

~2005 Update~

**Western States Air
Resources Council**

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Strategic Plan

Clean Air Through Cooperative
Efforts in the West

Updated May 2005

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Background

The Western States Air Resources Council (WESTAR Council) was formed in 1988 as an outgrowth of an eight-state effort to address acid precipitation in the west. Realizing the benefit of information sharing and a unified voice, WESTAR continued on with an expanded charter. The Council is now comprised of the Air Directors from fifteen member states and four ex-officio members, representing the US Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and the Bureau of Land Management.

Purpose and Approach

The purpose of the WESTAR Strategic Plan is to develop a clear picture of its future and to set into writing a vision of what WESTAR will be five years from now. The Plan identifies the milestones to be achieved over those five years, from which a one-year action plan will be created to guide staff and volunteers in their efforts.

Strategic Plan Objectives

The objectives of WESTAR's Strategic Plan are to:

- Create a mission, vision, and set of principles to guide the Council, staff, and volunteers;
- Create objectives, strategies and action plans for the next three to five years;
- Build a clear direction for the entire organization; and
- Identify and develop a limited number of key result areas on which WESTAR will focus in the immediate future.

Business Trends

Internal and external factors are important considerations in the establishment of WESTAR's future direction. Business factors affecting WESTAR include internal factors - the current strengths and weaknesses of the organization - and the business environment within which WESTAR

operates. Based on an analysis of these factors, the WESTAR Council identified the following business trends that are likely to have the most influence on WESTAR's strategic direction over the coming two to five years:

- The impact of population growth on air quality, especially visibility in parks and wilderness areas;
- The increasing demand for energy driven by population growth, and the air quality impacts from energy producing sources; and
- The growing burden on states to address air quality issues as federal leadership in this area declines.

Summary of Strategic Issues Facing WESTAR

Throughout history, there has been a strong correlation between air pollution and population – where there are a lot of people, there is a lot of air pollution. Over the last thirty years, air quality managers have done an outstanding job ensuring that as population continues to grow, air quality does not suffer. They have done this by reducing emissions from the largest sources of air pollution while minimizing emissions from new sources. That strategy has been so effective that many areas where air quality has been unhealthy for decades now enjoy clean air. As we look ahead, however, we cannot be confident that this strategy will be nearly as effective. A commonly heard metaphor is: the low-hanging fruit has been picked. That is to say that there are few if any strategies remaining that will result in significant, cost-effective improvements in air quality.

The strategic issues facing air quality managers in the west are little different than those their predecessors were confronted with thirty years ago – how will we maintain or improve air quality in the face of continued population growth? While this issue is not unique to the western states, it is especially critical here given the higher growth rates and the significant challenges of providing infrastructure, goods, and services over such a large area. Adding to the challenge is a population that expects and demands air that is healthy to breathe and will not impair their views of some of the most spectacular vistas in the world.

While the impacts of population growth on air quality may be the same issue air quality managers have been grappling with for decades, the strategies to address the issue must change. The challenge ahead of us is to manage the air resource in such a way that our air quality objectives are met with a minimum, or possibly positive impact on our economic prosperity. How will we mitigate the impact of more power plants and other

energy resource development projects in rural areas to produce the energy a growing population will demand, or the emissions from increasing vehicle miles traveled, or more factories and farms to produce the goods we all want? Should state air pollution regulatory agencies take a more active role in energy conservation and efficiency programs? Does it make sense to manage on a state-by-state basis sources and emissions that are interstate, or even global in nature?

Mission

WESTAR's mission is to assist air quality managers in the west in achieving and maintaining clean, healthful air through efficient stewardship of the air resource.

WESTAR will realize this mission through:

- Cooperative efforts to address air quality management concerns;
- Exchanging information and participating in discussions about air pollution control;
- Enabling states through a comprehensive training and capacity development program; and
- Providing services and products that air quality managers can use to meet their objectives and obligations.

Vision

Our vision is for WESTAR to be recognized as an organization that:

- Provides exceptional service to its members;
- Is viewed as a national leader for its training, technical abilities, and policy insights;
- Has the capacity, through its staff and membership, to develop practicable solutions to air quality problems; and
- Is a great place to work.

Key Result Areas

To achieve the above vision, taking into consideration the trends in WESTAR's business environment, the WESTAR Council identified four priorities for the organization. They are:

1. Capacity Development: Maintain and enhance the capability of state air quality professionals.
2. Administrative Efficiency: Promote administrative efficiencies in air quality management.
3. Air Quality: Foster improvements to air quality in the western United States.
4. Relationships: Foster effective internal and external relationships.

Key result areas (KRAs) have been identified for each of these priorities. While the organization will not limit its efforts to those discussed below, these will be a primary focus for WESTAR in the coming two to five years.

KRA 1: Maintain and enhance the capability of state staff.

WESTAR offers training on an as needed basis to western state air quality directors and their staff, local agencies, and as necessary other participants (i.e. tribal staff, etc.). This training has been well received, and steps should be taken to ensure that this level of training is maintained and continually improved.

Although the training developed and offered by WESTAR is considered one of the organization's strengths, it is important to ensure that we continuously evaluate our training program and expand future training opportunities to meet member needs.

Objective 1: By March 2008, a new employee orientation packet focused on WESTAR's educational and professional development opportunities will be designed and developed, and fully implemented.

