



Puget Sound Clean Air Agency Creating Our Future: Conference Highlights Report

Introduction

On January 26, 2006, Puget Sound Clean Air Agency convened an all-day conference of almost 100 clean air experts, advocates, community leaders and decision makers. The intent of the conference was to inform, educate and provoke discussion about the future of air quality in the Puget Sound Region. The day was designed to elicit input from stakeholders and help the agency identify critical issues to be addressed over the next 10 years. It represented an initial milestone in a planning process that will continue through 2006 and include the development of a Ten Year Plan, along with strategies for pursuing priority goals over the next two to five years.

This brief report summarizes the highlights of the conference in the following sections:

- I. Agenda Overview
- II. Participants: Profile and Awareness
- III. Summary of Panel Presentations
- IV. Issue Consolidation and Polling
- V. Final Messages and Outcomes
- VI. Strategy Ideas by Major Focus Area
- VII. Participant Feedback
- VIII. Next Steps
- IX. Addenda

I. Agenda Overview

To set the stage for informed discussion, conference participants received fact sheets in advance that summarized information on key pollutants (Air Toxics, Ozone, Fine Particulate Matter and Carbon Monoxide) and on Climate Protection and Indoor Air Quality. The fact sheets, which garnered positive feedback, helped build a common understanding of pollution sources, impacts, local pollution reduction strategies, progress and barriers to date. A keynote speaker, Dr. John Fabian (former astronaut and member of the Association of Space Explorers) was also well received and helped to inspire participants to focus on the big picture.

Much of the day was organized around three panel sessions:

- 1) Protecting Individual Health
- 2) Promoting Livable Communities
- 3) Preserving the Global Environment.

Each session included panel presentations followed by a question-and-answer session and table discussions. Each table included a diverse mix of participants who were encouraged to respond to

what they heard from the panelists, discuss additional ideas and generate their own proposals on potential issues to be addressed in the next 10 years. Computers on each table allowed participants to generate and transmit proposals electronically.

Proposals collected throughout the day were consolidated into key issues. Participants rated the consolidated issues for importance (potential impact on the region) and feasibility (potential for the agency to make a difference). An electronic polling process, provided by Stuart Elway, allowed participants to immediately view the results of their composite ratings. The day ended with final suggestions from each table on how the agency should move forward.

II. Participants: Profile and Awareness

The conference participants represented a cross section of entities and groups with a stake in regional air quality and the future efforts of the agency. Participants identified themselves as follows:

- Agency staff (28%)
- Board and Advisory Council members (11%)
- Partner organizations (28%)
- Regulated industry (9%)
- Community organizations, advocates and other entities (24%)

More than 70% of those who participated in the initial polling came from the public sector, including:

- Puget Sound Clean Air Agency (30%)
- Local government – city, county port (29%)
- State and federal government (11%)
- Other public entity (3%)

Individuals who participated tended to rate themselves as being relatively familiar with air quality issues related to fine particulate matter, carbon monoxide, ozone, climate protection and air toxics. Reported familiarity with indoor air quality issues was lower. The majority were advocates who believe that air quality substantially affects their health and that of their families, as well as the quality of life in their communities. Differences between conference participants and the general public are illustrated in the following chart.

	Conference Participants	Public Survey January 2005
How has Puget Sound Air Quality changed in the last five years? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gotten Worse - Stayed the Same - Improved - Don't Know 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 6% - 27% - 54% - 13% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 38% - 42% - 10% - 10% -
How do you rate efforts to control air quality in your community? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Too Much is Being Done - Right amount - Not Enough is Being Done - Don't Know 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1% - 24% - 71% - 4% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4% - 41% - 42% - 13% -
How serious a problem is global warming? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not Really a Problem - Slight - Somewhat Serious - Very Serious - Don't Know 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1% - 2% - 12% - 83% - 1% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10% - 12% - 28% - 47% - 3% -
There is not much that individuals can really do to reduce global warming. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strongly Agree - Somewhat Agree - Somewhat Disagree - Strongly Disagree - Don't Know 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2% - 10% - 20% - 67% - 0% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 13% - 25% - 25% - 35% - 2% -

