

THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS

HOWARD HEINZ ENDOWMENT - VIRA I. HEINZ ENDOWMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Doug Root
412-338-2657

STUDY FINDS REGION'S AIR POLLUTION RANKS AMONG MOST SEVERE IN NATION

**Residents at Much Greater Risk for Health Problems
Significant Amount of Pollutants Generated Inside Region**

*Science Group's Report Spurs Heinz Endowments' Clean-Air Initiative
A New Website Section and a Call for Regional Partnership*

Pittsburgh, March 9, 2011 – A six-month, independent study of air quality data for western Pennsylvania has found that despite significant improvement during the past three decades, the region still has some of the most polluted air in the country, and its residents are at much higher risk for a range of serious health problems.

While findings on the extent and effect of the problem are sobering, the implication of a key finding, that much of the region's poor air quality is due to in-state sources, is that local communities have the power to make changes that will lift Pittsburgh from the ranks of the worst-air regions.

The study, "Fine Particulate Matter and Ozone Air Quality in Western Pennsylvania in the 2000s," is a research and analysis project conducted by a senior scientist with the Boston-based Clean Air Task Force. It was commissioned by The Heinz Endowments last year during an internal assessment of progress made from the foundation's nearly two decades of grant making for air quality-improvement efforts.

"What we suspected was validated by the study," Endowments President Robert Vagt said in announcing its findings today. "While some significant progress has been made through the decades in reducing some types of harmful emissions, the progress has not been strong enough. The Pittsburgh region has one of the most serious air pollution problems in the country, and it is likely to get worse because it is not keeping pace with other regions that continue to make better progress."

The study's author, Dr. John Graham, said his findings corroborate the very poor air-quality rankings that the Pittsburgh region has received from the American Lung Association in its annual State of the Air report in each of the past six years. He also dispelled the assertion made by some critics of the poor rankings that they are tied to poor air readings by one monitor in Allegheny County's Liberty Borough. "Air quality in the region is not good across the board. There are bad spots and there are very bad spots. Many communities regularly fail to meet the federal Clean Air Act and annual standards."

Among the study's other significant findings and recommendations:

- Air quality relative to the rest of the country has been consistently poor throughout the past decade;
- The current amount of pollution in the Pittsburgh region is at the limit of, or greater than, the federal threshold for harm to human health;
- Wind-carried pollution from neighboring states is a significant contributor to western Pennsylvania's air problem, but failure to clean up in-state sources prevents the region from improving as fast as other parts of the country;
- Pennsylvania sources may account for one-half to two-thirds, on average, of the fine particulate matter pollution monitored in the Pittsburgh region;
- To better protect human and environmental health, there needs to be a more comprehensive air monitoring system for the region;

"This study is blunt in its implication for our work in philanthropy," Endowments Board Chairman Teresa Heinz said after being briefed on the findings. "All our aspirations for leveraging a higher quality of life in the region in so many areas cannot be realized if our health and our environment are threatened with a serious air quality problem. For the Endowments, building the community will to solve this problem must be one of our highest priorities."

Endowments President Vagt said the board and staff are committed to dedicating significant resources and manpower to lead a region-wide, public initiative that will build awareness of the problem and develop solutions, including a list of behavioral changes individuals and families can make to make a difference.

In addition, the foundation intends to empower its grantees and other air quality-improvement advocates to press for more active federal oversight of regulations that will restrict wind-carried pollution from other states. "One foundation, no matter how well-resourced and well-connected cannot do this by itself," said Vagt. "For this effort to be successful, we must have leaders from every sector involved in developing a plan to clean our air. We have begun a series of conversations within this group, and the overwhelming response has been enthusiasm for joining in to help bring our air into compliance."

The Endowments is now in the process of developing a long-range plan that includes significant public messaging directed to the general public to increase awareness and build support. An immediate step will be the launching at the end of this month of an air quality awareness and action center on the foundation's website. Caren Glotfelty, director of the Endowments' Environment Program, said the site is designed to provide a place for people in the

region to go to get direct access to the latest science and to better understand health implications. “It is also a way for us to begin work on implementing many of the recommendations in the report, which include building public support to ensure that standards are enforced as stringently for power plants in our region as they are in other regions around the country.”

Glotfelty said that with just a few clicks, visitors will be connected to solid, unbiased information on the issue, and they also can find out what to do as individuals and where to volunteer to help get us to cleaner air as quickly as possible. She said the microsite eventually will be supplanted with a larger, independent website once other sectors of the community are engaged.

The full report and the Endowments’ response to the findings have been posted on the foundation website, www.heinz.org.

#####