

## **SEPA IWG Status Update July 21, 2008 (DRAFT)**

Since the last status update (dated July 7, 2008), the SEPA IWG met in person for a full day meeting on July 8, and small groups of IWG members and technical staff have continued to work on specific issues since that meeting.

At the July 8 meeting, the SEPA IWG focused on three questions:

- What types of greenhouse gas emissions should be measured and disclosed for projects and non-projects (e.g., plans and policies) under SEPA?
- What tools are available to measure greenhouse gas emissions for project and non-projects?  
And,
- What should be the approach for determining what constitutes a “significant” environmental impact from greenhouse gas emissions (i.e., SEPA’s “threshold determination”)?

For each of these questions, members began to focus on potential solutions by identifying a “sense of the group” on each question and beginning to describe options for policy proposals.

For the question of what types of emissions to measure, the “sense of the group” was to look at greenhouse gas impacts in terms of net emissions of such gases, which would include a consideration of both sources and sinks. Some members favored a “broad” approach, in which the focus would be on measuring many types of emissions, and other members favored a “narrow” approach that would focus on measuring a limited set of emissions. A sub-group of members and technical staff is working to define options for broad, narrow, and possibly other, options for the “what do we measure?” question.

For the question of what tools can be used to measure greenhouse gas emissions, the “sense of the group” was to have some statewide consistency in the types of tools that are used, but not necessarily require or recommend the use of particular tools. The group identified a number of criteria for appropriate tools (e.g., accuracy, ease of use, cost, etc.). A sub-group of members and technical staff are evaluating a set of tools (compiled for the July 8 meeting) according to these criteria with the goal of winnowing the list down to a smaller set of preferred tools and/or clarifying what types of tools are most appropriate.

For the question about threshold determination, the “sense of the group” was that there should be some statewide consistency in the approach to threshold determination. However, some members raised the concern that statewide consistency could overly limit local discretion. Members identified three options to statewide consistency, which will be evaluated further by a sub-group of members and technical staff:

- A statewide standard for determining significance,
- A statewide framework for determining significance, possibly with a range of acceptable standards, or
- A procedural requirement that local agencies establish their own standard for determining significance.

The SEPA IWG will meet again for a teleconference on July 23 to continue the discussion of measurement and threshold determination and to consider the options developed by smaller groups before the meeting.