOR THE SEA-TO-SKY CORRIDOR

~ A meeting of the Howe Sound Community Forum and the
Proposed Sea to Sky Air Quality Coordinating Committee~

Squamish Council Chambers
16 March 2005, 1 – 4 pm

DRAFT MEETING NOTES

Participants:

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Ian Sutherland | Mayor, District of Squamish |
| Hugh O'Reilly | Mayor, RMOW |
| Lisa Barrett | Mayor, Bowen Island |
| Dave Allen | Director of Development Services, Village of Pemberton |
| Laurie Bates-Frymel | Air Quality Planner, GVRD |
| Brian Barnett | General Manager Engineering & Public Work, RMOW |
| David Bodner | Terasen |
| Dr. Michael Brauer | Professor, UBC |
| Kiem Diep | Terasen |
| Peter Frinton | Councillor, Bowen Island |
| Lisa Griffiths | Planner, SLRD |
| Cora Hallsworth | Project Consultant, Sheltair (Facilitator) |
| Francesca Langford | Environmental Coordinator, District of Squamish |
| Stephanie Meyn | Regional Meteorologist, MWLAP |
| Paul Martiquet | Coast-Garibaldi Health, Medical Health Officer |
| Glen Okrainetz | Manager, Air Protection, MWLAP |
| Al Strang | Manager, Environmental & External Relations, Howe Sound Pulp & Paper |
| Jeanne Taylor | Environmental Supervisor, Western Pulp |
| Notetaker: | Samantha Peticrew, Consultant, The Sheltair Group |

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

1. Develop common understanding of air quality issues in the corridor amongst participants
2. Have the forum agree to become vehicle for developing AQMP, supported by a committee
3. Seek participants' agreement on a process for the AQMP

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

1. Why is a regional air quality plan needed?
2. Air quality planning in other jurisdictions
3. Unique approach for the Sea-to-Sky corridor
4. What is already being done?
5. Group discussion on AQMP process
6. Next steps...

PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

Background

- MWLAP mandated to monitor and manage air quality.
- 50-80% of corridor emissions from mobile and area sources.
- MWLAP is recommending the development of a regional Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP).

Why is a regional air quality plan needed?

- Air quality has health, environmental and economic impacts. Poor air quality can cause respiratory irritation/disease and impair immune system repair; damage plants and trees; and cause poor visibility, reduce outdoor activity and impact tourism.
- Tourism accounts for 43% of income sources in Whistler, 23% in Pemberton, and 15% in Squamish. Studies from the Lower Fraser Valley as well as studies from US National Parks are showing that poor visibility from smog and smoke can have a large impact on tourism revenue.
- Threats to air quality in the Sea-to-Sky Corridor include: transportation, highway expansion, population growth and increased tourism. Majority of impacts are from vehicle-based transportation but other sources include space heating and wood fireplaces.
- Currently, airshed is relatively clean but prevention is easier than remediation (need to “keep clean areas clean”).

Health and Air Quality

- PM and ozone negatively affect human health and the environment, there is no apparent lower threshold for the effects on human health, and there are additional benefits to reducing and maintaining ambient levels below the standards.
- Any action to improve air quality will achieve benefits (health/environment)

Air quality planning in other jurisdictions

- Unique features – GVRD’s AQMP was the first of its kind in Canada and is now being updated to reflect broader sustainability goals, and energy consumption. Other AQMP’s in the interior of the province have focused on distinct emission sources for targeting reduction measures – this may not be appropriate for Sea-to-Sky because we have more in common with the mobile and area source emission issues of the GVRD.
- Drivers for commencing the process – in some communities it has been NGOs and other community groups (e.g. Prince George) who have pushed to start the AQMP process. In others (like Sea-to-Sky) it has been a partnership and regional government awareness that has driven the process.
- Committee structures and functions – some are linked to just technical committees, while others are driven by a political roundtable. The group should be cautioned that the most successful model has been one where a technical subgroup works on the core issues and identifies strategies, and the political group endorses these decisions.
- Timelines – order of planning, actions, and pollution science – in some cases (Quesnel), all of the technical work was done up-front. In others, the known problems were identified and future problems and technical work were built-in as time and work progressed.
- Budgets and funding structures – funding fluctuated depending on amount of work/facilitation needed. Funding structures in other cases were based on the amount of emissions each of the partners were responsible for (works best in industrial communities, and may not work for Sea to Sky).

Unique approach for the Sea-to-Sky corridor

- MWLAP does not want to contribute to planning fatigue.
- Many existing planning initiatives in the region will contribute to air quality management .
- An AQMP will provide greater opportunities to address inter-jurisdictional challenges such as transportation
- Potential to strengthen existing initiatives through cross-jurisdictional approach.

What is already being done?