III. Summary of Panel Presentations

Panel One: Protecting Individual Health

Moderator: Marina Cofer-Wildsmith, Executive Director, American Lung Association of Washington

Panelists: Harriet Ammann, Senior Toxicologist, Washington Department of Ecology
 Robert Duff, Site Assessment Section Manager, Washington Department of Health
 Ngozi Oleru, Director, Environmental Health Services, King County Health Department

Major themes:

- Fine combustion particles affect public health.
- The most vulnerable populations include children, the elderly and low-income groups.
- Major sources of fine particle pollution include wood smoke and vehicle exhaust, both diesel and gasoline.

- Proximity to transportation corridors creates disproportionate risks for low-income populations and children (daycare centers and schools).

Proposals generated: 25

Panel Two: Promoting Livable Communities

Moderator: Bill Ross, President, Ross & Associates Environmental Consulting, LTD

Panelists: Lawrence Frank, Bombardier Chair in Sustainable Transportation,
University of British Columbia
Bert Gregory, CEO, Mithun (architectural design and planning)
Yolanda Sinde, Executive Director, Community Coalition for Environmental Justice

Major themes:

- Creating compact, attractive, mixed use, pedestrian-focused neighborhoods to promote clean air and quality of life.
- Promoting land-use and transportation investment strategies that reduce generation of greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption.
- Environmental justice – developing cultural competency and inclusiveness and reducing disproportionate air quality impacts on low-income populations and people of color.

Proposals generated: 20

Panel Three: Preserving the Global Environment

Panelists: KC Golden, Policy Director, Climate Solutions
Andrew Green, Senior Engineer, Air Quality Program, Environment Canada
Ray Hoffman, Director of Strategic Policy, Seattle Public Utilities

Major themes:

- Regional leadership to demonstrate how a thriving, entrepreneurial region can position itself for success in the clean-energy economy of the future and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Pursuing cost-effective strategies for reducing marine emissions.
- Public education on the effects of personal choices on air quality.

Proposals generated: 14

IV. Issue Consolidation and Polling

A small team of agency staff worked to consolidate the 59 issue proposals that were submitted by conference participants into the following 20 issues:

- A. Reduce wood stove/fireplace pollution (wood stoves)
- B. Reduce tailpipe emissions (tailpipes)
- C. Influence land-use decisions (land use)
- D. Reduce outdoor burning (outdoor burning)
- E. Institute performance standards for pollution-control equipment (equipment)
- F. Include heavy metals in air toxics program (air toxics)
- G. Reduce fine particles (particles)
- H. Create compact, mixed-use neighborhoods (compact communities)
- I. Increase outreach to/engagement with environmental justice communities (EJ)
- J. Reduce per-capita greenhouse gas emissions (Reduce GHG)
- K. Improve odor complaint response (odor)
- L. Reduce marine vehicle emissions (marine)
- M. Educate about the power of individual actions (education)
- N. Demonstrate the benefits of clean-energy economy (clean energy)
- O. Reduce diesel emissions (diesel)
- P. Develop indoor air quality program (indoor AQ)
- Q. Expand and fund alternatives to driving (driving alternatives)
- R. Reduce emissions from construction projects (construction)
- S. Promote sustainable/green development (green building)
- T. Reduce nitrogen deposition (nitrogen)

As a step toward prioritizing these issues, participants rated each of the 20 issues on two criteria – importance and feasibility. A 10-point scale was used for each criteria to increase the likelihood that there would be a range of ratings across the issues.

Importance: Each participant indicated how important it was to address each of the issues. Recognizing that all issues are important, the scale ranged from “important” (1) to “critical” (10).

Feasibility: Each participant then indicated how feasible it was for the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency to address the issue(s) during the next 10 years. This time the scale was “not feasible” (1) to “very feasible” (10).

Polling was conducted electronically, so participants were able to immediately view their composite ratings for each issue. (For details on issues ratings, see “Creating our Future: Interactive Polling Results in the addenda.)

