

“Air Quality and Environmental Justice Issues in the South Coast Air Basin: Major Challenges Ahead”

Mr. Wayne Natri
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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“Necessity is the mother of all invention,” began Mr. Wayne Natri, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Regional Administrator for Region 9, in reference to the development of environmental leadership in Southern California. The most desirable qualities of Southern California, continued Mr. Natri, have always been our greatest challenges; a strong economy; attractive climate and topography; ideal proximity to the Pacific Rim. Though we have made great strides in environmental protection, such as our much improved our air quality since the 1940s; Mr. Natri raised some of the current concerns for the EPA, one of which is ensuring environmental justice is integrated into all projects. Mr. Natri provided examples of current EPA projects in Southern California working toward reducing ozone and particulate matter emissions that will greatly benefit communities who are down-wind or in close proximity to polluting activities. For example, the newly proposed engine and fuel standards for locomotive and marine vessels, he described, will have tremendous health and monetary benefits. The most successful strategy employed by the EPA to leverage funding and gain political support for these types of projects, said Mr. Natri, is collaboration at the regional scale and between sectors, especially the private sector and community groups.