Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Central Ohioans Breathed Cleaner Air this Summer

**(Columbus-December 11)** October 31 marked the official end of ozone season in Central Ohio. Thanks in large part to a cooler summer, air quality in Central Ohio during the 2013 summer season improved when compared to 2012. Ozone pollution forms when volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from motor vehicles and power plants react with sunlight, making ozone pollution the most hazardous during the warmer months of the year.

"The improvement in air quality this summer is likely due to differences in weather conditions between 2012 and 2013. In 2012, temperatures were warmer than normal and precipitation was below normal across much of the Midwest, including Ohio. In contrast, temperatures in 2013 were slightly below normal across the region and were much cooler when compared to 2012. In addition, precipitation was above normal across Ohio in 2013," said Daniel Alrick, Sonoma Technologies, Inc., Meteorologist. This combination of cooler temperatures, increased precipitation, and the associated cloud cover likely contributed to improved air quality overall during the summer of 2013.

Throughout the ozone season, April 1 through November 1, meteorology firm Sonoma Technologies, Inc., (STI) provides MORPC with daily air quality forecasts. From there, MORPC issues an Air Quality Alert when levels of pollution are predicted to be harmful. The Columbus region experienced violations of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) health-based ozone pollution standard on June 12 and June 20.

STI begins the development of the daily forecast by retrieving and reviewing current weather data from the National Weather Service and air quality data from the Ohio EPA's eight near real-time monitors. To develop a daily air quality forecast, STI utilizes the current information and output to project air quality conditions in Central Ohio over the next five days.

Air quality conditions may change the next day due to rapidly changing weather conditions or local pollution sources, but MORPC strives to offer the most accurate forecast. To protect public health, MORPC uses the national Air Quality Index scale (AQI), which runs from 0-300, to inform the public about daily ozone and particle pollution ($PM_{2.5}$) levels in Central Ohio. When levels reach above 100, air quality is considered to be Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups and MORPC issues an Air Quality Alert.

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Though weather factors influence ozone formation greatly, U.S. EPA's 2008 National Emissions Inventory indicated that mobile sources like cars, trucks, and buses contributed 60 percent of all VOC emissions that can form ozone pollution under the right conditions. MORPC recommends actions individuals can take, such as carpooling and fueling vehicles after 6:00 p.m., to improve air quality and to promote healthier communities. To view the *End of Season* report visit http://airquality.morpc.org.

To receive free Air Quality Alert notifications, delivered straight to your inbox, click on the EnviroFlash logo at airquality.morpc.org. MORPC forecasts for ozone between April 1 and November 1, and for $PM_{2.5}$ year round.

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MORPC is a voluntary association of 41 local governments in central Ohio serving the region through planning, direct service, public policy information and innovative programming and intergovernmental coordinating services in the areas of transportation, land use, energy conservation, the environment and housing.