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Press Release

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Fairbanks air quality plan released for public review

(JUNEAU, AK) – The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation is releasing for public review and comment a draft “State Implementation Plan” (SIP) that the community and state will take to address air pollution in the Fairbanks North Star Borough. The SIP is a requirement of the Environmental Protection Agency to bring the Borough’s fine particulate matter (PM2.5) nonattainment area into compliance with the federal Clean Air Act and reduce the health effects of poor air on residents. Wood smoke from home heating in the winter, coupled with temperature inversions and other natural conditions, is a main contributor to the poor air quality in the nonattainment area.

The draft plan builds on existing air quality programs like the wood heater change-out program, local voluntary programs and public education efforts to burn cleanly. Also included is detailed information on the local PM2.5 pollution problem; air monitoring data and network; emission sources and levels; control strategies and contingency measures; technical modeling to project future emission trends; and emergency episode plan.

The draft plan is accompanied by proposed regulations and also includes wood heater emission standards that were adopted by the department and are now undergoing final processing at the State. Some of the draft regulations released for comment are new proposals, while others are from last year’s set of proposed regulations that have been revised based on feedback from the community.

“We look forward to the public’s feedback on the draft plan and regulations,” said Commissioner Larry Hartig, “It is our goal to use that input to come up with a final plan that ensures residents can continue to burn wood, which is a vital component to keeping a home warm during a Fairbanks winter, while addressing local air quality concerns and federal Clean Air Act requirements.”

Copies of the proposed regulations are available on the DEC Air Quality website. The public may also visit the website to comment on the regulations. DEC will be hosting two open houses where the public can ask questions and

gather additional information, followed later in the comment period by two public hearings.

“For any air quality plan to be successful, it must be accepted and implemented by the community as a whole,” said Alice Edwards, DEC Air Quality Director. “For this reason, it is critically important to receive input from the public on what works best for the community.”

For more information about the Fairbanks PM2.5 State Implementation Plan, including copies of the regulations, and how to comment, visit the Division of Air Quality website at: <http://dec.alaska.gov/air/index.htm>.

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