

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 6, 2026

Intermountain West Ozone Exchange Conference Set for October 2026 After Funding from Colorado Air Quality Enterprise



The North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments will host the Intermountain West Ozone Exchange Conference after a \$100,000 award from in the Colorado Air Quality Enterprise. This conference will take place Oct. 26–28, 2026, at The Ranch Events Complex in Loveland, Colo.

Unlike traditional conferences that center primarily on technical presentations and expert panels, this event is being designed as a grassroots, community-driven exchange of ideas, data, and lived experience. The goal is to bring together scientists, policymakers, local governments, industry leaders, and, critically, the public to collaboratively explore data-driven strategies for addressing ozone pollution.

“We all care about the health effects ground level ozone has on our residents; however, ozone levels in our region are still not in compliance with EPA standards despite the many control strategies we have adopted,” said Kristin Stephens, chair of the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization. “Colorado’s Air Quality Enterprise grant allows us to offer presenter stipends and lower registration costs, making this not-for-profit conference more accessible to a broader range of participants, including community members who might not otherwise attend. We encourage everyone, from technical experts to interested residents, to save the date and be part of this important conversation.”

Despite major efforts to reduce ozone-forming pollutants including nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds, many areas across the Intermountain West continue to struggle to meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ozone, as designated by the Environmental Protection Agency. The last time a regional ozone conference was held by the EPA was in 2016.

Given the need for understanding the unique and evolving ozone pollution problem in the Intermountain West, the Ozone Exchange hopes to provide a new approach to the ozone conversation, highlighting the need for broadly sharing updated research findings, identifying data gaps, and collectively discussing solutions. The Ozone Exchange aims to create a collaborative forum for sharing the latest research, identifying data gaps and exploring solutions

The Intermountain West partners will also reflect on the unique environmental and geographic conditions as it relates to ozone pollution and attainment of the federal ozone standard.

“This conference is about taking a hard look at current ozone science to better understand what’s driving high ozone levels and bringing diverse perspectives together to discuss what we can do about it,” said Holly Williams, chair of the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments. “As we recognize Air Quality Awareness Week, this effort highlights the importance of increasing public understanding and working collaboratively toward solutions that improve the air we all share.”

Call for Abstracts Now Open

The conference will include research presentations, panel dialogues, roundtable discussions, research poster sessions and more, providing opportunities for engagement and idea sharing across sectors.

“By creating a space for open dialogue and shared learning, we can better equip our region to support air quality strategies that effect changes and protect public health,” said Andrew Gunning, executive director of the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments.

The call for abstracts includes several topic areas:

- Latest ozone research findings and emerging data gaps
- Regional challenges such as local and transported human-made contributions, topography, meteorology, wildfire impacts, and background ozone
- Policy and regulatory approaches to improving air quality
- Communication strategies for high ozone days
- Emerging air quality issues and long-term solutions

The deadline for abstract submissions is June 23, 2026. The submission form can be found at nfrmpo.org/air-quality/ozone-exchange.

Public Engagement Opportunities

Rather than a one-way flow of information, the conference will emphasize interactive discussions, workshops, and problem-solving sessions designed to bridge the gap between technical experts and the public.

In advance of the conference, two virtual town halls will be held to provide information, answer questions and receive comments from the public:

- **May 15, 2026**, 11:30 a.m.
- **June 3, 2026**, 6 p.m.

These virtual town halls provide an opportunity for attendees to learn more about the Ozone Exchange, ask questions, and engage directly with organizers on session topics ahead of the event.

“This conference is about creating a shared understanding of the challenges Intermountain West States face and working together toward realistic, effective solutions,” said Elizabeth Relford, executive director of the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization. “We want participants to leave not only more informed but empowered to be part of the solution.”

More information on the virtual town halls, is available at nfrmpo.org/air-quality/ozone-exchange or by emailing imwozone@outlook.com.

About NFRMPO

The North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization is the federally designated regional planning body for transportation and air quality in Northern Colorado, representing the urbanized areas of Larimer and Weld Counties, Fort Collins, Loveland, Greeley, Evans, Windsor, Timnath, Johnstown, Berthoud, Eaton, Garden City, LaSalle, Milliken, and Severance.

About PPACG

The Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments is comprised of 16 local governments in El Paso, Park and Teller counties that collaborate on issues that cross political boundaries, with a focus on transportation planning, aging services, military land use planning, water quality management and air quality efforts. The organization also administers the Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority that provides more than \$150 million in funding for the region’s transportation capital, maintenance and transit needs, and manages the non-profit Drive Smart Colorado.