- Federal Government
- Canada-wide standards establish numerical ambient concentration targets that are to be met by 2010.
- Other federal initiatives include: Georgia Basin Puget Sound International Airshed Strategy, Environment Canada Marine Vessel Program, Environment Canada Incentives Program for Diesel Engines.
- Provincial Government Initiatives include:
 - Development and support of ~ 10 airshed management planning initiatives across BC.
 - The Environmental Management Act has clean air provisions to regulate point source emissions, open burning, and gives authority to create area-based management plans.
- Howe Sound Pulp & Paper and Western Pulp have made improvements to equipment that reduce emissions from their operations. These include collection and burning of odorous gases, low odour recovery boilers, switching from Bunker C to natural gas and wood waste, electrostatic precipitators, bleach plant scrubbers, mill modernization.
- Regional and Municipal Initiatives
 - Open-Burning bylaws
 - Whistler's Integrated Energy, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Plan
 - Squamish Wind Power Initiative and Smart Growth on the Ground
 - Pemberton's WWTP Upgrades
 - Regional Growth Strategy
 - Plus many more

QUESTIONS DURING PRESENTATIONS

Q: Is air quality related to population (i.e., how do communities in the corridor compare to those of similar size)?

A: Not necessarily, there are many other important factors (e.g. level of industry, meteorology, topography).

Q: Is there information on PM_{2.5}?

A: There is a continuous monitoring station in Whistler, non-continuous in Squamish, and a new non-continuous PM_{2.5} in Pemberton.

Q: There is no safe threshold for PM₁₀, is there one for common air contaminants?

A: This has not been looked at.

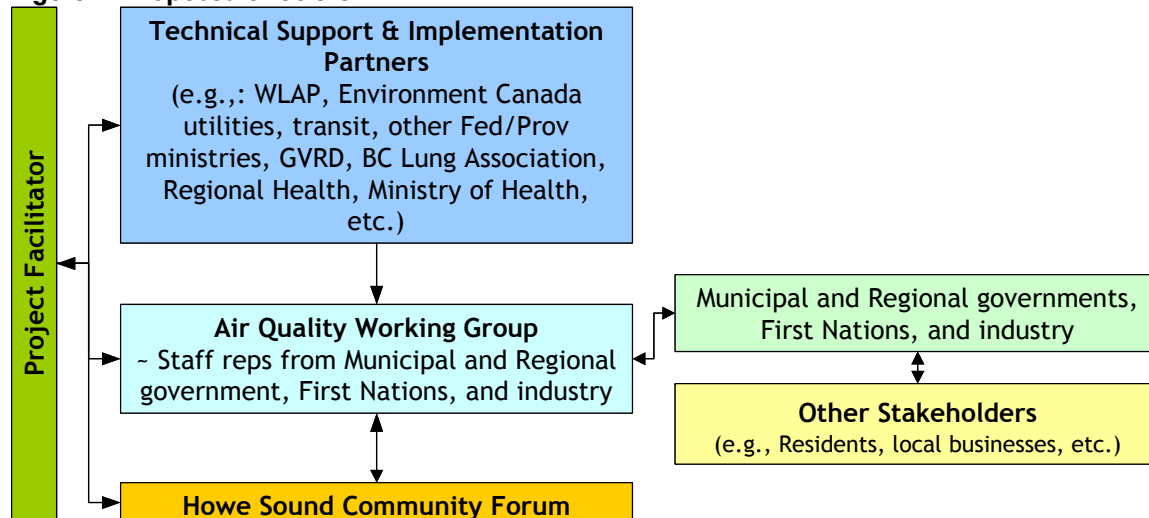
Discussion:

- There are additive effects. We need to also consider background contributions from other jurisdictions such as Asia. We have no control over these emissions.
- It was suggested that we could demonstrate political leadership here and influence other communities in that way.

DISCUSSION ON PROPOSED COORDINATING COMMITTEE

The group agreed to proceed with the proposed structure. Summary of discussion is presented below.

Figure 1: Proposed Structure



Discussion:

Q: Is there an AQMP process occurring in the Sunshine Coast? Does the geographic scope of the HSCF fit with the airshed boundaries, should the Sunshine Coast be included?

A: Stephanie is working with the Sunshine Coast on issues that they have identified. They are pursuing a 'planning lite' approach. The HSCF will provide the opportunity to keep the Sunshine Coast in the loop since there is overlap between these two airsheds.

Q: How will the process address jurisdictional authority issues? For example, Bowen Island is in the GVRD and is bound by their burning bylaws, but is in the Sea-to-Sky airshed. HSCF probably best forum although it doesn't have funding sources.

A: The structure will enable dialogue between the various authorities to address overlapping jurisdictional issues.

Q: What commitment (both time and money) will be required of stakeholders?

A: This will be determined collectively by the group. Most of the costs will relate to human resourcing though. Funding for additional studies, regional measures will need to be identified. There are a number of potential sources of funds: WLAP, Environment Canada, Health Canada, industry, FCM.

Comment: An overview of anticipated human resource requirements and other funding requirements would have to be approved by councils. This should be considered in the planning timeline.

Comment: Budgeting cycle – this process fits in well with the next fiscal year (approvals in September).

Comment: Through knowing what the data gaps are, the amount of funding required to fill in the gaps will become clear.

