

RAQPAC Notes – EPA Update

2/24/2022 Meeting

Enhanced Air Quality Monitoring for Communities

Pursuant to the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP), EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning & Standards (OAQPS) announced on 12/13/2021 the availability of funds and began soliciting applications from eligible entities to conduct ambient air monitoring of pollutants of greatest concern in communities with environmental and health outcome disparities stemming from pollution and the COVID-19 pandemic. EPA will award funds to support community and local efforts to monitor their own air quality and to promote air quality monitoring partnerships between communities and tribal, state, and local governments. For more information, see: <https://www.epa.gov/grants/enhanced-air-quality-monitoring-communities>

The total estimated funding for this competitive opportunity is approximately \$20,000,000. Approximately \$2 million dollars of this amount will be awarded to tribal governments under a tribal government set-aside, and approximately \$2 million will be awarded to eligible community-based organizations under a community-based organization set-aside.

On February 11, EPA extended the American Rescue Plan Community Air Pollution Monitoring Grant Competition application deadline to March 25, 2022, at 11:59 p.m. (ET). This is a 30-day extension from the original 2/25 closing date for applications, EPA issued this 30-day extension in response to requests for more time to submit applications.

Draft US Inventory of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990-2020

On February 15, EPA announced the availability of the public review draft of the 1990-2020 Inventory of US Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks. The public review draft is made available on EPA's website for 30 days (March 17).

Since the early 1990s, EPA develops this inventory annually that tracks U.S. greenhouse gas emissions and sinks by source, economic sector, and greenhouse gas going back to 1990. Publication of the draft report each February allows for public comment prior to publishing the final report by April 15 of this year. Inventory is submitted to the United Nations in accordance with the Framework Convention on Climate Change. For more information, see: <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/inventory-us-greenhouse-gas-emissions-and-sinks>

2021 Emissions report

On February 18, the Clean Air Markets Division within the Office of Atmospheric Programs released publicly available, annual data on 2021 emissions of nitrogen oxides (NOX), sulfur dioxide (SO₂), carbon dioxide (CO₂), and mercury from power plants in the lower 48 states. Emissions in 2021 were higher than 2020, reflecting a 16% increase in coal-fired electricity generation as COVID restrictions eased and economic activity recovered. However, compared to 2019, 2021 emissions fell between 3% and 11% reflecting the long-standing trend of decreasing annual emissions.

For more information, see: <https://www.epa.gov/airmarkets/power-plant-emission-trends>

EPA's EJScreen 2.0 and CEQ's beta Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tools released

On 2/18/2022, EPA updated the environmental and demographic data that serves as the foundation of the EJScreen tool. As part of that process, the tool's interface has been redesigned to be more intuitive and to provides expanded insight into potential EJ concerns in overburdened communities. For more information, see: <https://ejscreen.epa.gov/> (Please note that users may need to clear their cache to access the updated version of the tool)

On 2/18/2022, the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) released its Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST). The purpose of the tool is to build off of EJScreen and support the federal government-wide Justice40 Initiative efforts and to help Federal agencies identify disadvantaged communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution. This is a beta version and CEQ will be accepting public comments over the next 60 days. For more information, see: <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/>

Clean School Bus Program Website Updates

EPA's Clean School Bus Program's webpage has been updated to include the Report to Congress, and a signup to a new Clean School Bus listserv. Furthermore, EPA established a cleanschoolbus@epa.gov email address to respond to comments and questions about the program. Note that EPA cannot respond to specific eligibility questions while the program is still in development.

For more information, see: <https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus>