

Regional Planning Organization (RPO) Program Evaluation

Office of Air and Radiation (OAR)

November 17, 2011



RPO Program Evaluation

- EPA sponsored an evaluation of the Regional Planning Organization (RPO) Program
- Goals:
 - Review past RPO roles and work related to regional haze
 - Inform future EPA and partner decisions and work to address regional air quality planning and technical support needs



Evaluation of National Air Quality Regional Planning Organization Program

Final Report | July 7, 2011





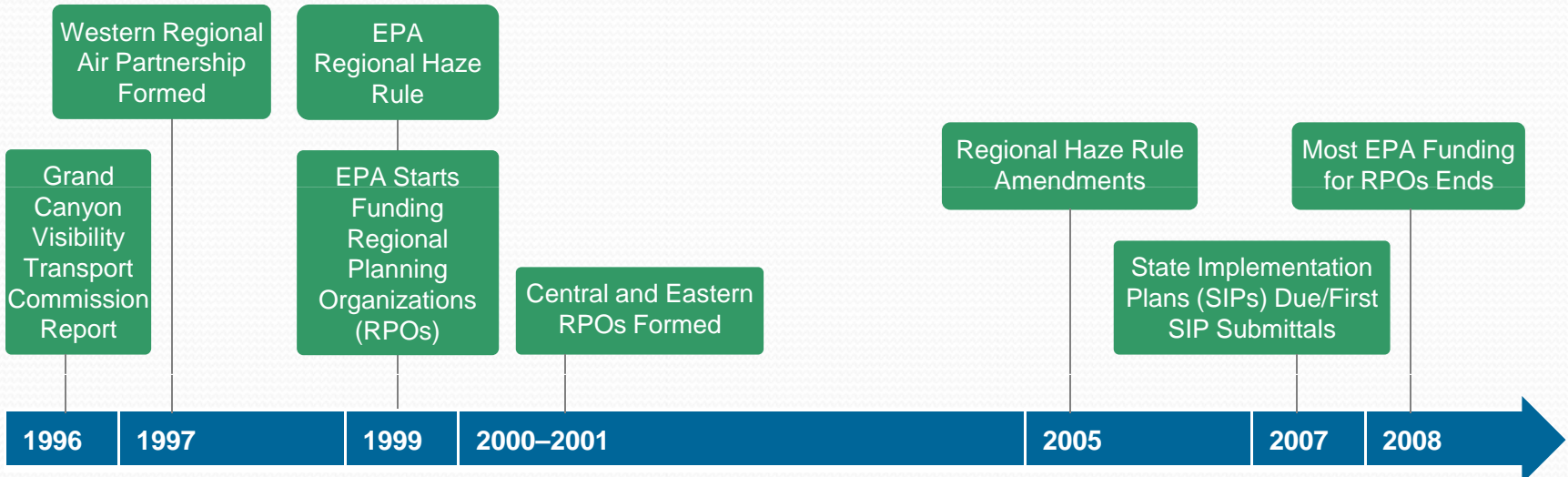
RPO Evaluation Focus and Scope

- RPOs' roles in support of regional haze state and tribal implementation plan development and the broader U.S. air quality management system
- Perceived value of the RPOs and benefits of RPO support, as well as disadvantages and inefficiencies
- Perspectives on existing and future needs for regional air quality data management, modeling, and planning
- Design attributes and technical support needs of options for supporting future multi-jurisdictional air quality management
- Trends in RPO funding from various sources over time



RPO Evaluation Approach

- Evaluation conducted December 2010 – July 2011
- Contractor support from Ross & Associates and IEC
- Approach:
 - Reviewed background documents
 - Developed a logic model and evaluation questions based on input from EPA
 - Conducted ~38 interviews
(RPOs, MJOs, States, Tribes, EPA HQ and Regional Offices)
 - Reviewed comments submitted by National Tribal Air Association
 - Analyzed data and identified findings
 - Selected sections reviewed by RPOs to ensure accuracy
 - Final draft of report completed in July 2011



RPOs Develop Regional Planning Framework (First 1-2 years)

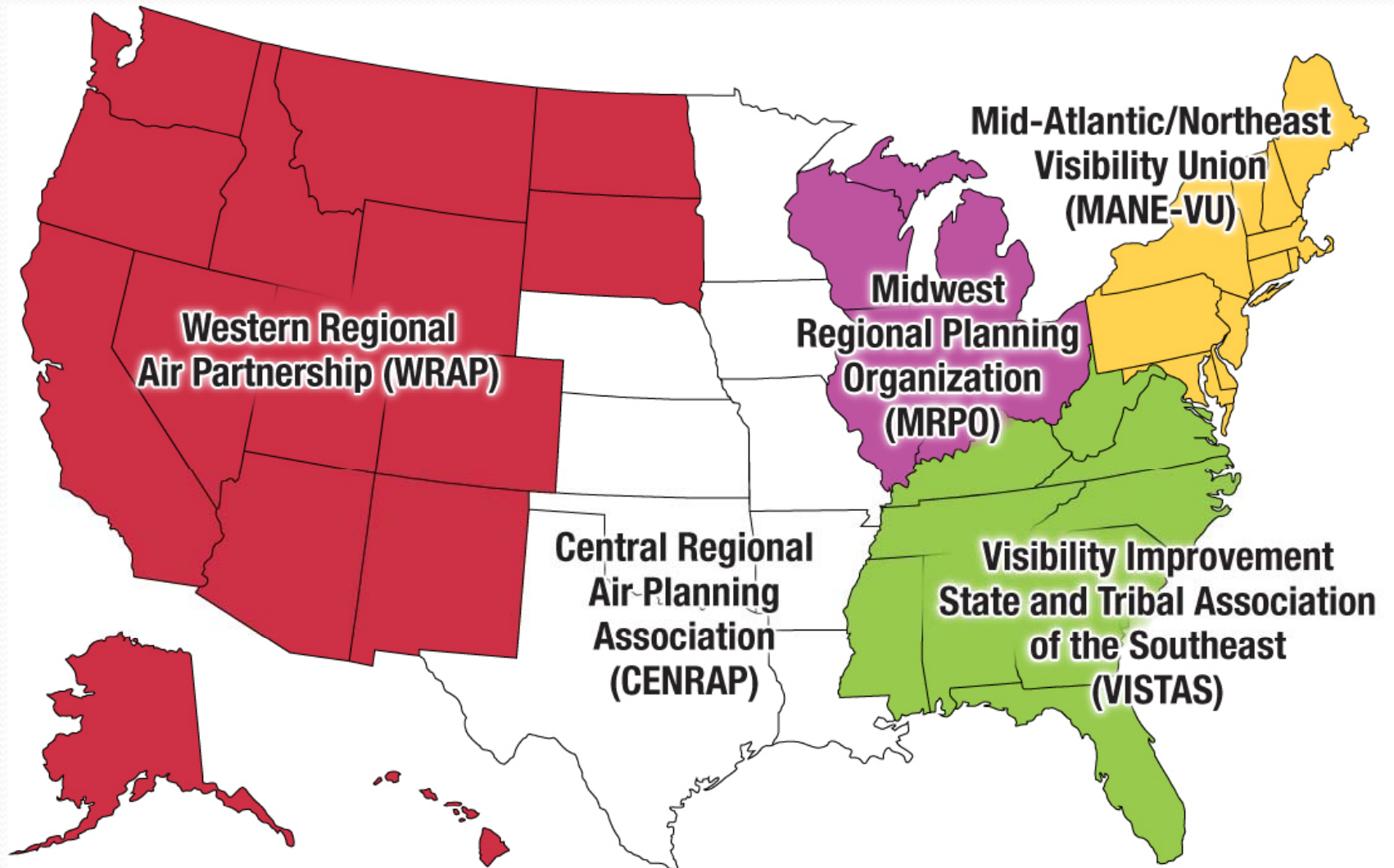
States and Tribes Develop and Submit Implementation Plans (41 SIPs submitted as of 3/2011)

RPO Technical Support: Monitoring and Data Analysis | Emissions Inventories | Modeling of Control Strategies | Tool Development (4+ years and ongoing)

