New Tools For Air Quality Evaluation: Air Quality Sensors

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Technological advances have made it possible to measure air quality with smaller, more portable sensors at lower-cost and in more locations while simultaneously engaging new players.

Data is more complex with implications for data storage, processing, and data correction before it’s useful for research applications.
Motivation

- Rapid expansion in the use of sensors creates a growing need to understand the data being produced so that agencies are better able to respond.
  - As an example, there are more than 6000 publicly reporting PurpleAir sensors worldwide
  - Outnumber the regulatory monitors
- In some cases, this data is out-competing AirNow for Air Quality information
  - People sometimes believe data they collect themselves over data provided by government
  - Data is geographically closer and perceived to be more representative of local exposure
SPEAR (Sensor Performance, Evaluation and Application Research) Program

• Project Goals
  • Discover, evaluate, develop, apply and communicate new & emerging air quality sensor technologies to meet a wide range of stakeholder needs (general public to regulatory officials)

• Research Questions
  • What are the capabilities of emerging technologies and their potential to meet current & future air quality monitoring needs?
  • How can EPA best support sensor developers and the user community?
  • What other data and technologies are needed to help understand and interpret sensor data?
  • How can EPA apply the knowledge gained to issues of concern to EPA and their clients/partners/stakeholders?
• Continued effort to evaluate new sensors coming to market
  • Focus on criteria pollutants but also considering other pollutants (e.g., VOCs, HAPs)
  • Especially interested in products likely to be widely adopted and/or new technologies
• Select sensors are collocated at the AIRS research site in RTP, NC for 30 days or more
  • Tested in triplicate to understand sensor variability
  • Data compared to nearby regulatory instruments (FRM/FEM) and meteorological measurements to evaluate performance
• Results communicated through the Air Sensor Toolbox (https://www.epa.gov/air-sensor-toolbox)
Study Design:
• Leverage partnerships with air monitoring agencies to test sensor in a variety of locations for an extended period
• 7 air monitoring stations across the US - NC, GA, DE, AZ, CO, OK, WI
• 1-year of measurements beginning in July 2019
• Similar reference monitors across sites
• 6 air sensors
• Some PM only, some multipollutant


Project Lead: Andrea Clements

Sites across the US
LTPP - US Performance PurpleAir

Design:
• Leverage projects already underway by air monitoring agencies
• 12 partner air monitoring agencies and ~50 collocated Purple Air sensors across the US

Objectives:
• Draw broader conclusions about the performance of Purple Air sensors
  • Different climates
  • Extreme events
• Explore methods of Quality Assuring (QA) and adjusting data from distributed sensors

Collocation sites in 10 states - AK, AZ, FL, GA, OK, VT, NC, CA, WI, IA

Partners from 10 states
Preliminary PurpleAir findings

- Good precision between sensors as similar slopes are observed for replicate sensors at same site.
- Accuracy is variable - field collocation is essential as relationships in different parts of the country vary
  - Slope ~2.1 Atlanta
  - Slope ~1.7 in RTP
  - Slope ~1.2 Phoenix

1-hr comparisons across 3 sites

Red line = linear regression
PM sensors for wildfire smoke

Project Lead: Amara Holder

Evaluated low to mid-cost PM$_{2.5}$ sensors to augment ambient monitoring networks during wildfire smoke events:

- PurpleAir PAII-SD (PM$_1$, PM$_{2.5}$, PM$_{10}$)
- Aeroqual AQY (PM$_{2.5}$, O$_3$, NO$_2$)
- SenSevere RAMP (PM$_{2.5}$, CO, CO$_2$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fire/Measurement Location</th>
<th>Sensors</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPA ambient monitoring site (RTP, NC)</td>
<td>AQY, PA, RAMP</td>
<td>T640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natchez Fire (Happy Camp, CA)</td>
<td>AQY, PA</td>
<td>E-BAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bald Mt – Pole Creek Fire (Price , UT)</td>
<td>AQY, PA</td>
<td>E-SAMPLER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alder Fire (Springville, CA)</td>
<td>RAMP</td>
<td>BAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Pinehurst, CA)</td>
<td>AQY, PA, RAMP</td>
<td>BAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Camp Nelson, CA)</td>
<td>RAMP</td>
<td>E-BAM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PM sensors for wildfire smoke

- All PM sensors were highly correlated ($R^2 > 0.8$) with reference instruments at elevated PM concentrations.
- PM sensors generally reported 1.5 – 2X higher than EBAMs at elevated concentrations, but were in better agreement at lower concentrations.
- Correction for RH and T improve comparison.

Preliminary results
Wildfire Smoke Translational Science

Research Questions

• What interventions are effective for reducing wildland fire smoke exposures and risks?
• How is public health impacted by different levels and durations of exposures?
• What science is available to support recommendations for communities to develop clean air spaces in larger buildings?
• How effective are portable air cleaners (PACs) during smoke events?
• Are people in community clean air spaces or who have PACs in their homes reducing their exposure/risks to PM2.5?

