

Cathryn Chudy

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Improving Air Quality in Overburdened Communities Initiative. I attended the October 18th online meeting and gave the attached comments.

To: WA Dept. Of Ecology
Public Comment/10-18-22/Cathryn Chudy

Re: Improving Air Quality in Washington's Overburdened Communities Initiative

Thank you for providing this opportunity to share my concerns as you identify communities in Washington that are highly impacted by air pollution and the significant sources of this pollution.

I fully support Vancouver being included in the list of overburdened communities who will most benefit from the next steps of expanded and improved air monitoring, strategies to reduce criteria air pollutants, and periodic analysis to make sure reduction goals for air pollution are being met.

I am a retired healthcare worker living close to the River Road gas generating plant here in Vancouver, operated by our local Clark County PUD. I also live right next to both the I-5 and Highway 14 freeway corridors, which means I am exposed to high levels of transportation emissions along with what comes from the gas plant. I live in an old house, and like many elderly, limited income residents, have a gas furnace that I would like to replace with an efficient heat pump, but am currently unable to afford.

There are only a few air quality monitors that I am aware of in Vancouver, one for AQI and one for PM 2.5. We have 6 existing bulk fossil fuel facilities and a gas plant, along with three major transportation corridors contributing to polluting emissions that are clearly affecting our air quality and negatively affecting our public health.

I have friends and neighbors who have children with asthma, and given their vulnerability (greater than adults) I think it is essential to resolve the "data limitations" in order to include this as an indicator for identifying overburdened communities.

I have advocated (without success) to our PUD Commissioners to phase out the gas plant as soon as possible, but they persist in longer range planning with the gas plant remaining in operation, with a proposed reduction but not complete removal of the criteria pollutants that affect the air quality and public health of my neighbors and myself.

Our census tracts in Vancouver score 9-10 on the Health Disparities Map, which underscores the seriousness of the impacts we endure here. We also have a significant number of unhoused people visible in various locations in Vancouver, and I am deeply concerned about the ongoing health impacts these individuals and families are experiencing as they struggle to survive here. These are indicators worth including in your considerations.

Finally, Wildfire smoke has driven our air quality into the unhealthy to hazardous numbers repeatedly in the last several years, (just this last week as wildfire close by led to evacuations) and this problem will only continue to worsen as we experience the kind of hot, dry summers that appear to be the new normal for us here in Vancouver.

Thank you for taking my concerns into consideration in your determinations going forward.