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MEETING MINUTES

AIR QUALITY FORUM

December 9, 2025

10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

MARC Board Room/Hybrid

Member and Attendees:

Andy Savastino (MO Co-Chair), City of Kansas City, MO
Rollin Sachs (KS Co-chair), Johnson County DHE
Allison Smith, KDOT
Jodi Gooseman, City of Kansas City, MO
Doug Watson, KHDE
Kelly Gilbert, Metropolitan Energy Center
Sarah Monson, Wyandotte County Division of Air Quality
Josh Wood, City of Olathe, Ks.
Emily Olack, Jackson County Public Health

Other Attendees:

John Frederick, Mo. Department of Natural Resources
Kurt Heine, Mo. Department of Natural Resources
Will Wetherell, Mo. Department of Natural Resources
Leena Divakar, Kansas State Pollution Prevention Institute
Sullivan Brown, Weather or Not
Jason Klindt, Evergy

MARC Staff:

Karen Clawson
Tom Jacobs
Doug Norsby
Bridget Koan
Lynelle Haugabrook

1. Introductions and Determination of Quorum

Rollin Sachs noted early in the meeting that the group did **not** have a quorum, which would affect approval of previous meeting minutes. In-person introductions were followed by a full roll call of virtual attendees, including representatives from KDHE, MARC, county health departments, state transportation and environmental agencies, Evergy, the Weather or Not forecasting team, and other regional partners.

Because attendance remained too low, no quorum was established.

2. Approval of October Meeting Summary*

Due to the lack of quorum, approval of the October meeting summary was postponed.

3. 2025 Air Quality Summaries

a. Ozone Season Summary

Sullivan (Sully) Brown provided a comprehensive review of the 2025 ozone season, highlighting key exceedance events, weather patterns, and forecasting outcomes. The region experienced six ozone exceedances, similar to recent years except for the unusually low 2023 season. He explained that the season could be divided into three meteorological phases—spring, midsummer, and late season—each with distinctive air quality drivers.

Early-season warm temperatures were moderated by periodic precipitation, helping limit ozone formation despite persistent southwesterly winds. June and July saw above-normal rainfall that frequently ventilated the air, though short stagnant periods led to several exceedance days. Brown detailed each exceedance event, noting forecast performance, upwind contributions, cloud cover deviations, and the behavior of stagnant plumes—particularly their tendency to pool near downtown monitors and at Rocky Creek.

Late summer and early fall exhibited reduced precipitation and warmer conditions. Two unusual September exceedances occurred but were tempered by limited upwind pollution. Brown also reviewed the impact of Canadian wildfire smoke on August 1–2, which caused significant PM_{2.5} concerns but actually suppressed ozone production due to solar radiation attenuation.

He closed by summarizing seasonal rankings: the 8th warmest ozone season since 1995 and the 14th driest. Forecast accuracy averaged approximately 84%, with challenges arising primarily in borderline yellow-green days. Brown also addressed questions about model updates, the historical analog database, and the evolving relationship between emissions profiles and meteorological patterns.

b. Particulate Matter (2.5)

Doug Norsby reported encouraging downward trends in annual PM_{2.5} design values, noting that while the year's summer values were elevated, spring and fall concentrations helped average levels back below 9.0 µg/m³. He explained ongoing regulatory uncertainty: while the Biden-era reduction of the PM_{2.5} standard to 9.0 µg/m³ technically remains in

place, the new administration has announced it will not enforce the updated standard and will instead leave the matter to the courts.

Doug Watson (KDHE) noted that Kansas did not receive its expected 120-day EPA response letter on recommended designations, and EPA Region 7 has indicated no designation determinations will be issued in February as originally expected. Missouri similarly refrained from submitting recommendations given the regulatory uncertainty. Watson emphasized that although the standard is technically 9.0, its future remains entirely dependent on the court's eventual ruling.

Attendees discussed recent improvements at the Kansas City, Kansas monitor, likely attributable to fewer wildfire smoke events and shifts in the three-year averaging window. Watson also noted known positive bias at T640 monitors during smoke episodes, which complicates designations but may become moot if the standard reverts to 12 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

4. Flint Hills Smoke Management Plan

Doug Watson provided an overview of why prescribed fire remains essential in the Flint Hills region and emphasized Kansas' position as one of the nation's highest-use prescribed burning states. He reviewed long-term burn patterns, noting that while the region averages roughly 2 million acres burned annually, recent years have fallen below that level due to spring weather volatility.

Watson explained the origins and goals of the 2010 Smoke Management Plan, including its voluntary nature and its focus on public health protection, air quality standards, and the ability to secure exceptional event flags when appropriate. He highlighted the predictive burn modeling tool developed via Sonoma Technology, which helps land managers understand potential impacts on downwind monitors before lighting fires.

A major portion of his update focused on the ongoing multi-stakeholder revision process. With changing national standards and EPA expectations, KDHE convened a broad coalition—ranchers, environmental groups, NRCS, Kansas Forest Service, conservation organizations, and local governments—to collaboratively modernize the plan. Key stakeholder priorities include enhancing public notification systems for smoke events. KDHE has been in early discussions with the National Weather Service to develop a statewide air quality alert mechanism that could address smoke, dust storms, and other air quality episodes.

Watson also responded to questions about statewide expansion of the smoke plan, use and effectiveness of the Sonoma tool, survey data limitations, and the growing encroachment of eastern red cedar in areas where burning has declined.

5. Evergy Presentation: Data Centers and New Tariffs on Large Loads

Jason Klindt (Evergy) presented on the changing energy landscape, driven in large part by the rapid expansion of large-load customers, including data centers and advanced manufacturing. He showed the sharp rise in project inquiries since 2023 and noted Evergy's economic development pipeline now exceeds 15 GW, compared to an existing system load of about 10 GW.

Klindt walked through Evergy's structured Path to Power process for large customers, including deposits, engineering queues and prioritization. He described the rising demand for

data centers in both Kansas and Missouri and the influence of Kansas' new incentives under Senate Bill 98.

The core of his presentation focused on the newly adopted Large Load Power Service (LLPS) tariff for customers above 75 MW. Key elements include:

- Data centers no longer receive discounted rates.
- LLPS customers now pay approximately 20% more than standard industrial rates.
- "Take-or-pay" provisions ensure Evergy can recover investments even if customers underutilize planned load.
- Collateral and creditworthiness requirements protect ratepayers.
- LLPS explicitly incorporates demand response participation, allowing load drops during high-stress grid conditions.
- Excess LLPS revenue is applied to the residential customer class, reducing upward rate pressure.

Klindt emphasized that the LLPS structure protects existing customers while ensuring that extraordinary system expansions are funded by the new large loads that create the demand.

Attendees raised questions regarding emerging micro-nuclear technologies, their potential use for data centers, and the feasibility of co-locating such systems. Klindt described promising activity but stressed that costs and regulatory questions remain unresolved. He also addressed inquiries about Evergy's long-term decarbonization goals and the need to expand demand-side management programs to offset rising peak load.

6. State Rules in Progress & Partner Update

The forum briefly opened the floor for additional items. John Frederick (MO DNR) provided a detailed state update, including:

- The status of the St. Louis ozone nonattainment area maintenance plan, currently out for public comment.
- Updates on Missouri boundary recommendation processes for PM_{2.5} and SO₂ standards.
- Upcoming January 2026 Air Conservation Commission meeting topics, including consolidation of air fee language into a single rule.
- MO DNR's plan to review the 2025 Rocky Creek ozone exceedance days in early 2026 to analyze causes and regulatory implications.

7. Other Business

There was no other business to discuss.

8. Adjourn

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned.