



DRAFT



Placer County
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT

Board-Adopted

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023 – 2028

Improving
Placer County's air quality to
protect public health, our economy,
and the environment





LETTER FROM THE APCO

Dear Placer County partners, neighbors, and friends,

On behalf of the District's Board of Directors and our dedicated staff team, I'm pleased to provide you our new five-year strategic plan for the Placer County Air Pollution Control District.

The four focus areas outlined here combined with the objectives and strategies to carry them out are based upon a realistic appraisal of the District today; the forces, challenges and opportunities we are likely to face in the years ahead; interviews and planning sessions with the Board of Directors and staff; and detailed feedback sessions with external stakeholders to test early concepts and action areas to confirm we were headed in the right direction.

In many ways, it is more important than ever that the District plan ahead given the volatility and disruptions we are likely to face for years to come. Critical to our success in this new post-pandemic operating environment is remaining flexible and adaptable in the face of changing conditions while staying focused on the positive outcomes we want for our kids, families, businesses, and our community. I'm grateful to our Board, staff and leadership team that 2023 finds our agency in such a strong position that we can take the time to consider our future. Thanks to years of steady progress and investment, the District has a strong fund balance, committed Board members, dedicated and creative staff team, and a growing number of agency, business, and community partnerships upon which we can build.

The challenges we face are certainly big, but not insurmountable. Air quality in our area has continually improved despite an enormous increase in population, freight and vehicle traffic, and pollution blowing here from other jurisdictions. Through combined efforts, ozone levels have been cut in half in Placer County since the highest ozone measurements in the 1980s even though we have nearly three times as many people and four times as many vehicles on the road today. Despite this success, the task of improving our air quality is never done...more work is needed.

Against a backdrop of more frequent wildfires and smoke impacts, steady population growth and development, rapid changes in vehicle and fuel technology, and a shifting regulatory environment, this new Board-adopted strategic plan helps point the way to the future we intend. We look forward to collaborating with you to set this plan to action over the months and years ahead.

Sincerely,

Erik C. White
Air Pollution Control Officer



FIVE-YEAR FOCUS AREAS

1 Trusted Community Partner

- Giving timely information to residents, employers, and students to improve health outcomes
- Forming close alliances and partnerships with jurisdictions, agencies, groups and industry inside and outside the County to advance the District's mission
- Providing project-based information to local governments and the public for evidence-based decision-making
- Implementing state and federal mandates responsibly and aligned with local community conditions and needs

2 Innovative Problem Solver

- Partnering to reduce emissions through forest management practices, fire prevention, and biomass solutions
- Helping to bring state and federal funding into Placer County
- Engagement in policymaking at state and federal level to achieve high-quality public policy outcomes that align with local community conditions and needs
- Engagement with peer regulators around state and nation to develop and promote best practices
- Helping partners navigate the energy transition (e.g., fleet conversions)

3 Solutions-Focused Regulator

- Meeting standards in a cost-effective manner through advanced planning, monitoring, notification, clear communication, collaboration, and ingenuity
- Achieving results thanks to dedicated, responsive, knowledgeable, and accessible staff across the organization
 - Taking a balanced approach to regulatory enforcement to achieve compliance by regulated sources while supporting economic vitality

4 High-Performing Organization

- Efficient operations and staffing models to achieve organizational objectives
- Ensuring future operational effectiveness through robust succession planning
- Supporting staff needs, training, and development
- Engaging the commitment, knowledge, and connections of the elected Board of Directors to achieve the mission
- Continuing to position the District on solid financial footing for the future
- Pursuing diverse revenue sources to support key District initiatives and/or ongoing District operations

PLACER AIR DISTRICT AT A GLANCE

What is the PCAPCD?

The Placer County Air Pollution Control District is the regulatory agency responsible for improving air quality throughout Placer County. It is unique among California's 35 air districts as the only district that includes portions of three different air basins (i.e., Sacramento Valley, Mountain and the Lake Tahoe Air Basins). It has a nine-member elected Board of Directors drawn from the County and area cities and currently has 18 full-time and two part-time staff with backgrounds in environmental science, public health, engineering, administration and management.



What does the District Do?

In coordination with surrounding air districts, the District develops and adopts an Air Quality Management Plan, which serves as the blueprint to bring the area into compliance with federal and state clean air standards. Cost-effective rules are developed by staff and adopted by the District's Board to reduce emissions, using a combination of rule-making and incentive programs. Permits are issued to many businesses to ensure compliance with air quality rules. District staff conduct periodic inspections to ensure compliance with these requirements and also respond to citizen complaints. The test of whether these efforts are working is the quality of the air we breathe. The District continuously monitors air quality at five locations across the county. This also allows the District to notify the public whenever air quality is unhealthy.

