**AAC Article for CRAZ blog Jan2017**

While many Albertans are familiar with Airsheds in the Province, fewer people may be aware of the Alberta Airsheds Council (AAC) and the role it plays in bringing Airsheds together, and supporting the air monitoring framework so that air quality information is collected and shared with all Albertans.

The AAC facilitates communication, cooperation and sharing of best practices among the nine Airsheds in the province and represents the Airsheds in discussions with Provincial funders, partners and stakeholders. Through quarterly meetings and on-going communication, the AAC provides a forum for Airsheds to work and learn together, and to continue to advance effective and efficient air monitoring, reporting and outreach, and to address regional matters. The AAC and Airsheds also contribute to provincial policy development by bringing regional perspectives to province-wide discussions.

Nine Airsheds formed in Alberta between 1996 and 2006. Airsheds now operate more than 70 air monitoring stations across the Province in compliance with all provincial and federal standards, including Alberta’s Air Monitoring Directive. Data collected by Airsheds also contributes to the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI), which is reported in over 25 communities. The credibility of Airsheds’ data and programs relies on the multi-stakeholder, consensus-based governance of each Airshed. More than 50 municipalities, eight First Nations and Métis groups, 200 community members and 200 industry representatives contribute to the success of Airsheds across Alberta. Each of these direct participants represents a vast network of thousands of individuals and stakeholders interested in, and affected by the monitoring and resources Airsheds provide. Airsheds are a key partner with established regional networks for responding to local and regional air matters, and participate in dozens of community education and outreach events each year.

The AAC was initiated in 2006, and all nine Airsheds are members. The AAC has evolved over the years and hired its first Executive Director in 2016. Key priorities include developing a new website, and expanding the communication and education toolkit for the AAC and Airsheds. In partnership with the Government of Alberta, the Airsheds Council is developing approaches to educate Albertans about air monitoring and air quality, and in particular about the current issue of fine particulate matter.

If you have questions about the AAC or ideas on how to increase Albertans understanding about air quality matters, feel free to connect with us. We would be happy to talk with you.

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