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ADEQ's 25 Years of Existence Result in Large Reduction of Pollutant Levels in the Air of Metropolitan Phoenix Area

PHOENIX (Dec. 11, 2012) – During the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality's 25 years of existence, the amount of pollution in the skies of metropolitan Phoenix has been greatly reduced.

Carbon monoxide levels have fallen 83 percent, dust has declined 40 percent and ozone 6 percent despite the population of the Valley almost doubling, the number of vehicles increasing 177 percent and the number of vehicle miles driven increasing 89 percent on Valley roads since 1987. Among the reasons are ADEQ's Vehicle Emissions Inspection program, cleaner burning fuels and various dust control measures within the Valley.

Those statistics are among the findings contained in the release today of the publication *ADEQ -- 25 Years Protecting Arizona's Environment 1987-2012* in honor of the agency's 25th anniversary and which summarizes its many success stories during that time.

“We have helped accomplish many things that protect the public health and environment of our state and touch the lives of Arizonans since our inception a quarter of a century ago,” said ADEQ Director Henry Darwin.

Among the other success stories:

- ADEQ's Monitoring Assistance Program (MAP) has drastically increased the compliance rate to state and federal standards for contaminant levels in 850 of the state's smaller public water systems with less than 10,000 customers. The compliance rate for synthetic organic compounds like pesticides and herbicides has jumped from 26 percent to 100 percent; the compliance rate for asbestos, radionuclide, nitrite, sulfate and nickel has increased from 44 percent to 99 percent and the nitrate compliance rate has increased from 75 percent to 99 percent.
- A total of 91 percent – nearly 8,000 – of underground storage tank leaks in the state from petroleum products have been cleaned up and the land returned to beneficial use.
- The Arizona Aquifer Protection (APP) Program was the first comprehensive groundwater protection program in the country and has issued permits to thousands of facilities around the state while ensuring that drinking water standards are not exceeded.

- ADEQ's Brownfields Program has provided the money and expertise to rehabilitate once-contaminated properties into the state's largest outdoor retail, entertainment and dining destination (Tempe Marketplace), a key tourist stop (Winslow's Standin' On The Corner Park), a downtown transportation hub (Flagstaff Transit Center), and an important historical outpost (Camp Naco).
- Nearly 900 tons of discarded electronics have been collected during 70 ADEQ-sponsored electronic waste collection events throughout the state from more than 12,000 vehicles, keeping the material from being illegally dumped or clogging landfills.
- ADEQ's Water Quality Improvement Grant Program kept more than one-third of a million tons of sediment and more than one-third of a million pounds of nitrogen out of state water over five-year periods.
- Air quality forecasters have accurately predicted a health watch or high pollution advisory for ozone 70 percent of the time, which allows the general public to take protective measures to protect health.

ADEQ was established in 1987 as a separate cabinet-level agency to administer all of the state's environmental protection programs.

Director Darwin said he was excited about the prospects of ADEQ offering even better service to Arizona residents during the coming years.

"Our most immediate goals are supporting environmentally responsible economic growth, enhancing Arizona's unique environment and accelerating the pace of environmental cleanups," Darwin said. "It's my hope for ADEQ to be known as an organization committed to technical and operational excellence as we deliver the finest quality service in all of our endeavors."

The 25th anniversary publication is available online at:

http://www.azdeq.gov/function/about/download/25th_anniversary_book-web.pdf

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