Air Quality Sources:

Roseville Railyard



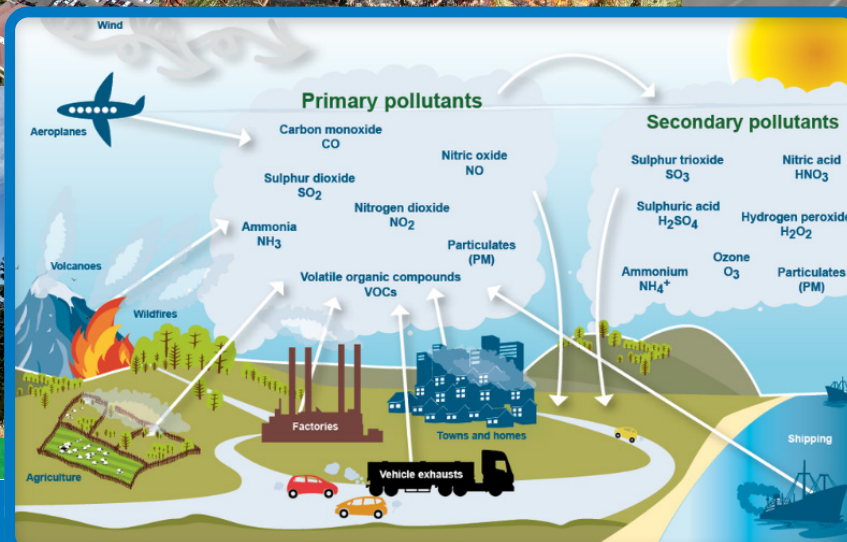
Residential burning



Roads and highways



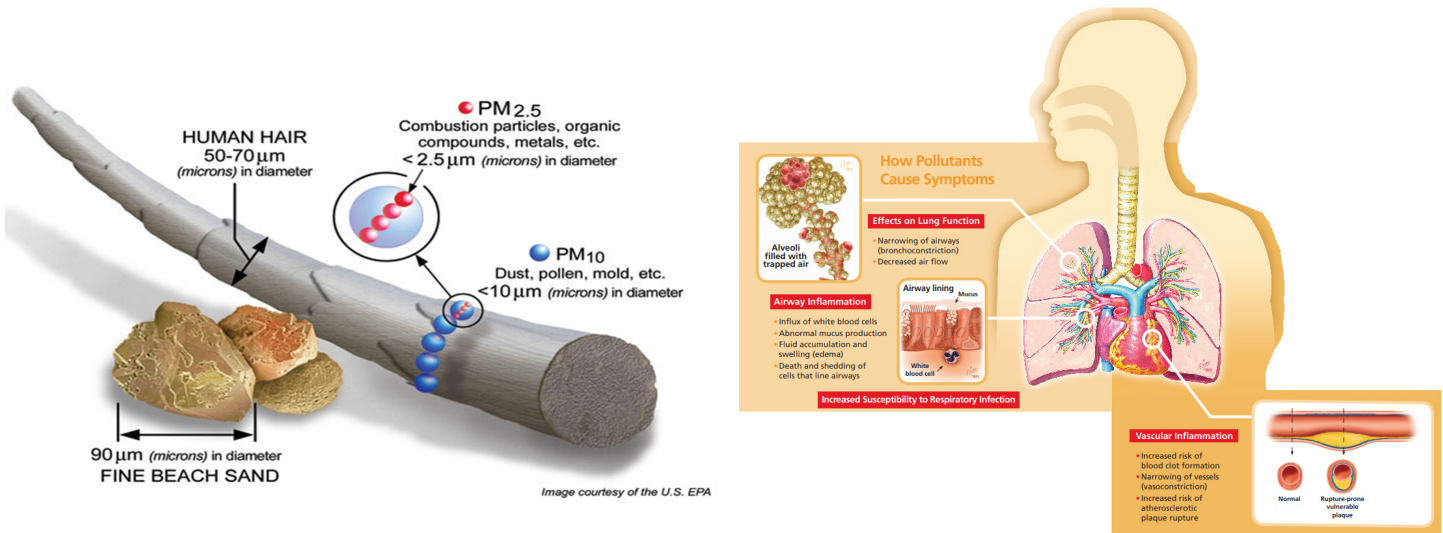
Forest fires



Industry

How can poor air quality impact our health?