Project Design

• Two 2019 field campaigns – Missoula, MT & Hoopa Valley, CA with indoor/outdoor measurements and outdoor mapping
• Laboratory testing with portable air cleaners

Science Leads:
Wayne Casio
Gayle Hagler
Amara Holder
Phoenix P-TAQ (Nov. 2018 – Mar. 2020)

**Project Lead:** Sue Kimbrough

**Phase 1 – Pilot (Nov. 2018 - May 2019)**

- Study PurpleAir performance in unique, arid environment
  - Low humidity, high temperature, and high PM$_{10}$ concentrations
- Evaluate sensor performance against collocated reference monitors
- Sensor degradation, reproducibility, and local correction factor

**Phase 2 – (May 2019-Mar. 2020)**

- Is PurpleAir suitable to supplement monitor network?
- Calibration of non-collocated PurpleAir sensors
- Optimal density and use of PurpleAir sensors
P-DAQ Pilot (Nov. 2018 – Apr. 2019)

- Hourly PurpleAir PM$_{2.5}$ data correlates much better than PM$_{10}$
- PurpleAir over-estimates PM$_{2.5}$, underestimates PM$_{10}$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensor</th>
<th>PM$_{2.5}$ $R^2$</th>
<th>Regression</th>
<th>PM$_{10}$ $R^2$</th>
<th>Regression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PurpleAir 1</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>$y = 1.2x - 0.5$</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>$y = 0.6x - 0.8$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PurpleAir 2</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>$y = 1.3x - 0.5$</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>$y = 0.6x - 0.7$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PurpleAir 3</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>$y = 1.2x - 0.8$</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>$y = 0.6x - 1.4$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Slope = 1
P-TAQ Pilot (Nov. 2018 – Apr. 2019)

• Hourly PurpleAir PM$_{2.5}$ data correlates much better than PM$_{10}$
• PurpleAir over-estimates PM$_{2.5}$, underestimates PM$_{10}$
  • PM$_{10}$ simply scales the PM$_{2.5}$ concentration – not a reliable measurement
  • PM$_{2.5-10}$ events are not detected by PurpleAir

The PurpleAir sensors tested appear to be unreliable for PM$_{10}$
Kansas City TRansportation and local-scale Air Quality Study (KC-TRAQS)

- **Research Questions**
  - What is the spatial and temporal extent of local air pollution sources in and around the Argentine (KS) neighborhood?
  - Can the impact of local air pollution sources on the Argentine and surrounding neighborhoods’ air quality be identified and quantified?

- **Approach**
  - A complementary citizen science program using personal sensors and computer modeling tools as a comparison to the field study data;
  - A field study using stationary monitors and mobile measurements to collect black carbon (BC) and PM$_{2.5}$ data to characterize the impact of local air pollution sources.
  - A mobile monitoring campaign using an instrumented electric vehicle and a support vehicle to collect BC, ultrafine particulate (UFP), and nitrogen dioxide (NO$_2$).
  - A screening model to assess spatial/temporal coverage of measurement sites.

- **Sensor Technologies**
  - Custom built P-Pod measuring BC (AethLabs MA350) and PM$_{2.5}$ (Alphasense OPC-N2), WS/WD, T, RH, and P
  - Custom built AirMapper measuring PM$_{2.5}$ (Alphasense OPC-N2), CO$_2$, GPS, accelerometer, noise, T, and RH
  - Commercially available sensors including PurpleAir and Aeroqual AQY
Roadside Vegetation Project

- Collaboration between ORD and EPA Regions (5, 9)
  - Collecting air quality, meteorology, and noise (Detroit only) measurements before and after roadside vegetation planting
  - Assessing benefits for air quality and water runoff control

- Approach
  - Research-grade mobile and fixed monitoring data for UFP, BC, NO₂, CO₂
  - Portable BC and NO₂ sensors
  - Meteorology at multiple heights and locations

Project Lead: Rich Baldauf

Data explored on RETIGO
epa.gov/retigo
Regional Sensor Loan Program

- Collaboration between ORD and EPA Regions (1, 2, 3, 5, 8)
  - Procurement of 20 multipollutant sensor devices (AriSense), 7 with solar panels for off-grid application
  - Measurements: CO, NO, NO₂, O₃, CO₂, PM, solar intensity, noise, wind speed, and wind direction

- Initial sensor performance evaluation work at EPA’s RTP site then sensors to be provided to Regions on a rotating basis for targeted projects with local partners

- Applications under consideration include
  - Wintertime PM in mountain valleys
  - Educational outreach with students
  - Measuring near transportation sources
Library Sensor Loan Program

- Collaboration between ORD and EPA Region 9
  - Procurement of 30 low-cost PM sensors (APT) with clip and connectivity for mobile or stationary applications
  - Development of train-the-trainer materials, lessons plans, quick start guide, and a resource list to support the library use and loan

- Approach
  - Library trainers will be given training on air quality and use of sensors
  - Trainers will train additional library staff and conduct outreach programs within their respective library branches
  - Sensors will be loaned to interested community members (e.g., teachers, school groups, community groups, private citizens)
  - Materials will be made publicly available and lessons-learned will be summarized to support future efforts to expand the program to other locales

Project Lead: Andrea Clements
External Collaborations

• Current Agreements
  • Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA) with Aeroqual involving evaluation and application of sensor systems in select field studies
  • CRADA with Aclima involving collaboration on evaluation of ambient mobile monitoring data using higher-end instruments and/or low-cost sensors

• Agreements Under Discussion
  • Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) with PurpleAir supporting the exchange of air quality sensor data (current and historical)
  • Potential work EPA may pursue
    • Research on quality assurance methods for PA data
    • If methods produce data of sufficient quality, EPA may explore the use of the data in research studies and applications
      • Model evaluation
      • Data fusion
      • Data visualization
      • Development of research and informational applications


3. **Massachusetts Institute of Technology** - The Hawaii Island Volcanic Smog Sensor Network (HI-Vog): Tracking Air Quality and Community Engagement near a Major Emissions Hotspot – Hawai’i Island, Hawaii

4. **Research Triangle Institute** - Monitoring the Air in Our Community: Engaging Citizens in Research – Globeville, Elyria Swansea (GES), Denver, Colorado

5. **South Coast Air Quality Management District** - Engage, Educate, and Empower California Communities on the Use and Applications of “Low-cost” Air Monitoring Sensors – North, Central, and South California

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