The polling process then consolidated the ratings into a scatter diagram to show the relative importance and feasibility ratings for all the issues. The polling processes generated some confusion over how the issues were defined and the scale of the plotting diagram, and initially all but four of the 20 issues appeared to be “priorities”. On closer examination, the following issues received the highest combined importance and feasibility ratings:

- 1) Educate about the power of individual actions

- 2) Reduce diesel emissions
- 3) Reduce fine particles
- 4) Reduce woodstove/fireplace pollution
- 5) Increase environmental justice efforts
- 6) Reduce outdoor burning

Following closely behind as highly important but slightly less feasible were:

- 7) Reduce marine vehicle emissions
- 8) Demonstrate the benefits of a clean-energy economy

V. Final Messages/Outcomes

Following the issues polling process, participants discussed the results with others at their table. Each table was invited to report out what they thought was most important in terms of priority focus areas and to offer final suggestions to the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency about how to move forward with planning and actions.

Priority focus areas:

Final table recommendations on issue priorities focused on six major focus areas:

- Public outreach, awareness and education
- Environmental justice
- Community planning, development and oversight
- Wood burning/fine particle pollution reduction
- Diesel, marine emissions, clean fuels
- Climate change and greenhouse gases

Advice to the agency:

The final table reports also included process suggestions and advice on how the agency should move forward with long-range planning and strategy development and implementation. The cross-cutting themes were:

Strategic focus: The Agency can't do it all. It needs to prioritize and be strategic about what it takes on. Establish long-range goals and assess what roles the agency could best play and where it could add the most value toward achieving those goals in the priority focus areas.

Build from success: Play to your strengths; capitalize on your accomplishments; demonstrate positive results.

Partner and collaborate: Continue to build partnerships; create/support networks; encourage inclusivity and collaboration. Work with/through organizations already present and active within communities to coordinate and leverage resources for maximum impact.

Add value through research and expertise: Use information and technical expertise to encourage regional and local efforts to focus on air quality.

Influence versus control: Get involved, act as a catalyst, help set goals, encourage changes and air-friendly decisions. Don't rely heavily on regulatory approaches or mandates.

Seek expanded funding: New roles and long-term strategies such as public outreach and education will require new funding sources and stable resources over time. Be creative. Work with decision makers and stakeholders to tie funding to specific benefits and results.

Invest in board and staff development: Stay current, maintain technical competency, and promote communication and process competency.

Improve agency systems: Develop systems capabilities, organize appropriately and expand capacity for new priority work.

Revisit agency mission: Be sure it is broad enough to encompass the issues, activities and roles that are most important to air quality and its impact on health, sustainability, equity and quality of life in our region and globally.

Learn from others: Don't reinvent the wheel. Find examples of good programs that can be replicated and adapted here. Identify and promote best practices.

VI. Strategy Ideas by Major Focus Areas

Many strategy ideas and action alternatives were embedded within the 59 issue proposals submitted during the course of the conference. Some of these ideas are highlighted below and organized within major focus areas. (For links to verbatim listings of proposal ideas generated in each panel session, please see the final section of this report.)

Public outreach and education

- Expand agency education and outreach activities to individuals, agencies and private sector companies.
- Improve public awareness of new and continuing agency programs and their benefits.
- Bring complex issues into a practical focus. Create issue papers on both general and specific air quality issues ("What will it take to stay where we are with air quality?" "Why you can't see Mount Rainier," etc.)
- Conduct annual or biennial surveys to test air awareness and determine willingness to pay for clean-air efforts.
- Seek to inspire behavioral change. Reinforce the idea that individuals *can* make a difference.
- Emphasize a positive vision of what we have to gain versus focusing on sacrifice.
- Consider economic incentives in encouraging individual behavior changes (e.g., promoting proximate commutes through lower mortgage rates for housing close to mass transit and/or urban centers).

- Consider a variety of specific awareness campaigns that quantify the benefits of specific behavioral changes (e.g., bicycling, fuel efficiency, one less car, what a 20% reduction in your car mileage will do for you and the environment, etc.)
- Focus on health benefits.
- Learn more about obstacles to behavior change and how to effectively address them.
- Focus change campaigns first on low-hanging fruit versus high-resistance behaviors.
- Focus on affecting behaviors around climate change and indoor air quality.
- Focus education in the schools. Target children and you will influence their parents' behavior.
- Agree on and develop consistent messages targeted to key populations.
- Take a long-term focus. Don't expect quick results.
- Make an investment. Pool public and private resources, leverage support and concentrate efforts for maximum impact.
- Study and learn from success stories in social marketing.