Exposure to air pollution can affect everyone's health. When we breathe in air pollutants, they can enter our bloodstream and contribute to coughing, itchy eyes and cause or worsen many breathing and lung diseases. This can lead to hospitalizations, cancer, or even premature death.



Where do we stand today?

Despite significant improvements to air quality over many decades, more work needs to be done to reduce the health impacts from airborne particular matter, or “soot,” and from ozone “smog” caused by reactive organic gases and oxides of nitrogen. The District has been a leader locally and statewide in reducing air pollution with innovative and practical strategies that balance public health, community resilience and economic growth.

How can I help?

We can all help by making some simple changes in the way we use certain products and services. Some examples include using carpools, walking and riding bikes for short trips, converting to low emitting vehicles, avoiding aerosol products, recycling, and conserving energy.



OUR VISION:

To achieve and maintain clean air standards throughout Placer County.

OUR MISSION:

Improving Placer County's air quality to protect public health, our economy, and our environment.

OUR VALUES:

Collaboration, leadership, excellence, innovation, equity, fairness.

1

TRUSTED COMMUNITY PARTNER

Being a trusted community partner requires clear communication, mutual respect, transparency, and accountability. At the District we know that healthy community partnerships not only make our collective work easier and our actions better informed, but the outcomes we achieve tend to be more representative of the needs in our communities. District staff must work to balance these local needs and priorities with the regulatory requirements passed down to the District by state and federal agencies.

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
<p>1.1 Giving timely information to residents, employers, and students to improve health outcomes</p>	<p>1.11 Continue to work collaboratively with public safety, public health, and emergency services to ensure that first responders and the public have the timely information they need to stay safe and healthy during wildfire and other emergency incidents.</p> <p>1.12 Engage regularly with County employers, business and trade groups, and area agencies to report progress and to update them on pending District actions. Conduct targeted community outreach to improve awareness and raise engagement.</p> <p>1.13 Enhance public awareness and engagement efforts amongst school-age children and adults by working closely with local healthcare professionals to provide expert assistance in the formulation and District messaging and web-based materials related to the health effects of wildfire smoke, proper face mask use, the Air Quality Index, and outdoor activity guidance.</p> <p>1.14 Regularly refresh and share District communications and resources containing the latest science on the health impacts of smoke, smog, and soot and best methods to protect students, families, and adults.</p>
<p>1.2 Forming close alliances and partnerships with jurisdictions, agencies, groups and industry inside and outside the County to advance the District’s mission</p>	<p>1.21 Locally, raise awareness and provide technical assistance to area agencies regarding various federal and state grant opportunities that can improve air quality and public health outcomes.</p> <p>1.22 With focus on disadvantaged communities, engage effectively with affected neighborhoods as defined by the Community Air Protection (CAP) Program to improve health-based awareness, monitoring, and actions that reduce ozone (smog) and particulate matter (soot) pollution, especially for residents living near Interstate 80 and the Roseville Rail Yard.</p> <p>1.23 Regionally, continue to participate in the Cleaner Air Partnership and programs like Cap-to-Cap and the Placer Business Alliance DC trip to advance the District’s policy and investment priorities.</p> <p>1.24 Maintain an active role in the policy and advocacy formation work of the National Association of Clean Air Agencies and the California Air Pollution Control Officers Association.</p>

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
1.3 Providing project-based information to local governments and the public for evidence-based decision-making	1.31 Maintain District awareness of pending development projects as well as best available methods and tools for analyzing and describing potential air quality impacts for local decision-makers.
	1.32 Work with local jurisdictions and development partners to furnish air quality impact technical reviews and render technical assistance upon request to partners to mitigate or reduce potential impacts.
1.4 Implementing state and federal mandates responsibly and aligned with local community conditions and needs	1.41 Provide comments and advice on legislative and regulatory proposals impacting the District that account for the urban, suburban, rural, and forested characteristics found in Placer County.
	1.42 Balance the competing demands inherent in meeting stringent air quality standards while preserving the County's economic health and quality of life using tools like adaptive management and ingenuity.

2

INNOVATIVE PROBLEM SOLVER

As a state and nation, we have spent the last 70+ years deploying policies and investments to clean our air. Each decade we have tightened standards on business and industry (i.e., stationary sources), fuels, trains, trucks and autos (mobile sources), off road equipment, buildings, and more recently the design of how our neighborhoods and cities can grow. To meet the challenges that remain now requires a new level of creative thinking, ingenuity and unusual partnerships. This is where the nimbleness and relative size of the Placer Air District becomes an advantage.

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
2.1 Partnering to reduce emissions through forest management practices, fire prevention, and biomass solutions	2.11 Continue to collaborate with federal, state and local agency partners and local land managers to treat and restore forestlands in Placer County to health and expand the application of best practices to reduce wildfire risk.
	2.12 Provide ongoing leadership to the County Biomass Consortium leading to local biomass facility development to reduce fuel loads and generate renewable energy from alternative sources while meeting clean air standards.
	2.13 Advance policy that increases financial investment in local forest health projects that sequester carbon and satisfy greenhouse gas mitigation requirements under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
2.2 Helping to bring state and federal funding into Placer County	2.21 Actively monitor grant programs within CalFire, CalOES, USDA, USEPA, USDOE, and other agencies that match the objectives of the County's clean air goals and transition to a low carbon economy.
	2.22 Organize regular forums for area agencies and municipalities to learn of possible grant matches that help them achieve fleet and physical plant conversions that meet clean air goals.
	2.23 Provide direct technical assistance and/or access to assistance to improve award outcomes.

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
2.3 Engagement in policymaking at state and federal level to achieve high-quality public policy outcomes that align with local community conditions and needs	2.31 Maintain an annual list of legislative and budget priorities at the federal, state, and local level to monitor and focus action.
	2.32 Regionally, continue to participate in the Cleaner Air Partnership and programs like Cap-to-Cap and the Placer Business Alliance DC trip to advance the District’s policy and investment priorities.
	2.33 Evaluate the merits of leveraging the County’s federal and state contract lobbyist for District purpose and/or the virtue of the District retaining its own contract lobbyist to advance its annual policy, investment, and grants objectives.
2.4 Engagement with peer regulators around state and nation to develop and promote best practices	2.41 Continue a leadership role in the policy and advocacy formation work of the National Association of Clean Air Agencies and the California Air Pollution Control Officers Association.
	2.42 Upon request, render assistance and advice to peer agencies regarding District initiatives, programs, and practices and seek out best practices in-kind.
	2.43 Evaluate the merits of leveraging the County’s federal and state contract lobbyist for District purpose and/or the virtue of the District retaining its own contract lobbyist to advance its annual policy, investment, and grants objectives.
2.5 Helping partners navigate the energy transition (e.g., fleet conversions)	2.51 Seek program grant funding from public and private sources to increase District capacity aimed at assisting employers, public and private, to transition buildings, fleets, and practices to low carbon equipment and fuels that yield air pollution co-benefits.
	2.52 Form and support a Placer-based technical advisory group with membership drawn from the County, cities, agencies, education institutions, nonprofits, and the private sector to share ideas and best practices related to energy, physical plant, fleet conversions, supply chain, waste streams, and related topics.
	2.53 Inventory best practices, resources, and assistance programs and share out with program partners.

3 SOLUTIONS-FOCUSED REGULATOR

The way we look at perceived barriers, constraints, and limitations can either stop us in our tracks or challenge us to frame the problem differently, test new ideas, and deploy innovative approaches. When developing this plan our external partners told us the District had a reputation for being “solutions oriented” and focusing its compliance efforts on the big picture. Our staff are described as dedicated, knowledgeable, accessible, and responsive. We will continue to rely on these traits and abilities when addressing the challenges and opportunities to come.

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
<p>3.1 Meeting standards in a cost-effective manner through advanced planning, monitoring, notification, clear communication, collaboration, and ingenuity</p>	<p>3.11 Maintain efforts and regular forums that pro-actively help owners or operators of sources understand existing requirements and anticipate future rule making or compliance changes to enable pre-planning, budgeting, staffing and operational adjustments to meet emission targets.</p> <p>3.12 Expand the District’s multi-million-dollar Clean Air Grant (CAG) Program to reduce emissions from unregulated activities and sources including farm equipment, electric vehicles and charging stations, school buses and waste haulers, and wood stove replacements.</p> <p>3.13 Continue upgrades of the District’s air quality monitoring equipment, software, and communication systems to improve evidence-based decision-making.</p>
<p>3.2 Achieving results thanks to dedicated, responsive, knowledgeable, and accessible staff across the organization</p>	<p>3.21 Expand on-the-job training and skill development opportunities, task / job rotations, job shadowing, attending industry-related conferences, self-study and online coursework, and/or professional development plans to improve employee retention, capacity, and growth.</p> <p>3.22 Recruit and hire smart and committed team members with a penchant for creative problem-solving and the ability to raise the overall capability and positive reputation of the organization.</p> <p>3.23 Continue upgrades of the District’s air quality monitoring equipment, software, and communication systems to improve evidence-based decision-making.</p>
<p>3.3 Taking a balanced approach to regulatory enforcement to achieve compliance by regulated sources while supporting economic vitality</p>	<p>3.31 Continue to coordinate closely with the landfill, the Roseville Railyard, municipal wastewater, sewage treatment, and energy plants to address odor complaints from residents and businesses.</p> <p>3.32 Administer the District’s citizen complaint resolution program in a fair and equitable manner that ensures a level playing field while meeting compliance requirements.</p>

