

Sea to Sky Air Quality Planning: Background Information

Why manage air quality in the Sea to Sky Corridor?

Well known for its spectacular scenery and wide variety of outdoor recreation activities, the Sea-to-Sky Corridor currently enjoys relatively clean, healthy air. However, in the summer of 2004, an air quality advisory was issued for Squamish.

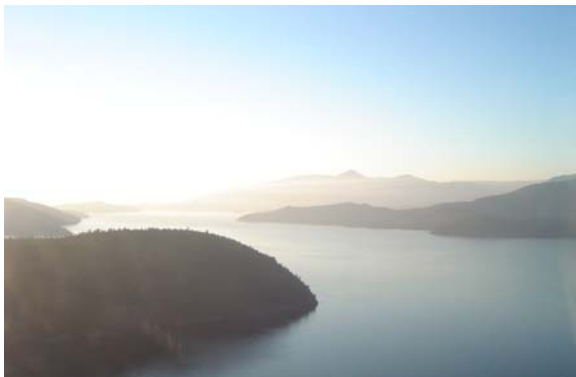
This incident, along with trends and projections for future development, including the expansion of Highway 99, indicate that air quality could deteriorate if emissions are not proactively managed.

Recent studies have shown that for some pollutants, there are no “safe” concentrations in the air. Air quality impacts:

- Health of residents and visitors,
- Health of the environment, and
- Tourism and recreation activities.

Each person takes an average of 20,000 breaths per day. Because of their body size, children breathe 50% more air per pound of body weight than adults (US EPA).

Air quality is impacted by emissions of “common air contaminants” (CACs). CACs of concern in the Sea-to-Sky corridor include fine particulate matter and ground level ozone. Emissions in the Sea to Sky Corridor are mostly due to transportation and building heating.



Vehicle-based transportation is currently the most significant factor influencing air quality in the airshed, and impacts are expected to continue to grow as population and tourism increase.

What is being done?

The BC Ministry of Environment (MoE) is responsible for protecting the air quality in the province. MoE’s monitoring along the Sea to Sky corridor indicates that the airshed is healthy. However, the MoE has encouraged municipalities and other stakeholders in the corridor to develop an air quality management plan due to:

- Predicted dramatic population and tourism growth,
- Regional priority placed on environmental protection, and
- Air quality can be best managed at the local and regional level.

The Sea to Sky Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) will focus on preventative actions and keeping clean areas clean.

Communities in the Sea-to-Sky Airshed have already demonstrated their commitment to adopting practices that will contribute to air quality management. Notable examples include the Squamish Lillooet Regional District’s Regional Growth Strategy, and municipal initiatives such as adoption of Smart Growth principles, integrated energy, greenhouse gas and air quality management planning, and backyard burning bylaws.

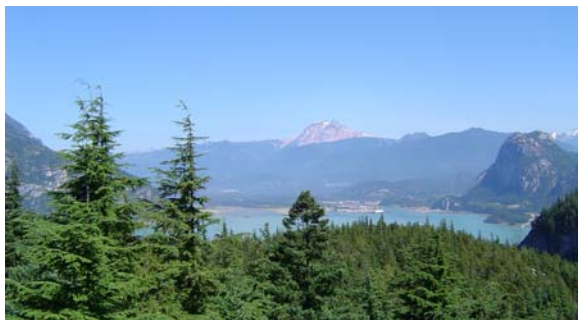
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About the Sea to Sky AQMP

The draft Sea-to-Sky AQMP is a regional, collaborative, action plan for protecting air quality in the Sea-to-Sky Airshed. A multi-stakeholder committee, the Sea-to-Sky Air Quality Coordinating Committee (AQCC), which consists of provincial, regional and municipal government representatives of the corridor, transit companies, utility companies and local industry, developed the draft plan.

The primary purpose of the Sea-to-Sky AQMP will be to ensure clean air throughout the Sea-to-Sky Airshed. It defines actions that will help maintain healthy air through an integrated planning approach. This approach ensures that air quality actions do not conflict with broader community and regional objectives.

The secondary purpose of the AQMP will be to inform residents of the Sea-to-Sky community about the plan and to encourage everyone to actively take part in keeping the region's air clean.



What's next?

The plan will be available for public review in Fall 2006. Public input is an important part of the process as it allows the AQCC and Councils to better understand the needs, challenges and opportunities in the community. Comments will be reviewed by the AQCC and Councils and incorporated into the plan.

The plan includes 20 year vision for air quality in the corridor, goals for 2025, actions to get us there, and an implementation and monitoring plan to help keep us on track.

The plan will then be finalized and adopted by Councils. The final plan will be made available to the public via the Sea-to-Sky website (www.seatoskyairquality.ca).

How can I participate?

You can learn more about the AQMP and provide feedback in a variety of ways.

- Attend an open house in Pemberton, Whistler, Squamish, Lions Bay, Bowen Island or Gibsons.
- Download the plan from the Sea-to-Sky Air Quality Website (www.seatoskyairquality.ca)
- View the plan at local libraries and municipal offices.
- Fill out feedback forms at open houses or online.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact Cindy Walsh, Regional Meteorologist, at the Ministry of Environment
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