

Yes, it's still raining acid

Report of the Acid Rain Task Group Workshop

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The Acid Rain Task Group Workshop was held in Gatineau, Québec on February 23 and 24, 2005, with representatives from industry, environmental and public health groups, and various government departments. The purpose was to discuss and develop an understanding of the latest science and obtain stakeholder feedback and perspectives on the five-year review and the proposed next steps.

From the information presented, delegates concluded:

- There have been limited but encouraging signs of recovery
- Currently planned emission reductions are insufficient
- Climate conditions are important to recovery
- The recovery process will be long-term - decades to centuries
- Ecosystems will not return to their original states
- Some biological populations will be permanently altered
- Reducing emissions can reduce acid deposition
- At least 5% of lakes sampled in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia are so sensitive that they are unable to neutralize any acid rain
- Many Canadians think that the acid rain problem has been solved
- Acid deposition is a trans-boundary problem

Recommendations:

- Set realistic long-term goals, with shorter-term objectives that can be monitored regularly to determine if projects/programs are on-track and effective
- Integrate acid rain work with other air quality issues, such as global warming, smog
- Conduct more monitoring and increase the number of monitoring sites
- Establish a new baseline for data, including critical loads, using wet and dry deposition information
- Start the process immediately
- Communicate to public, media, and governments that the acid rain problem still exists
- Start monitoring other pollutants such as ammonia, aluminum, mercury
- Convert the annual report to a biannual report; get it out earlier in the year
- Set up a database of research being conducted and share information
- Continue to encourage the U.S. government to lower U.S. emissions
- Set up a North America-wide emission reduction credit exchange program
- Work to reduce acid emissions by another 75%