On June 25, at Georgetown University, President Obama announced a national climate action plan to accelerate progress in addressing climate change by using existing authorities, tools, and programs throughout the federal government. He noted that climate change “is a challenge that . . . demands our attention now” and that “will require all of us to do our part.” That’s why I want to thank A&WMA for the invitation to introduce an issue of *EM* devoted to climate change by providing an overview of the President’s Climate Action Plan.

For more than 40 years, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) mission has been to protect American families from harmful pollution, and the United States has seen tremendous success in cleaning up the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the land where we will live, learn, and play. This progress has been achieved through partnerships with agencies, states, industries, nongovernmental groups, tribes, local governments, and the public. Together, our efforts have led to commonsense and workable solutions that have reduced harmful pollution.

In 2009, EPA issued the Endangerment Finding, which determined that greenhouse gases posed a threat to human health and the environment and that emissions from human activities clearly played a role. Since then, EPA has taken important steps to address carbon pollution, including the historic achievements in the mobile source sector. And now the President has called on agencies and departments across the federal government to work together with states, cities, industries, consumers, and the international community to build on this historic progress and to continue the momentum for the future. Under the President’s plan, EPA is working on several fronts:

- cutting carbon pollution from power plants;
- helping to build a 21st century transportation sector;
- increasing energy efficiency;
- reducing methane and hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs);
- preparing for and adapting to a changing climate; and
- supporting international progress in cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

**Key EPA Actions under the President’s National Climate Action Plan**

**Power Plants – The Path Forward**

Power plants are by far the most significant stationary source of greenhouse gas emissions. Approximately 40% of the nation’s carbon pollution comes from power plants. While there have in recent years been changes in the types of power plants and how they are operated that have resulted in lower carbon emissions, the President’s plan calls for EPA to address carbon pollution from new and existing power plants.

By the time this article is published, EPA will have issued and begun taking comment on a new proposal for carbon standards for new power plants. The proposal sets separate emission standards for new coal-fired units and new natural gas turbines ensuring that the standards for new power plants reflect recent developments and trends in the power sector, as well as comments received on the April 2012 proposal. I encourage you to review the proposal and provide the agency with comments and information during the 60-day public comment period. After considering public input, EPA will issue the final carbon pollution standards for new power plants in a timely way.

Setting carbon pollution guidelines for existing power plants involves both EPA regulations and development of plans by states. The President
So today, for the sake of our children, and the health and safety of all Americans, I’m directing the Environmental Protection Agency to . . . complete new pollution standards for both new and existing power plants.

> President Obama
highway vehicles, EPA will partner with truck makers, the U.S. Department of Transportation, and other stakeholders to set greenhouse gas and fuel efficiency standards for post-2018 medium- and heavy-duty trucks.

Cutting Wasted Energy in Homes, Businesses, and Factories
The President’s plan recognizes the important role that simple and cost-effective steps to increase energy efficiency can play in cutting carbon pollution. To this end, EPA will continue to boost ENERGY STAR performance levels for appliances and products; facilitate home energy improvements; support interagency efforts to increase efficiency of multi-family housing; promote EPA’s Portfolio Manager Tool as the gold standard for tracking energy usage; and encourage conversion to Combined Heat and Power (CHP) systems. There are many opportunities for increased energy efficiency that will reduce pollution while saving businesses and consumers money, not to mention many programs that provide assistance and recognition for those going the extra mile.

Reducing Methane and HFCs
The President’s plan also calls for EPA to help cut methane and HFCs, both potent greenhouse gases. While methane has a global warming potential more than 20 times greater than carbon dioxide (CO₂), one ton of HFCs is the equivalent of hundreds of tons of CO₂.

Methane
The President’s plan calls for EPA to work with the Departments of Agriculture, Energy, Interior, Labor, and Transportation to develop a comprehensive methane strategy. Key tasks in this effort will be to assess and improve emissions data and to identify technologies, incentives, and best practices for reducing emissions. EPA will also work collaboratively with state governments, as well as the private sector, to look comprehensively at reducing emissions.

HFCs
By 2030, U.S. emissions of HFCs are expected to triple compared to 2005. Under the President’s plan, EPA will work through the Significant New Alternatives Policy (SNAP) program to encourage private sector investment in low-emissions
technology by identifying and approving climate-friendly chemicals, while restricting certain uses of the most harmful chemical alternatives. EPA will also provide federal leadership by purchasing and transitioning to equipment using safer, more sustainable alternatives. EPA will continue our international diplomatic efforts to phase down the use of HFCs, including our work through the Montreal Protocol.

Adaptation
Addressing climate change will need to include both mitigation and adaptation. While the steps EPA is taking under the President’s plan will help transition the United States to cleaner energy sources; drive more miles on less gas; and waste less energy at home, on the job and in transit, the effects of climate change are already being seen and experienced. Adaptation initiatives in the President’s plan aim to increase the resilience of communities to climate change by increasing their ability to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from the impacts of climate change.

Under the President’s plan, EPA will participate in the U.S. national climate assessment in 2014 to highlight our understanding of impacts and to help anticipate and prepare for specific impacts. Consistent with the President’s open data efforts, EPA will continue to provide open access to greenhouse gas reporting rule data. In addition, many states, cities and communities are already planning and preparing for the impacts of climate change. EPA will work to support these efforts as well as climate resilient investments at the community level.

Leading International Efforts to Address Global Climate Change
As the President’s plan makes clear, no country can meet the climate challenge alone, which is why it’s imperative for the United States to couple action at home with international leadership. For EPA’s part, through the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC), the agency will work to combat short-lived climate pollutants—pollutants that stay in the atmosphere for a short amount of time and have a warming influence on the climate.

The CCAC was launched in 2012 and has grown to include more than 30 partner countries in addition to the World Bank and the United Nations’ Environment Programme. Efforts under the CCAC include reducing methane and black carbon from waste management practices and landfills; avoiding methane leakage, venting, and flaring from oil and gas production; phasing down HFCs through new technologies; and addressing black carbon from brick kilns and diesel engines.

In addition, EPA will also work to reduce methane and short-lived climate pollutants through other international efforts, including the Arctic Council and the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, and the Global Methane Initiative.

Looking to the Future
Through these efforts, we can begin to slow the effects of climate change, leaving a cleaner, more stable environment for future generations. Members of A&WMA represent industry, academia, nongovernmental organizations, and all levels of government from across the United States and around the world. Whatever your particular field of practice, there’s something in the Climate Action Plan of interest to you. Successfully addressing a challenge as big as climate change will demand the involvement of a wide spectrum of perspectives and disciplines. The articles in this issue of EM focus on specific aspects of this challenge. You can find more information about President Obama’s Climate Action Plan online at www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/image/president27sclimateactionplan.pdf.

EPA looks forward to continuing the robust dialogue and collaborative efforts already underway as we work to address this momentous challenge together. em