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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Steady Improvement in Region's Air Quality Continues in 2016 Despite More Alert Days Issued

**(Columbus, OH – December 8, 2016)** The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) issues daily air quality forecasts and notifies the public when ozone and particle pollution levels are considered to be unhealthy for sensitive groups of people. From April through October, ground-level ozone levels peak when warm temperatures and sunlight, mixed with pollutants, enhance the formation of ozone. This can create unhealthy levels of air pollution triggering Air Quality Alerts.

MORPC's recently released *End of Ozone Season Report* for Central Ohio provides a summary for the 2016 ozone season and compares it to the last two ozone seasons. The report includes the following findings:

- Beginning in the 2016 ozone season, the federal ozone standard tightened from 75 parts per billion (ppb) to 70 ppb.
- Under the tighter federal standards, there were 10 ozone exceedances in the Central Ohio region during the summer 2016 season compared to 3 in 2015. Under the previous standard of 75 ppb, the region would have had 3 exceedances this year.
- April 18 was the earliest in a season that an ozone alert has been issued for the Columbus region since records began in 2002.
- Air Quality remained in the Good category for a higher percentage of days compared to 2015 despite 2016 being the second hottest summer on record.
- Hotter than normal temperatures and dry conditions contributed to ozone exceedances.
- The region has continued its trend of improving air quality over the past twenty years.

People with asthma are more likely to suffer an increase in the number and severity of symptoms during an Air Quality Alert. To decrease the potential for health implications, sensitive groups of people such as children, older adults, active adults, and those with respiratory diseases like asthma are urged to limit prolonged outdoor exertion. More information on the health effects of ozone pollution is available at: [www.myfcph.org/air.php](http://www.myfcph.org/air.php) and [www.publichealth.columbus.gov](http://www.publichealth.columbus.gov).

To sign up for Air Quality Alerts or to view the *End of Ozone Season* report visit <http://airquality.morpc.org>.

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*Working to Build a Better Region*

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*The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) is a voluntary association of local governments and regional organizations which envisions and embraces innovative directions in economic prosperity, energy, the environment, housing, land use, and transportation. Our transformative programming, services and innovative public policy are designed to promote and support the vitality and growth in the region.*