COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSION, TIDEWATER

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

DATE:	TIME:	LOCATION:
Feb. 5, 2025	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	DEQ Tidewater Regional Office, 5636 Southern Blvd, Virginia Beach, VA 23462

MEETING PURPOSE

DEQ is hosting community listening sessions across the Commonwealth to gain local feedback on potential climate actions to be included in the development of Virginia's Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP). DEQ will gather and analyze all input received at these sessions to help identify community goals, challenges, and potential climate actions to reduce greenhouse (GHG) emissions statewide. This input will be considered holistically when developing the long-term plan.

AGENDA

This meeting consisted of an introductory presentation by DEQ staff, followed by a facilitated community discussion.

TOPICS
Introductions, Video, and Meeting Goals
Review of the Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP)
Overview of the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP)
Community Discussion and Group Activity • Discussion questions on potential GHG emission reduction measures

Wrap Up • How to stay involved with DEQ throughout the CCAP planning process

MEETING SUMMARY

The Tidewater CCAP Community Listening Session was facilitated by DEQ's Air Division staff and began with an overview presentation of DEQ's climate planning efforts in Virginia. The first topic covered was a summary of the Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) published in February 2024. Topics covered in this section include:

- DEQ's public feedback during the PCAP planning process
- A summary of PCAP greenhouse (GHG) emission reduction measures
- Overview of where Virginia's GHG emissions come from

Following the PCAP overview, DEQ staff presented on its current phase in climate planning: the 2025 Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP). Topics covered in this section include:

- What the CCAP is and what content will be included in the plan
- Who is providing input on the plan
- DEQ's engagement process and CCAP development timeline

After the presentation, DEQ staff guided both in-person and virtual attendees through an open discussion on various climate pollution topics to gain localized feedback to be considered as part of the CCAP.

DEQ sought public input on the following questions:

1. Which sectors (e.g., agriculture, transportation) are most important to you when reducing GHG emissions?
2. What specific actions are you already taking to reduce GHG emissions, or are already happening in your community?
3. What barriers are preventing you or your community from reducing GHG emissions?
4. What specific emission reduction measures do you wish were in place in your community, or for DEQ to consider in the CCAP?

After the discussion period, DEQ provided avenues for community members to stay engaged throughout the CCAP planning process, including through the CCAP Community Survey; the listening session feedback form; and the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) e-mail bulletin.

KEY TOPICS AND TAKEAWAYS

The Tidewater CCAP Community Listening Session covered a wide range of topics in **transportation, energy, land use, urban planning, and coastal resiliency,** while focusing on benefits, opportunities, barriers, and concerns in reducing GHG emissions across the Commonwealth.

In **transportation**, there was strong support for expanding public transit options, such as buses, trains, and bike lanes in the region. The potential for electric vehicles (EVs) to become more affordable in the future was also highlighted. However, barriers included insufficient bus stations near key locations like shipyards, resistance to EV adoption due to perceived costs and limited charging infrastructure, and the rising toll costs from expanded interstates. Additionally, there were concerns about the lack of safe and accessible pedestrian infrastructure.

In the **power sector and energy demand**, participants expressed support for increasing the use of renewable energy sources, including geothermal, wind, and hydroelectric power, as well as reducing energy demand through efficiency measures. They emphasized the potential of distributed solar energy and agrophotovoltaics as sustainable solutions. However, challenges included the rising energy demand driven by data centers, land use conflicts for large-scale solar and wind development, and outdated energy infrastructure that raises consumer costs.

Regarding **land use and urban planning**, there was strong support to preserve green spaces and improve infrastructure while addressing flooding and coastal hazards. Participants emphasized the need for flood-resilient infrastructure and nature-based solutions like green streets and bioswales to protect against flooding and improve water quality. However, concerns included extreme heat, sea-level rise, the risk of increased flooding, and the need for better maintenance of tree canopies. The lack of modern stormwater systems and outdated city infrastructure were also cited as significant barriers.

In terms of **buildings**, participants advocated for higher-density housing in urban areas, along with flood-resilient infrastructure and weatherization efforts for low-income homes.