Environmental Justice

- Get a better understanding of environmental justice issues.
- Promote common analysis for race/class using Congressional Budget Office and Environmental Protection Agency public policy models for environmental justice.
- Identify areas with high point-source emissions and populations with high exposures to harmful pollutants.
- Create an issue paper for policy discussion.
- Develop agency priorities. Focus where risks are greatest.
- Partner and educate to reduce disproportionate levels of pollution for low-income communities.
- Train staff in cultural competency
- Develop communication materials for diverse audiences.
- Conduct "clean-air clinics" in low-income neighborhoods
- Repeat this (futures) conference with a diverse, multi-cultural community.
- Engage communities across the cultural spectrum with special efforts to include minority and low-income people in policy and decision-making processes.
- Consider a special liaison position for addressing environmental justice, community connections and cultural competency.

Community planning, development and oversight

- Represent clean air issues and goals in regional, local and community processes. Bring our information and technical expertise to the table.
- Develop a mechanism to ensure that realistic air quality and health data (including vulnerable populations and health disparities) are presented and used in regional transportation planning, land-use planning and siting processes.
- Use permitting processes to assert clean-air related regulatory requirements. Address diesel and wood smoke by including health considerations in SEPA and NEPA processes.
- Encourage use of health impact assessments for decision making.
- Beef up agency staff expertise and capacity to add value in planning processes.

- Educate local government decision makers on air quality benefits of more sustainable building and land-use practices.
- Work with city planning agencies.
- Work more closely with developers.
- Work through the Puget Sound Regional Council's elected officials to influence change and gain a voice at the table.
- Strengthen implementation focus on long-range plans and goals.
- Work proactively with enforcement agencies.
- Expand role in providing outreach and assistance to county departments on clean-air related issues.
- Play an increased role in the following processes: Brownfields, Healthy Communities Initiative, pedestrian and bikeways projects, transportation mitigation.
- Develop data on air quality that can be used in local planning. Provide technical expertise to explore and identify solutions.
- Listen to and work with communities to promote air-friendly practices in development and retrofit. Be a catalyst and advocate for bottom-up community ideas.
- Organize tree planting to bring communities together around clean-air and quality of life issues.

Wood burning/fine particle pollution reduction

- Prevent the installation of wood-burning stoves and fireplaces in new construction.
- Conduct targeted campaigns that reduce the use of existing wood stoves and fireplaces.
- Create localized strategies for buy outs.
- Focus on most vulnerable populations first (e.g., incentive programs to break dependence on wood burning).
- Some have a sense that they have no choice, so also teach them how to burn properly.
- Provide financial incentives to builders to install natural gas or propane stoves or fireplaces.

Diesel, marine emissions, clean fuels

- Expand the agency's highly successful diesel-reduction program while emphasizing marine sources.
- Focus resources for cost effectiveness where vehicle emissions most impact population centers, schools, etc.
- Conduct additional research on air quality impacts and health advantages of various vehicle fuels.
- Provide an information tool for people to compare emissions from different vehicle technologies.
- Educate the public on the benefits of increasing the use of biodiesel and on federal tax incentives for lower impact vehicles.
- Inform and involve labor unions in pollution reduction strategies.
- Beef up oversight of construction projects and enforcement of anti-idling and off-road diesel emissions.
- Encourage reduction of marine emissions through cleaner fuels for ships and partnerships with West Coast cities and ports.

- In cooperation with other West Coast clean-air agencies, pursue emission-reducing commitments from marine carriers and marine fuel suppliers.
- Focus on building pollution-reducing relationships with large corporations that ship and purchase shipped goods (e.g. Walmart).
- Use partnerships to send consistent messages to importers.
- Continue pursuing expansion of alternative fuel and/or emission control technology retrofit incentive programs for resident marine vessels.
- Advocate national and international measures to reduce emissions from non-resident vessels. Encourage U.S. ratification of IMO annex 6, which regulates marine quality issues.
- Support the move for shore power for marine vessels docked at our ports.
- Encourage a Carl Moyer-type program for marine vessels.