Next SIPs due 2018

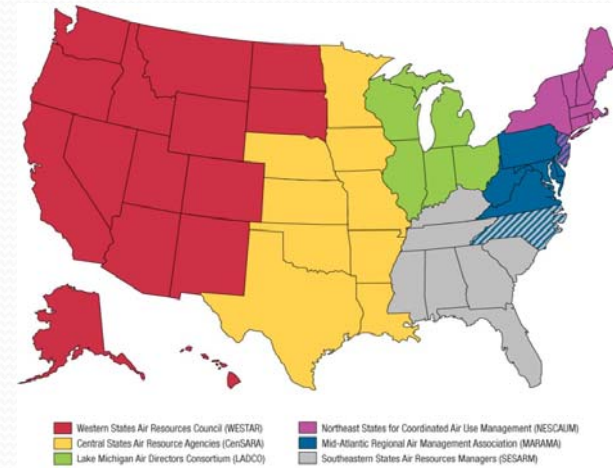
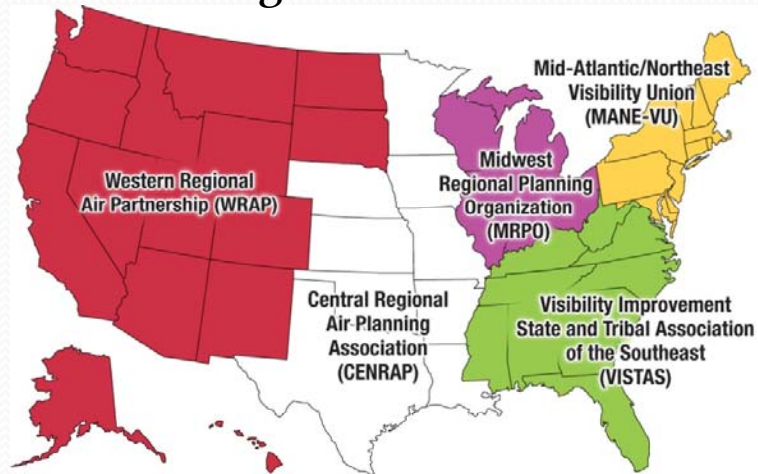


Regional Planning Organizations (RPO)

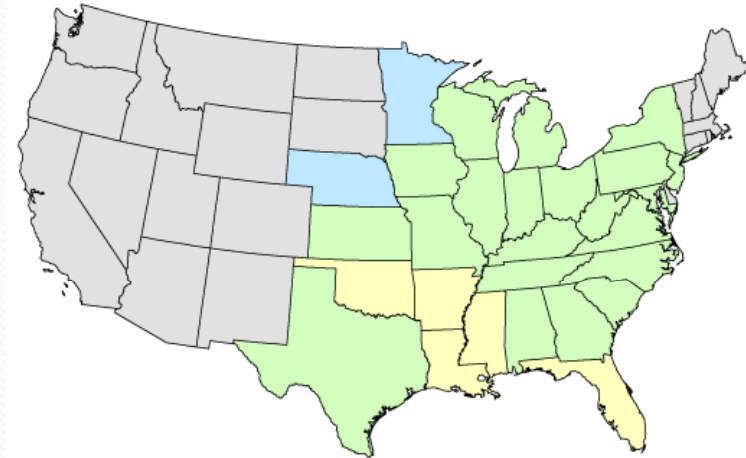




Regional-Level Policies : Regional Haze and CSAPR



Mandatory Class I Areas



Visibility is more of priority in the West; CSAPR in the Midwest and East.



Findings

- RPOs met a clear need for regional technical support and collaborative forums for cost-effective air quality planning
- Existing RPO-MJO structure can inform future design
 - Use a combination of permanent staff, in-kind contributions, and targeted contracting that best meets regional needs
 - Focus on technical analyses and support rather than policy or research
 - Inclusion of tribes
- RPO scope should expand beyond regional haze to address multiple air pollutants (e.g. CSAPR, NAAQS)
- There is a need for national-scale coordination of regional technical work and alignment with EPA policies to leverage resources and prevent duplication of efforts.
- RPO's developed tools than can continue to facilitate regional air quality work in the future



Next Steps

- Final report was distributed to state & local agencies, tribes, RPO and MJO for comment
- Recognizing the increased burden on states and tribes, EPA has requested an \$82 million increase in STAG funding for FY2012, but has been unsuccessful so far in securing additional funding
- EPA will follow up to the report with regional discussions



Next Steps

- EPA want to engage state & local governments, tribes and RPOs & MJOs in a conversation at a regional level on how to move forward on regional planning (tentatively January)
 - Explore whether RPO and MJO merger is an option in each region
 - Identify upcoming regional planning needs and shortfalls of technical support in states and tribes
 - Discuss ways to support tribal involvement in regional air planning, including possible EPA funding for tribal involvement
 - Identify ways to achieve efficiencies through joint EPA/RPO development of tools and data, aligning with EPA policy (i.e., SIPs)
 - EPA coordinates regional air planning activities and provides technical training at periodic meetings
 - Targeted support of regional tools used by multiple RPOs-MJOs