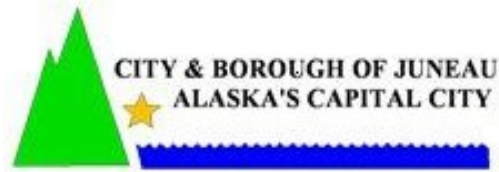
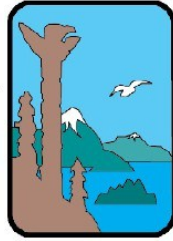


ALASKA
Department of
Environmental
Conservation



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Oct. 08, 2009

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New data shows Juneau meets federal air quality standards

Residents' efforts pay off in cleaner air

Today the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced its national list of "nonattainment" areas for fine particle air pollution. Juneau is not on that list thanks to improvements in air quality in the Mendenhall Valley. Previously the EPA had listed Juneau as out of compliance with its standards for fine particle pollution, also known as PM 2.5.

The reversal is the result of a strong local wood stove ordinance, a successful public education campaign and new air quality data.

"We are pleased that the EPA took into consideration our data and has found that a non-attainment designation is not currently needed. Juneau's air quality is improving, and Juneau's efforts to reduce air pollution have been exemplary," said Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Larry Hartig.

"The Assembly is proud of the community's efforts to meet EPA standards and is pleased that our efforts have paid off to date. We encourage Mendenhall Valley residents to continue to do their part to maintain healthy air quality levels in the Mendenhall Valley, and to keep in mind that citizens living in other parts of the community also benefit as they work, shop and attend schools in the Valley," said City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) Deputy Mayor Jeff Bush.

Sources of fine particulate matter include power plants, vehicles and wood burning stoves. The tiny particles and droplets can cause serious health problems. They range from increased hospital admissions and doctor and emergency department visits for respiratory and cardiovascular disease, to heart attacks and premature death.

Efforts start in 1980s to address coarse particulate matter, PM 10

Starting in the 1980s, working with DEC, the City and Borough of Juneau introduced burn bans and other measures as a way to improve air quality in the Mendenhall Valley. These efforts successfully reduced the impacts of smoke, and other sources of coarse particulate matter, also known as PM 10. The area now achieves standards for coarse particulate matter. DEC and the City recently submitted a PM10 maintenance plan to EPA and have requested that the agency reclassify the Mendenhall Valley to attainment status for coarse particulate matter.

Fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) standards set and met

In 2006, the EPA strengthened its air quality standards for fine particulates. As federal standards became more protective, Juneau tightened its wood stove ordinance from the 1980s and the state and the city increased public education and compliance efforts. As a result of these proactive efforts, air quality data between 2006 and 2008 showed the area as just within the limits for complying with the stronger standards for fine particulates.

“People in Juneau observed the burn bans and adopted other practices, such as using seasoned wood and properly maintaining their wood stoves. It all added up to Juneauites breathing easier,” said Alice Edwards, acting director, DEC division of Air Quality. Edwards said that while Juneau’s air is cleaner, residents should continue to pay close attention to city announced burn bans and use smart burning practices to maintain the improvements.

“For the upcoming cold weather seasons, CBJ will continue to coordinate closely with DEC to monitor air quality in the Mendenhall Valley. Air Emergencies will be announced when air particulate levels will reach, or are at, unhealthy levels and weather conditions will not clear the air. Residents in the Mendenhall Valley are encouraged to visit the CBJ wood smoke information website www.juneau.org/lands/woodsmoke to learn more about Air Emergency announcements, clean burning tips and weatherization programs,” said Heather Marlow, Lands and Resources Manager, City and Borough of Juneau.



DEC air quality monitoring equipment at Floyd Dryden Middle School in the Mendenhall Valley.