Climate change and greenhouse gases

- Accelerate the development of a comprehensive climate policy framework for Washington, within the West Coast initiative, including greenhouse gas reduction goals, timelines and market-based emission trading systems with declining emission limits over time.
- Go beyond the targeted reductions proposed by the agency's advisory committee on climate change. Don't just get to the 1990 baseline by year 2020, aim for substantially below.
- Educate and help people realize that carbon dioxide is a pollutant.
- Partner with cities and large employers to achieve the local goal of meeting Kyoto-level greenhouse gas reduction targets.
- Identify and help create economic incentives promoting private sector adaptation to the new clean-energy economy.
- Encourage multi-pollutant approaches. Place highest priority on solutions that reduce particulate matter, toxics, nitrogen oxide and/or sulfur dioxide, as well as greenhouse gases.
- Promote/co-sponsor a regional energy-efficiency assessment.
- Encourage awareness/use of non-carbon energy sources.
- Partner in the development and execution of a comprehensive energy-efficiency campaign encompassing electricity, natural gas and vehicle fuels.

VII. Participant Feedback

Evaluation feedback from participants showed very positive responses to the conference design, activities, materials, presentations and discussions. Nearly all reported that it helped to further their understanding of clean air issues. Some of the positive comments offered by participants are highlighted below:

- Thanks for asking for our opinions.
- This process made good use of people's time and energy.
- Thank you for a superb forum. It was very well done and conducive to creative thinking.
- The agency is doing a great job and should continue with the same practices and philosophy.
- Thanks for inclusion of many groups and diverse speakers.
- Lively discussion. Cool technology.
- Extremely useful and well run.

- Extraordinarily well-planned event.
- Had a great time!

Criticisms or reservations offered by conference participants included the following:

- Sometimes agency staff tended to dominate the discussion with presenting barriers or “we tried that” comments. However they also contributed good nuts and bolts into.
- I needed more specificity on what the table discussions were supposed to produce.
- Could have switched tables to provide more exposure to others’ ideas.
- The conclusions were pre-ordained by the topics discussed in the panels, which isn’t necessarily inappropriate but makes me wonder how much value was added (by the table discussions/proposals).
- For me there was a slight disconnect between the topics that were covered and the subsequent topics that were brought up for the vote. Time to review the topics prior to voting would have been helpful.

Agency staff who participated in the conference were invited to share their impressions while they were still fresh. Here are some highlights from their comments:

- I came away from the conference so energized, I hardly know where to start.
- Thanks again. I was honored to participate.
- The conference itself was an incredible show of interest and support from a wide range of folks who took a day away from their normal lives to spend it helping the agency plan its future.
- We got a lot of kudos for the work we’ve done, the work we’re doing, and the collaborative way in which we approach it.
- Overall, I thought discussions and polling confirmed that we are currently “doing the right work” and have been relatively effective.
- The over-riding take-home message is that the agency needs to work harder at getting its message out. This would begin to help solve some of the problems the agency faces in the next 10 years. These are problems that stem from both lack of individual awareness and institutional awareness.
- I found it interesting that the scope of the panel talks framed the “domain” of possibilities for discussions our table. Our discussions didn’t stray far from the panel topics. That’s something for the core team to bear in mind as they look at the information – this one data point has a lot of qualifiers.
- A lot of the issues that came up would have us getting involved in broader topics like community planning and trying to influence economic and technical issues beyond the borders of our four-county jurisdiction. These are things we haven’t traditionally been involved in and maybe aren’t currently well equipped to handle.. But these things are important if we’re going to continue to improve air quality.
- I came away reminded of something I learned a few years back in the “appreciative inquiry” process the agency went through: “The future you envision tends to be the one you create.”

VIII. Next Steps

- **Website Posting:** This Conference Highlights Report, along with links to the conference documents (Addenda) listed below will be posted on the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency website for easy access by all interested parties.
- **All Staff Meeting:** Conference outcomes and next steps in strategic planning will be presented to agency staff at an all staff event in April.