4

HIGH-PERFORMING ORGANIZATION

At the end of the day, we are only as strong and effective as the systems and culture that drive our organization. The District’s board and staff are passionate about being an adaptive, high-performing organization with a clear mission, a specific set of actionable strategies, an engaged board, highly capable staff, with programs and activities that help us achieve our clean air mission.

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
4.1 Efficient operations and staffing models to achieve organizational objectives	4.11 Ensure proper HR and internal systems and culture supports remain in place to achieve top performance.
	4.12 Maintain investments in District technology systems, applications, and training to improve the efficiency in contracting, vendor management, permitting and compliance monitoring.
4.2 Ensuring future operational effectiveness through robust succession planning	4.21 Define a succession roadmap for the APCO and senior management positions that has the input and support from the board of directors and is consistently maintained.
	4.22 Seek out and/or create regular opportunities for exposure and cross-training in senior management and executive level activities for knowledge and skill acquisition necessary for succession to occur smoothly.
4.3 Supporting staff needs, training, and development	4.31 Expand on-the-job training and skill development opportunities, task / job rotations, job shadowing, attending industry-related conferences, self-study and online coursework, and/or professional development plans to improve employee retention, capacity, and growth.
	4.32 Ensure the District’s competitiveness as an employer to consistently attract and retain top talent.
	4.33 Increase budget allocations for training and development where possible.
	4.34 Increase HR budget allocations where feasible to ensure adequate staffing levels are maintained.
4.4 Engaging the commitment, knowledge, and connections of the elected board of directors to achieve the mission	4.41 Continue to effectively “onboard” new board members to orient them to the District mission, purpose, goals and activities, as well as the specific duties and responsibilities board members perform individually and as a group to advance the District’s mission and strategic priorities.
	4.42 Identify areas of passion, experience, knowledge and/or connections possessed by board members and actively put them to work in support of the mission of the District.
	4.43 In addition to business, seek opportunities to leverage board meetings as opportunities to hear outside experts or leaders from other agencies for group learning and/or to review and evaluate critical strategic or policy issues inside or outside the organization important to the future of the District.
	4.44 Conduct yearly reviews of the District’s strategic plan to evaluate progress, elevate challenges and opportunities, and make course changes as necessary.

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
4.5 Continuing to position the District on solid financial footing for the future	4.51 Maintain close accounting oversight of the three separate revenue and expenditure accounts which fund District operations annually while retaining a healthy fund balance commiserate with District needs.
	4.52 Maintain annual contributions to the District’s retirement fund account.
	4.53 Continue to allocate prioritized expenditures through the District’s Capital Facility Maintenance Plan to properly maintain the District’s headquarters building and fleet.
4.6 Pursuing diverse revenue sources to support key District initiatives and/or ongoing District operations	4.61 Keep close watch on any proposed legislative or budgetary changes that could affect District revenue allocations from the surcharge imposed by the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), or any other actions that could affect District revenues or fee collection.
	4.62 Allocate and/or develop capacity within the District to actively monitor grant programs within CalFire, CalOES, USDA, USEPA, USDOE, and other agencies that match the objectives of the County’s clean air goals and transition to a low carbon economy.
	4.63 Where feasible, serve as the lead agency in submitting grant applications that advance District priorities and partner agency goals, including grant administration and reporting tasks where applicable.

NOTE: Several strategies are listed more than once in the document as they meet multiple objectives.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

This board-adopted strategic plan is a living document, subject to regular progress checks by the board and adjustments in the face of new events or changing needs. We wish to thank our many partners at the local, state, and national level who have helped make the Placer County Air Pollution Control District one of the most innovative and impactful government agencies in the U.S. focused on public health, our economy, and the environment.

ACTION AREAS:

- Air quality monitoring
- Air quality plans
- Regulation and enforcement
- Land use review
- Wildfire prevention and notification
- Incentives
- Emission inventory development
- Technical assistance
- Public education

TO LEARN MORE:

www.placerair.org
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