



For Immediate Release
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**Local Advocates React to “Promising” Findings
of American Lung Association Report**
Groups: “Time to finish the job for clean air in western Pennsylvania”

PITTSBURGH, PA – After more than a decade, western Pennsylvanians are starting to breathe easier according to the American Lung Association’s annual [State of the Air Report](#) issued today.

The good news: the Pittsburgh metro region’s air quality is the best it’s been since the national research and advocacy group began monitoring nationwide air quality 12 years ago.

But environmental and public health advocates say there is still plenty of work to do to clean up the region’s air. For example, Pittsburgh metro region’s air still ranks as the *sixth most polluted in the nation* for both short- and long-term particle pollution. Particle pollution is the mix of tiny solid and liquid particles in the air we breathe. (That smoky, black truck exhaust you passed on the way to work this morning? That was particle pollution.) Short-term particle pollution measures what people are exposed to in a day, whereas long-term particle pollution measures what we are exposed to in a year – and both can increase people’s risk of heart disease, lung cancer and asthma.

Another concern is the region’s worsening ground-level ozone ranking. Ground-level ozone, or “bad ozone” – as opposed to atmospheric, or “good ozone” – can reduce lung function, inflame the lungs’ linings and worsen asthma.

“Absolutely, progress has been made to clean up our region’s air, thanks to the work of people, organizations and companies right here in Pittsburgh, as well as our state and federal representatives,” says Rachel Filippini, Executive Director of the Pittsburgh-based [Group Against Smog Pollution](#) (GASP). “Our higher ozone ranking, however, is of major concern and we need to ensure that this trend doesn’t continue.”

Joseph O. Minott, Executive Director of Pennsylvania's [Clean Air Council](#), agrees. "This report contains some good news for air quality in western Pennsylvania. However, some areas continue to decline, surely because of new and old sources of pollution alike. We must remain committed to continue protecting everyone's right to breathe clean air."

Many local environmental groups are viewing these findings as both a sign of progress *and* a call to action.

"It's time to finish the job," says Tiffany Hickman, Western Pennsylvania Outreach Coordinator for [PennFuture](#). "Making sure every child in southwestern Pennsylvania can breathe clean air every day is essential for the health of our families and our quality of life, and it's a crucial building block for a strong economy."

That's why PennFuture, along with the Clean Air Council and GASP are charter members of the [Breathe Project](#). The Breathe Project is a coalition of Pittsburgh groups, companies and individuals with a common commitment to deliver the air our region needs for the health and economy our citizens want.

"Breathe Project members PNC and US Steel have really stepped up and are making significant contributions to clean air," says Tom Hoffman, Western Pennsylvania Director for [Clean Water Action](#), also a Breathe Project charter member. "PNC is drastically reducing diesel emissions in its construction projects and US Steel has invested in cleaner air at its Clairton works."

[Women for a Healthy Environment](#)'s Executive Director Michelle Naccarati-Chapkis believes this collaborative approach is the key to cleaning up western Pennsylvania's air once and for all. "Pittsburghers know the power of teamwork. That is why each member of the Breathe Project is making commitments to clean up our air. Moving forward, it's going to take all of us – families and community groups, business leaders and our elected officials – working together to make sure we have the healthy air and the healthy economy we deserve."

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