- **Advisory Council/Board Briefing:** Puget Sound Clean Air Agency Board and Advisory Council members will be briefed (April/May) on immediate next steps and the work plan for continuing and completing the Agency's Next 10 Years strategic planning process.
- **Core Group:** The Next 10 Years Core Group (including five agency staff representing various work units, two division directors, and a project manager, with support from an external consultant) will take a lead role in process design, coordination, communication and oversight of product development, review and finalization.
- **Strategy Assessment/Direction (May – August):** Ad hoc work groups including a mix of agency staff, partners and stakeholders will take a closer look at each of the six proposed focus areas. Strategy assessments will address the following issues:
 1. **Vision:** What could/should we aspire to in this area? What would we like to see different or better in 20 years? 10 years? What goals are potentially achievable in this timeframe?
 2. **Agency Role to Date:** What have we done so far in this area? What actions (if any) have we taken? Why? What results or successes have we achieved? What challenges or issues have we faced?
 3. **Partners:** Who/what entities are actual or potential partners in this arena? Who could/should be involved in identifying options and developing 2-5 year strategies? What roles/relationships are desirable in order to effectively pursue strategies in this area?
 4. **Options Identification:** What would it look like if we continued with our current approach? What alternative approaches or strategy options can we identify? (For example: status quo; more aggressive strategy; most aggressive strategic.) What would it take to develop/pursue/support each alternative?
 5. **Strategy Assessment:** What are the implications/feasibility of pursuing identified strategy alternatives? How can we compare potential costs/expected benefits or results? What are the pros and cons of various alternatives within each focus area? What are the apparent tradeoffs across focus areas? What recommendations can we make?
 6. **Strategy Direction:** What is the preferred alternative or approach for each focus area? What direction/guidelines can we set for developing 2-5 year strategies in each focus area?
- **Organizational/Staff Assessment (May-November):** We will continue the organizational assessment begun last Fall with a survey of agency staff. The next step will be to conduct an email survey to gain input from stakeholders, partners, policymakers and others on agency roles, strengths and challenges – and how well *Future Search* principles have been implemented over the past 10 years. The survey will also look at level of confidence/support for the direction the agency seems to be heading and seek input on the greatest threats and opportunities facing the agency in the coming years. In addition, the Agency will gather information to develop a profile of staff experience and skills and an assessment of how staff are currently organized, deployed and funded across major programs and areas of focus. This information will be used in identifying and assessing strategy options for the agency's core business operations and organizational development to support strategy implementation in key focus areas.
- **Draft Ten Year Plan (September):** The Core Group will take the lead in developing a cross-cutting vision statement, reviewing/revising the agency's mission statement, operating principles and long-range goals, key focus areas and strategic priorities -- based upon the results of the strategy and organizational assessments. This work will be captured in a Draft Ten Year Plan that will be presented to the Advisory Council and Board for review, discussion and input in September.

- **2-5 Year Strategies** (October – December): Work will continue to develop near-term strategies for each focus area (and for organizational/staff development) that will support the goals of the Ten Year Plan. These strategies will include preferred approaches, agency/partner roles, planned actions, timelines and means and methods for supporting, monitoring, and evaluating progress.
- **Final Strategic Plan** (December): The final plan will include the long-range vision and 10 year plan, as well as the near-term strategies for each focus area and for organizational capacity building. It will be used to make adjustment in FY 07 work plans and guide the development of work plans for FY 08.

IX. Addenda

- Conference Agenda
- List of Conference Participants
- Conference Evaluation
- Interactive Polling Results
- Health Summary: Verbatim from Panel Session 1 issue papers.
- Communities Summary: Verbatim from Panel Session 2 issues papers
- Global Summary: Verbatim from Panel Session 3 issues papers.
- Fine words of Advice at the End of the Day
- Next 10 Years Work Plans – Fiscal Years 2006 and 2007
- Next Ten Years Fact Sheets:
 - Fine Particulate Matter
 - Ozone
 - Air Toxics
 - Carbon Monoxide
 - Climate Protection
 - Indoor Air Quality