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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2014 Ozone Season Ends with Zero Air Quality Alerts

(Columbus-December 9, 2014) The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) announces for the first time in 20 years that Central Ohio had zero ozone alert days. The Air Quality Index (AQI), which identifies health effects from higher levels of pollutants in the air, did not exceed 100 AQI or Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups for Delaware, Knox, Fairfield, Franklin, Licking and Madison counties.

While the official ozone season in Central Ohio is from April 1 to October 31, ground-level ozone levels often ramp up in June when temperatures begin to climb and sunlight is more prevalent. However, when forecasts were reviewed, weather conditions typically associated with higher ozone levels predicted High-Moderate AQI levels for ozone. But the actual AQI levels were lower resulting in zero air quality alerts. The improvement in air quality this ozone season can be attributed to a reduction in pollution emissions and decreased temperatures in July and August as analyzed by MORPC's air quality forecasting firm Sonoma Technology, Inc.

Federal regulatory programs, combined with local efforts, contribute to overall emission reductions. MORPC is proud to work in collaboration with local governments, organizations and businesses toward actions leading to better air quality. MORPC's Take Five for Clean Air campaign encourages and recognizes businesses and local governments that pledge five or more actions to conserve energy and reduce mobile emissions. This businesses and local governments that have taken the pledge include:

Accurate IT
Ameresco
Blendon Township (Franklin County)
City of Bexley
City of Columbus
City of Gahanna
City of Hilliard
City of New Albany
City of Upper Arlington
City of Whitehall
Columbus Zoo and Aquarium

COTA
Franklin County Commissioners
Franklin County Public Facilities Management
Genoa Township (Delaware County)
Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams
Kroger
Metro Parks
MORPC
Ohio Chapter Sierra Club
Ohio Environmental Council
Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO)

-more-

Working to Build a Better Region

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Voluntary commitments through Take Five include distributing Air Quality Alerts to staff, developing vehicle policies that reduce emissions, offering employees resources and/or incentives to encourage commuting by bus, bicycle or carpool.

Despite improvements, the region remains in nonattainment for the 2008 8-hour ozone standard. The U.S. EPA recently proposed a tighter ozone standard and public comments will be considered before finalizing the rule by October 2015. Nonattainment can result in federal penalties, including loss of highway funds, and can impact businesses that want to locate or expand an air pollution source in that area.

For more information on MORPC's Take Five for Clean Air or to review the *Central Ohio Air Quality Summary*, visit <http://www.morpc.org/Sustainability/air-quality/index>.

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The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) is a voluntary association of local governments and regional organizations which envisions and embraces innovative directions in economic prosperity, energy, the environment, housing, land use, and transportation. Our transformative programming, services and innovative public policy are designed to promote and support the vitality and growth in the region.