Lastly, considerations for the CCAP included broadening modeling efforts to capture social, environmental, and air quality co-benefits across sectors, and the need for expanded community education, investment, and transparency.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. **What is the difference between electric power and commercial energy in the GHG inventory?**

It depends on how the GHG inventory is broken up by sector. A different version of this GHG inventory does not break out electric power as its own sector and is instead divided by end use across commercial, residential, and industrial energy sectors, with any transmission losses added to the energy production activities sector. By breaking out electric power into its own sector in this GHG inventory, it can be assumed that remaining emissions in the commercial, residential and industrial energy sectors come from imported electricity from other states.

2. **How does Virginia's rejoining of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) account for predicted GHG reductions?**

Virginia was a member of RGGI for three years prior to leaving, and it was hard to tell what impact that had overall on the Commonwealth's GHG emissions. Virginia also has a state statute in the Virginia Clean Economy Act (VCEA) that will continue to drive GHG emission reductions in the power sector. DEQ will be showing the impacts of various policy scenarios on GHG emission trends in the CCAP.

3. **While the final CCAP will be submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Does DEQ have any thoughts on how the plan is going to be presented to the Governor's Office of Virginia?**

The CCAP will go through review by Virginia's executive administration before submission to EPA, at which point DEQ will account for final additions or modifications in the plan. The goal of the CCAP is to be framed as a roadmap of recommendations detailing potential GHG emission reduction pathways now and into the future for Virginia.

4. **Who is involved in developing the CCAP?**

DEQ is engaging with a variety of actors to develop the CCAP. DEQ is soliciting feedback from the general public via a community survey and in-person listening sessions across the Commonwealth. DEQ is also working with an appointed stakeholder group that is composed of various industries, non-profits, community organizations, and educational institutions across sectors. DEQ is also engaging an interagency working group with actors such as the Department of Forestry and Department of Transportation, amongst others. DEQ is also working with Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) and Planning District Commissions (PDCs) to leverage current outreach efforts in localities. DEQ will be building out tribal engagements throughout Spring 2025, alongside targeted efforts to engage low-income, disadvantaged communities (LIDACs) across the Commonwealth.

5. **What region of the state is seeing the most opportunity for GHG reductions?**

In terms of GHG emission reductions, those are less regionally specific and more so identified based on economic sector. However, through the development of the CCAP, DEQ is hoping to identify regionally specific challenges and opportunities to better guide pathways and decision-making.

6. **There's a lot of conversation about transitioning to EV's, but for low to moderate income households this may not be as feasible. Could you see the state providing grants or incentives for the adoption of EVs or Hybrids? Currently there is a fee that is assessed by the DMV for all vehicles that are EV's/Hybrids, which almost feels like a disincentive.**

There is a rebate program on the books in Virginia, but it is currently not funded. VDOT has worked to expand the adoption and accessibility of EVs/EV infrastructure, specifically in rural communities across Virginia, but future funding and the expansion of

these programs is an uncertainty at this time. There are also federal incentives and rebates available for consumers to currently take advantage of.

7. **How much of the CCAP will look at the financial risks of inaction across economic sectors?**

DEQ hopes to include a costs-benefits analysis in the CCAP that will consider socioeconomic and GHG emission impacts of various actions or inactions across sectors. One way of doing this could be to identify the social cost of carbon, for example.

8. **Are there plans to expand other types of renewable energy as well like wind or hydro? Or if there are not could there be plans to expand that as well?**

Dominion is already expanding wind and has a large project in development. Onshore wind has proven to be harder to implement in Virginia. DEQ's Renewable Energy team offers resources on our website that detail all renewable energy projects in Virginia, noting where they are located, if and how they are permitted, and how much megawattage capacity they have. Considerations for expanding wind or hydroelectric power could be included as recommendations in the CCAP. Virginia is also seeing moves to develop fusion plants and small nuclear modular reactors to meet increased energy demand.

9. **For the Business-as-Usual (BAU) projection, it possible to predict and quantify data center usage on a low, medium, and high curve?**

This work is currently being modeled for the CCAP in the Virginia-specific BAU projection.

MATERIALS SHARED

1. Meeting Handouts:
    - Graphic of Virginia's 2021 GHG emissions inventory
    - Definitions of GHG emissions inventory sectors, with example emission reduction measures
    - Discussion questions
    - Glossary of commonly used terms and acronyms
    - CCAP Public Participation Guide
2. CCAP Community Survey
3. Meeting Presentation
4. Post-Meeting Feedback Form