Outcome: A methodized approach to professional development and an enhanced understanding of professional development options available to staff; garnering a clearer picture of how to build and plan professional development.

Specific activities:

1. By March 2006, determine needs of states, evaluate which tools are germane to member agencies, and produce a draft summary document;
2. By March 2007, new employee packet completed, and tools are designed specifically to benefit WESTAR's member agencies;
3. By March 2008, new employee program is fully implemented and available.

Objective 2: By March 2008, a new set of tools will be identified and fully implemented to assist member agencies to more effectively and efficiently identify near-future and future training needs and interests.

Outcome: Enhanced ability to understanding the training needs of agency staff, and to more closely match training to agency business objectives.

Specific activities:

1. By March 2006, evaluate approaches and identify tools that are available;
2. By March 2007, select approaches and tools that are most appropriate, and develop selected tools;
3. By March 2008, fully implement selected tool.

KRA 2: Promote efficiencies in air quality management.

WESTAR's domain includes states within four different EPA Regional Offices. At times, the guidance provided to WESTAR member states by these different EPA Regional Offices is inconsistent, resulting in inequities among WESTAR states.

Objective: By December 2008, WESTAR and EPA will collaborate on important policies that are being implemented inconsistently from one EPA Region to the next and will have resolved, or made substantial progress toward resolving those inconsistencies.

Outcome: Less dispute between WESTAR member states and EPA over policy interpretations.

Specific activities:

1. By January 2008, WESTAR will assist states develop Regional Haze Implementation Plans that will be approved by EPA. By January 2006, WESTAR will assist states and EPA develop a Protocol for EPA review of SIP submissions. (assumption: subject to EPA SIP approval and litigation).
2. By December 2005, WESTAR, in consultation with STAPPA/ALAPCO, will provide comments to EPA and advocate for changes to the Natural Events Policy that will result in consistent, effective characterization of NAAQS exceedances caused by natural events. (assumption: contingent upon EPA acting on policy changes)
3. By March 2006, WESTAR will help states resolve technical constraints to preparing PSD increment analyses. By no later than the end of 2008, WESTAR will assist states develop a revised policy approach to PSD.
4. Ensure full consideration of WESTAR's recommended changes to the current PSD program by advocating EPA action on the recommendations.

KRA 3: Foster improvements in air quality.

One thing that all WESTAR members have in common is the responsibility to provide clean, clear, and healthful air – in a word, stewardship. For some, air quality improvements are needed, while for others, maintaining air quality in the face of increasing population is the most significant challenge.

Objective: By December 2008, WESTAR Council members will identify and play an important role in the development of at least one emission reduction program, enhancement of health protections, or measure that is significant in the western states, or alternatively play a significant role in preventing the rollback of existing measures.

Outcome: Lower aggregate emissions than would have been the case without WESTAR's efforts and/or improved health protection.

Specific activities:

1. By April 2006, identify opportunities for WESTAR to play a significant role in the development of emission reduction strategies or strategies to improve health protection that are important to western states, and from this list of opportunities, select one or more that represent the highest priorities to the western states. As an example of an opportunity, WESTAR could champion the development by EPA of a national program or emission reduction measure that would significantly benefit western states.
2. Identify WESTAR members and/or staff to take the lead in the development and implementation of priority emission reduction effort(s) that were selected by the WESTAR directors.
3. By December 2008, ensure that the priority emission reduction program(s) or measure(s) or strategies to improve health protection are implemented.

KRA 4: Foster effective internal and external relationships

Relationships, both internal to WESTAR as well as external relationships, are critical to the effectiveness of the organization. Internal relationships need to be cultivated and nurtured to ensure that member states remain as active participants in the organization. Good relationships with external organizations that have a similar mission to that of WESTAR enhance our effectiveness by avoiding duplication of effort and leveraging our respective organizational strengths.

Objective 1: On an on-going basis, participants will increasingly value their participation in WESTAR activities.

Outcome: Air directors and their staff will be actively engaged in WESTAR initiatives.

Specific activities:

1. By December 2005, assess the value of WESTAR's website to members, and implement improvements based on feedback from users.
2. At the fall business meeting each year, in consultation with the WESTAR President, prepare a plan to receive feedback from Council members on recommended priorities and how the organization can better serve its members. The plan should be

completed in sufficient time to inform the work plan and budget development process for the coming year. By December each year, prepare an annual work plan and budget to undertake the highest priority activities as determined by WESTAR Council members.

Objective 2: Maintain and improve WESTAR's stature with external organizations and seek opportunities for partnerships on key initiatives.

Outcome: Members' priorities will be addressed more efficiently and effectively.

Specific activities:

1. By March 2006, the Director, along with interested Council members will survey other organizations that are involved in common air quality issues, with which it is important to maintain constructive relationships. The purpose of the survey would be to identify ways, if any, to improve partnership and communication with each organization to achieve common goals. Other organizations include EPA, FLMs, NTEC, ITEP and tribes, WRAP and ECOS, other RPOs, STAPPA/ALAPCO, and local air districts in the WESTAR region.
2. By the 2006 spring business meeting, in collaboration with the Council members, the Director will report on the results of the survey, and recommendations for implementing any improvements identified from the survey.
3. By March 2007, Council members and staff will work together to develop essential outreach on key messages, including communications with other organizations, above, as well as appropriate government and stakeholder leadership.