

COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSION, PIEDMONT

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY



DATE:

Jan. 30, 2025

TIME:

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

LOCATION:

DEQ Piedmont Regional Office,
4949-A Cox Rd., Glen Allen, VA
23060

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 Piedmont 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
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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
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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?
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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 Piedmont CCAP Community Listening Session covered a wide range of topics in **transportation, energy, industry, and land use**, while focusing on benefits, opportunities, barriers, and concerns in reducing GHG emissions across the Commonwealth.

For transportation, discussions emphasized the benefits of increasing telework opportunities; improving transit through expanded rail networks; electrifying passenger and freight rails; and upgrading biking and commuting infrastructure for safety and efficiency. Efforts such as congestion pricing, zero-emission zones, and electric bike rebates were highlighted as ways to reduce dependency on single-passenger vehicles. Attendees further noted the importance of designing communities that prioritize walkability and alternative mobility options, specifically for their environmental, social, and economic benefits. However, challenges in transportation remain, including accessibility issues with current public transit, the reversal of telework policies, car-centric urban planning, and the need for frequent road maintenance due to heavy vehicle use.

In the power sector, key opportunities were discussed to expand distributed solar, modernize Virginia's electric grid, and improve energy storage and efficiency technology. However, concerns were raised about the expansion of data centers and their resource consumption, cost burdens on ratepayers from increased energy demands, and the land-use impacts of large-scale solar development.

Within industry, discussions focused on incentivizing sustainable practices for industries and phasing out fossil fuel plants.

Considerations in land use highlighted the value of ecosystem services to protect and restore natural lands. Concerns included the negative impacts of food deserts on urban areas, restrictive zoning ordinances, and the environmental impacts of greenfield development.

Lastly, considerations for the CCAP included broadening modeling efforts to capture social, environmental, and air quality co-benefits across sectors, and expanding the workforce development analysis to capture changes in green jobs across sectors.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Does the 2021 GHG inventory only look at Virginia-specific emissions?

Yes, the inventory looks at GHG emissions specifically generated within the boundaries of the Commonwealth, but DEQ will also analyze imported power and demand for the power sector.

2. Is the CCAP binding, and does DEQ have the power to implement any defined GHG emission reduction measures?

The plan is non-binding, with the goal to build a roadmap that could be used to develop actionable programs and policies in the future.

3. Does the 2021 greenhouse gas inventory account for natural carbon sequestration (i.e., looking at gross vs. net emissions)?

The 2021 GHG inventory identifies the total GHG emissions produced in Virginia (the gross total), then subtracts that number from estimated emission reductions from carbon sinks, to then produce a net total of approximately 93.5 million metric tons of CO₂ equivalent (MMTCO₂e).

4. How do Virginia's GHG emissions compare to other states?

Generally, Virginia's emissions are similar that of neighboring states such as North Carolina and West Virginia. Maryland may have fewer total emissions due to a longer history of implementing emission control programs.

5. What kind of authority does DEQ have over vehicle travel? Is it a realistic expectation that DEQ could pass new regulation on metrics like vehicle miles traveled (VMT)?

DEQ does not have large authority to control mobile sources, as most emission and fuel regulations are preempted at the federal level.

6. Have Virginia's GHG emissions increased or decreased over the last several years?

Between 2005 and 2021, Virginia has seen about a 19% decrease in GHG emissions.

7. Has there been any shift in EPA's timeline or expectations based on leadership change?

At present, DEQ is still operating under the same timeline to produce and submit the CCAP to EPA by December 2025.

8. Of the sectors that DEQ has direct authority over, what would be the highest return for the lowest investment?

This is a question DEQ hopes answer through the numerous cost-benefit analyses conducted in the CCAP, but currently does have a specific sector identified as providing the highest return for lowest investment.

9. Does DEQ have air quality monitors that record both greenhouse gas emissions and criteria air pollutants?

There is one monitor located in Shenandoah National Park that monitors greenhouse gas emissions. DEQ also has a large network of monitors across the Commonwealth that measure a variety of air pollutants. DEQ also models emissions at large industrial sources.

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](#)