

Importance:

Ozone is a persistent problem in the region. In January 2010, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed a further strengthening of the 8-hour ozone air quality standard which already had been tightened from the current 0.08 parts per million (ppm) standard to 0.075 ppm in 2008. Meeting the new ozone standard (between 0.060 and 0.070 ppm) will be a big challenge, due in large part to a growing Front Range population, associated increases in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and industrial sector growth.

Background/Key Issues:

Ozone is formed when volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides (NOx) react in the presence of sunlight. Emissions associated with motor vehicles, gasoline-powered equipment, electric power plants, and industry are the primary human sources of ozone formation. High levels of ozone can impair breathing and respiratory health, primarily for children, the elderly and physically active people.

The Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC) and the North Front Range Transportation & Air Quality Planning Council, in conjunction with the state's Air Pollution Control Division (APCD), a division of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), prepare a State Implementation Plan (SIP). The SIP is a federally enforceable plan that outlines how the region will demonstrate compliance with current federal air quality standards. It lists strategies and control measures that will be implemented to reduce emissions. These include restrictions for oil and gas condensate on storage tanks, removal of exemptions on point sources of pollutants, and the expansion of the vehicle inspection and maintenance program in parts of Weld and Larimer counties. The current SIP is to bring the Denver and North Front Range non-attainment area into compliance with the current 0.08 ppm standard.

The SIP also establishes the motor vehicle emissions budgets to which DRCOG's Regional Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program must conform. The nonattainment designation requires that air quality planning and transportation conformity procedures will remain in place for at least 25 years.

Status (as of April 2010):

The SIP was approved by the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission (AQCC) in December 2008. In June 2009, the SIP was approved by Governor Ritter and sent to EPA for review and approval. The EPA has made an adequacy determination of

Issues Paper

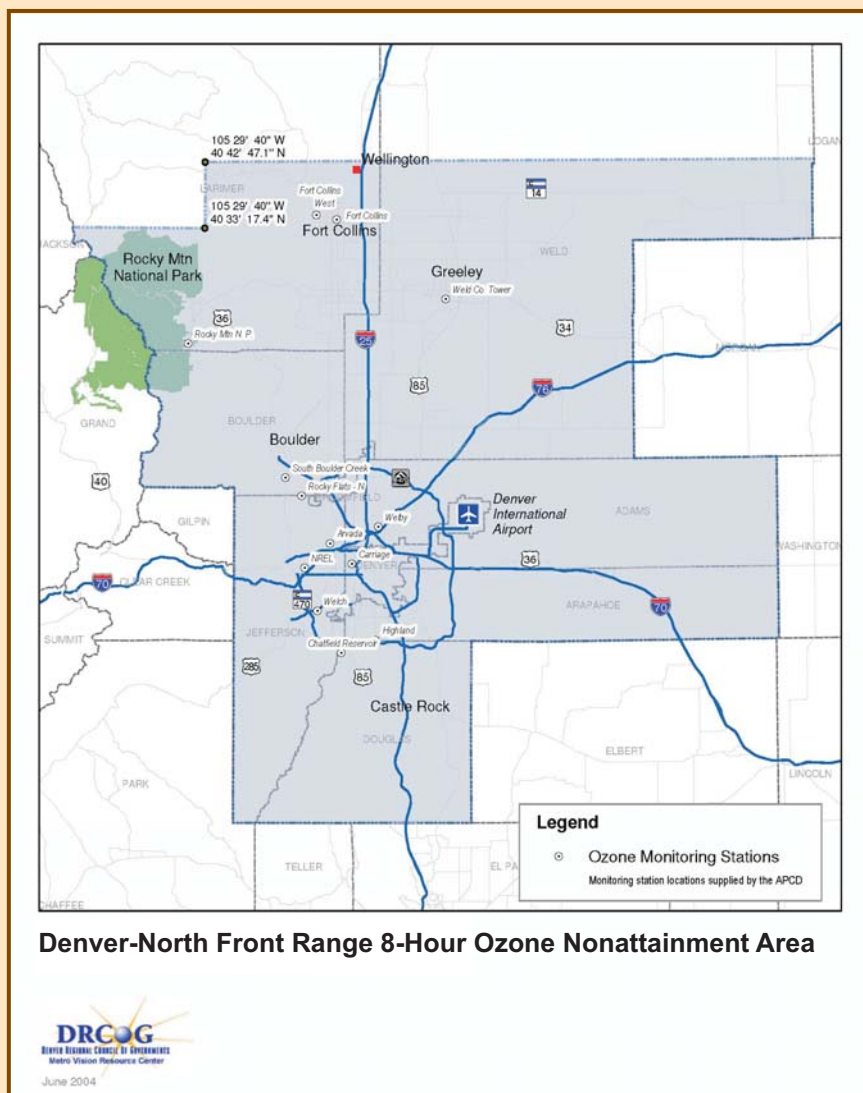
Ozone and the DRCOG Region

the proposed motor vehicle emissions budgets for conformity and the new budgets of 0.080 ppm became effective on March 19, 2010. The final approval of the SIP is likely to occur later this year.

In January 2010, the EPA proposed a further strengthening of the 8-hour ozone air quality standard, which had already been tightened to 0.075 ppm in 2008. The new standard, proposed to a level within the range of 0.060 – 0.070 ppm, is to be finalized by EPA in August of this year. The final area designations will become effective by August 2011.

Governor Ritter has directed the RAQC to engage in a coordinated process with state and local agencies to develop an effective proposed plan for further reducing ozone concentrations along the Front Range. A wide range of cost-effective measures will be considered to reduce emissions from stationary sources, the transportation sector and other sources. The RAQC will develop a proposed plan by mid-2012 for meeting the new EPA standard so that the AQCC can consider and approve the plan in late 2012. In turn, the approved plan will need to be submitted to the General Assembly for Legislative Review in 2013 and sent on to EPA the following December.

Colorado Climate Action Plan: The plan's goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 20 percent below 2005 levels by 2020. Many actions described in the plan will also reduce emissions of the pollutants that are causing high ozone levels. For more information, refer to the Governor's Energy Office Web site at: www.colorado.gov/energy.



For more information, contact:

**Pat Cronenberger at 303-480-6727 or
pcronenberger@drcog.org**