

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION III  
1650 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-2029

DEC 09 2011

The Honorable Robert McDonnell  
Governor of Virginia  
Patrick Henry Building Third Floor  
1111 East Broad Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor McDonnell:

Thank you for your March 11, 2009 and November 21, 2011 recommendations on air quality designations for the revised 2008 National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ozone throughout Virginia. I appreciate the information Virginia shared with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as we move forward to improve ozone air quality. This letter is to notify you of EPA's preliminary response to Virginia's recommendations and to inform you of our approach for completing the designations for the revised ozone standards.

On March 12, 2008, EPA revised its NAAQS for ground-level ozone to provide increased protection of public health and the environment. EPA lowered the primary 8-hour ozone standard from 0.08 parts per million (ppm) to 0.075 ppm to protect against health effects associated with ozone exposure, including a range of serious respiratory illnesses and increased premature death from heart or lung disease. EPA revised the secondary 8-hour ozone standard, making it identical to the primary standard, to protect against welfare effects, including impacts on sensitive vegetation and forested ecosystems.

History shows us that better health and cleaner air go hand-in-hand with economic growth. Working closely with the states and tribes, EPA is implementing the standards using a common sense approach that improves air quality and minimizes the burden on state and local governments. As part of this routine process, EPA is working with the states to identify areas in the country that meet the standards and those that need to take steps to reduce ozone pollution. Within one year after a new or revised air quality standard is established, the Clean Air Act (CAA) requires the Governor of each state to submit to EPA a list of all areas in the state, with recommendations for whether each area meets the standard. As a first step in implementing the 2008 ozone standards, EPA asked states to submit their designation recommendations, including appropriate area boundaries by March 12, 2009. In September 2009, EPA announced it was reconsidering the 2008 ozone standards. EPA later took steps to delay the designation process for the 2008 ozone standards pending outcome of the reconsideration. However, in September 2011, the Office of Management and Budget returned to EPA the draft final rule addressing the reconsideration of the 2008 ozone standards. On September 22, 2011, EPA restarted the

implementation effort by issuing a memorandum to clarify for state and local agencies the status of the 2008 ozone standards and to outline plans for moving forward to implement them. EPA indicated that it would proceed with initial area designations for the 2008 standards, and planned to use the recommendations states made in 2009 as updated by the most current, certified air quality data from 2008-2010. While EPA did not request that states submit updated designation recommendations, EPA provided the opportunity for states to do so. Thank you for the November 21, 2011 updated designation recommendation from Virginia based on the assessment of preliminary 2009-2011 air quality data.

As required by the CAA, EPA will designate an area as nonattainment if it is violating the 2008 ozone standards or contributing to a violation of the standards in a nearby area. Consistent with designations for previous ozone standards, EPA intends to designate an area as unclassifiable/attainment if there are certified, quality-assured air quality monitoring data showing the area is meeting the ozone standards or if there are no monitoring data for the area, and EPA has not made a determination that the area is contributing to a violation in a nearby area.

After considering Virginia's March 11, 2009 and November 21, 2011 ozone designation recommendations and other relevant technical information, including 2008-2010 air quality data, EPA intends to support Virginia's recommended area designations and boundaries for the Washington DC-MD-VA area. The enclosed Technical Support Document provides a detailed analysis to support our preliminary decisions. EPA intends to designate all other areas of the state as unclassifiable/attainment.

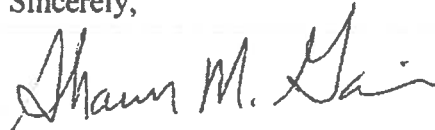
After considering Virginia's November 21, 2011 ozone designations recommendation, which was based on preliminary 2009-2011 air quality data, as well as other relevant technical information, EPA intends to designate the Richmond area as unclassifiable/attainment. In your December 6, 2011, Virginia certified its 2011 quality-assured air quality monitoring data. Therefore, EPA will consider 2009-2011 air quality data in the final designation decisions for this area.

EPA will continue to work with state officials regarding the appropriate boundary for the area in Virginia. If Virginia has additional information that the Commonwealth would like EPA to consider, please submit it to us by February 29, 2012. EPA will also make its preliminary designation decisions and supporting documentation available to the general public for review and comment. We will be announcing a 30-day public comment period shortly in the *Federal Register*. After considering additional information we receive, EPA plans to promulgate final ozone designations in spring of 2012.

EPA is committed to working with the states and tribes to share the responsibility of reducing ozone air pollution. Current and upcoming federal standards and safeguards, including pollution reduction rules for power plants, vehicles and fuels, will assure steady progress to reduce ozone-forming pollution and will protect public health in communities across the country.

We look forward to a continued dialogue with you and your staff as we work together to implement the 2008 ozone standards. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or have your staff contact Ms. Laura Mohollen, EPA's Virginia Liaison, at (215) 814-3295.

Sincerely,



Shawn M. Garvin  
Regional Administrator

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Doug Domenech  
Secretary of Natural Resources