



TALKING POINTS ENVIRONMENT

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) is committed to creating and promoting regional environmental programs and related tools in the areas of air quality, brownfields, green infrastructure and landcare, water quality, climate change and greenhouse gas and energy to create safe and sustainable communities.

REGIONAL COUNCIL ROLE – Since the passage of the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C.), regional councils (RCs) and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) have played a critical role in the nation's efforts to ensure clean air through short and long-term planning and implementation. Many RCs are already tackling climate change in long-range regional transportation and growth planning, and determining how to capitalize on the growing clean and alternative energy technology economy and workforce.

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING – RCs have been involved in environmental planning for more than three decades, including watershed planning, river studies, solid waste management planning, air quality and brownfields redevelopment. Environmental quality is unconcerned with municipal boundaries, allowing polluted rivers, streams and air flow across city, county and state lines.

AIR QUALITY – RCs and MPOs are responsible for meeting various mobile source air quality standards and are important stakeholders in Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) discussions regarding standardization changes, which directly impact the local and regional levels. Regional councils require an easing of conformity planning requirements – thereby making it easier and more cost effective to maintain the standards.

CLIMATE CHANGE – Climate change and global warming are real issues with negative impacts to the environmental and economic survivability of our communities. Actions need to be taken at all levels of government to ensure that climate change is addressed through strong policies and clear cut reductions in emissions and energy consumption. This includes increased funding to multi-jurisdictional regional planning organizations in order to maintain compliance with the Clean Air Act; develop and apply technologies that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and, the institute incentive-based programs for localities and regions to create solutions that will protect environmental standards and needs.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE – RCs are critical to the green infrastructure movement because of their comprehensive multifaceted planning capabilities, ability to convene stakeholders, conduct strategic planning, and implement projects to accomplish sustainable outcomes and identify critical opportunities for conservation, restoration and preservation. Green infrastructure planning and development action at the regional level will have positive environmental benefits nationally.

WATER RESOURCES – The quality and the quantity of our water supply are critical to our nation's future. According to a recent poll, nine out of ten Americans believe safe and clean water is a national priority that deserves federal investment. RCs play a large and diverse role in water resource planning and require federal assistance and funding for planning, technical assistance, and responding to emerging water issues. This includes establishing a federal Water Infrastructure Trust Fund with a dedicated, firewalled revenue stream. It is necessary for water infrastructure projects and environmental actions to include the regional perspective.

ENERGY – The development of a comprehensive and integrated national energy policy that addresses energy independence and security is necessary for continued and sustained economic growth, building alternative workforce opportunities, and healthy communities. RCs are a key element in executing national energy policies and technologies at the local levels. Alternative energy sources, including nuclear, wind, solar, wave, biofuels, clean coal, geothermal, etc. should be explored as solutions in all regions – urban and rural.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION – There is a great need to create nationwide information instruments - awareness and educational campaigns – reaching all levels of government and citizens focused on environmental quality by promoting informed choices that contribute to behavioral change and improved conditions. Regional councils and Metropolitan Planning Organizations should be directly involved with this undertaking.