Comment: It is not anticipated that there will be significant requirements for additional studies, but WLAP will help identify and fill data/research gaps.

Q: Is there monitoring in Pemberton?

A: There is no continuous monitoring in Pemberton. There was a study on ozone a few years ago and there are plans for non-continuous PM2.5 monitoring in the summer. No plans at the moment for continuous monitoring.

Comment: Pemberton would be interested in having continuous monitoring stations.

Q: Will wildfire issues be addressed in the AQMP process?

Comment: This issue should be considered in the AQMP and it would be ideal to involve the Ministry of Forests in the process.

Q: How do the S2S Highway improvements link to the air quality issues for the corridor?

A: Yes, this is a key issue. A representative of the Ministry of Transportation had intended to participate in the meeting but was unable to be here.

Comment from Glen: Getting the AQMP process going will generate momentum and additional stakeholders will become involved as work progresses. WLAP will help support efforts to get other Ministries/Agencies involved.

Comment: This process is about finding better solutions rather than laying blame.

Comment: Should designate alternates for those on the committee.

DISCUSSION ON PROPOSED PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Participants were in support of using the proposed Adaptive Management Framework.

The group expressed interest in getting on with actions immediately, rather than spending resources on further emission studies. Priority sources are already known (transportation and space heating). Pulp mills are already on a track of continuous improvement.

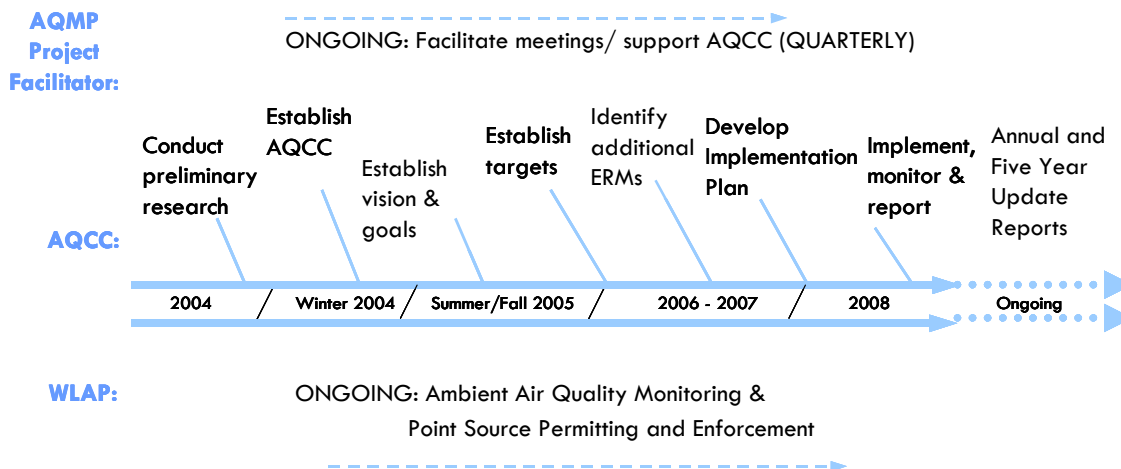
Dave Bodnar of Terasen expressed support for being involved in a process that identifies implementable actions, rather than spending time on studies. A good place to start is where you know you can make a difference.

Comment: Health indicators should be included in the set of metrics used to measure progress. It would be good to communicate the health benefits of improvements. Can we get this information though? How can we quantify and communicate health impacts?

Glen suggested that the research conducted for the GVRD could be transferable, no need to duplicate studies especially since they were so expensive.

DISCUSSION ON PROPOSED TIMELINE

The group expressed interest moving forward with actions immediately. It was felt that defining the visions and goals would be a relatively quick process since there are already numerous initiatives that have embraced sustainability principles, in particular the HSCF principles of cooperation.



Comment: Six months seems a long time to develop vision and goals – a shorter time frame was suggested.

Q: Does the six months include time to get approval from councils?

Comment: Should get pre-approved by council, then take to HSCF.

Comment: Forum will have mandate if council has given approval.

Comment: Communication is key. Go back to council for follow-up presentations straight away to get formal support.

Q: Is there opportunity to do concurrent problem solving? That is, can we start exploring potential opportunities/exchanging ideas immediately? E.g., promotion of fuel efficient wood stoves.

A: While the vision, goals and opportunities are being established, we can start immediately on identifying actions/ideas. Keep going on initiatives, don't let this process slow you down.

Comment: If there are issues that the Air Quality Coordinating Committee would like further information on a presentation can be arranged at the upcoming meetings.

Q: Will visions and goals take more than one meeting?

A: It was felt that this would be a relatively quick process since there are already numerous initiatives that have embraced sustainability principles, in particular the HSCF principles of cooperation.

Comment: GVRD has vision and goals set out in document (on website) that could provide a starting point. Public consultation to occur at end of April.

Please report any errors or omissions within these meeting notes to Cora Hallsworth by email at challsworth@sheltair.com, or by phone at 604-732-9106, ext. 305.