



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Media contact

[Seth Preston](#)

Office: 360-428-1617 ext. 235

Mobile: 360-724-8766

NW Clean Air veteran takes over as executive director

MOUNT VERNON – The [Northwest Clean Air Agency](#) has named Mark Buford, a 15-year veteran of the agency, as the fifth executive director in its 50-year history. The agency enforces federal, state and local air quality regulations in Island, Skagit and Whatcom counties.

“This area is one of the most beautiful places in the world,” said Buford. “One thing that contributes to that is the quality of our air.”

Skagit and Whatcom counties were recognized in 2016 by the American Lung Association as two of the cleanest counties in the country. For example, Bellingham is one of only eight cities in the country consistently identified as having low levels of particle pollution and ozone.

“Our communities have achieved remarkably clean air without sacrificing good jobs or our ability to make things,” said Buford. “I attribute this success to the values we hold as a region. Our citizens believe in the importance of a healthy economy *and* a healthy environment. We aren’t willing to sacrifice either one. A strong local clean air agency is critical to achieving that vision. It’s very rewarding for us at NWCAA, and for me personally, to live and work among people that believe in the value of our work.”

Island County Commissioner Richard Hannold, chairman of the agency’s Board of Directors, said Buford gained a great deal of knowledge and experience through his years with the agency.

“The Board has complete confidence in Mark’s ability to lead us through a smooth transition and to continue the good work and effort put forward by his predecessor,” Hannold said.

Buford succeeds Mark Asmundson, who retired after 10 years as the agency’s executive director. Prior to Asmundson, previous agency directors were Glen Hallman (1971-1984), Terry Nyman (1984-2000) and Jamie Randles (2000-2006).

Buford said he is confident that the Northwest Clean Air staff is ready for the challenges ahead. “There are so many issues that compete for everyone’s time and attention these days. I often imagine someone who is juggling work stress, and picking the kids up from school, and the water heater that just broke, and the lawn needs to be mowed.

"When this person stops to think about air quality, they're hoping that somewhere, somehow, good people are working on it. That's the person who motivates me. That's the person I don't want to let down," Buford said.

"Fortunately, we have the best team in the Northwest. That's something our community can be proud of."

Buford was born in Arkansas and moved in 1976 with his family to Alabama, where he lived for 20 years. He first came to Washington while he worked as an Atlanta-based consultant for CH2M Hill, a consulting company that partners with businesses and governments in more than 50 countries. He traveled regularly to the Seattle area to work with The Boeing Co. and fell in love with the Northwest.

He eventually transferred to CH2M Hill's Bellevue office and joined the Northwest Clean Air staff in 2001.

Buford earned bachelor's and master's degrees in civil engineering from the University of Alabama-Birmingham. He also has an executive master's degree in public administration from the University of Washington.

He lives with his wife Kathy and two children on Lummi Island in Whatcom County.

The Northwest Clean Air Agency is responsible for enforcing federal, state and local air quality regulations in Island, Skagit, and Whatcom counties. In addition to permitting and regulating industrial sources of air pollution, the agency provides services and information related to asbestos, indoor air quality, outdoor burning, woodstoves and fireplaces. More information about the agency is available at www.nwcleanairwa.gov.