

State of Oregon
Department of Environmental Quality

Memorandum

Date: May 31, 2016

To: Environmental Quality Commission

From: Pete Shepherd, Interim Director

Subject: Agenda item H, Informational item: North Harney County Air Quality project
June 8-9, 2016, EQC meeting

Purpose of item DEQ's Air Quality program, along with Regional Solutions team, facilitated a voluntary air quality monitoring and reporting network in the North Harney County airshed. The participating partners are the Cities of Hines and Burns, the Burns Paiute Tribe and Harney County. The local partners have initiated an air quality advisory system based on both data acquired at DEQ's local monitoring data and on a new predictive model cooperatively developed with the National Weather Service (Boise) and Eastern Oregon University.

Background Forecasting air inversion events can be challenging, and the forecast information is critical to preserving air quality through reduced residential woodstove burning during inversion periods. DEQ and the National Weather Service have collaborated on a forecasting model for inversions, and recently received much-needed assistance from the chemistry and mathematics departments at Eastern Oregon University. The students in these departments provided third-party technical evaluation and refinement of model input assumptions, model output structure and data analysis.

The communities implemented the model for its first full season this past winter, using the modeling data to determine when a burn ban or advisory was necessary. The project partners intend to provide a summary assessment of the model and program later this year, with a desire to refine the model for use in other communities with similar air quality concerns.

EQC involvement There is no commission action associated with this item.

Report prepared by Stephanie Caldera
Commission assistant

Information provided by DEQ staff