



Northeast British Columbia Air Quality Monitoring Project

Article 3: INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

In the first two articles in this series, the Ministry of Environment discussed the government-industry air quality monitoring project in northeastern B.C. We then gave an overview of the pollutants being monitored and how they relate to oil and gas in the region. This article describes the monitoring initiative and the two stakeholder groups that are steering the project.

Some residents in the Peace River Regional District in northeastern B.C. have concerns regarding air pollution related to the oil and gas “boom” of recent years. For example, air quality was identified as a top concern of residents during Phase 1 of the recent northeast BC Human Health Risk Assessment. This included the perceived risks to human health as a result of living near oil and gas facilities and an apparent lack of comprehensive air quality information.

In addition to direct human health risks, residents also expressed concerns about the health of wild animals, livestock, crops and water bodies (including aquatic life such as fish) that may indirectly affect human health as a result of air pollutants emitted by the oil and gas industry.

In response to these concerns and growing public demand for air quality information, the Ministry of Environment, in collaboration with other government agencies and industry, embarked on an ambient air quality monitoring project in the Peace region in 2012.

Two stakeholder groups are key to this project. A Technical Advisory Group is made up of scientists and air quality experts. It provides guidance on the type of pollutants to measure and on the best locations for air quality monitoring stations. A Public Outreach Group is made up of representatives from the community, governments and industry. It recommends the best way to communicate air quality information to the public. This ensures that project results reach those who are most affected.

To date, three new air quality monitoring stations have been installed in the Peace region. They have been monitoring the ambient (outside) air concentrations of sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and total reduced sulphur compounds (TRS) in Doig River, Farmington and Tomslake since early in 2014. A fourth new station has also been installed in Fort St. John and has been measuring ambient sulphur dioxide (SO₂), nitrogen oxide (NO), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), ozone (O₃), and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) since February 2015. Current hourly air pollutant concentrations at these and other monitoring stations in the Peace region can be found at <http://www.bcairquality.ca/readings/northeast.html>.

As the project enters into its third phase, the Technical Advisory Group is providing guidance on where to next locate the stations for a longer time period and what new pollutants should be measured.

Keep your eyes on this section for articles including more information about the project, its progress and the results. A regular article will keep you updated on the status of your community's air quality.

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- More information on Northeast BC air quality, including current readings, is at <http://www.bcairquality.ca/readings/northeast.html>
 - For concerns related to oil and gas, please contact the OGC at 250-794-5200
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