

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 6
1445 ROSS AVENUE, SUITE 1200
DALLAS TX 75202-2733

DEC 9 - 2011

The Honorable Bill John Baker
Principal Chief
Cherokee Nation
Post Office Box 948
Tahlequah, Oklahoma 74465-0948

Dear Principal Chief Baker:

Thank you for your February 13, 2009, recommendation on air quality designations for the revised 2008 ozone national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) on behalf of the Cherokee Nation. The purpose of this letter is to notify you of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) preliminary decision to designate the Cherokee Nation tribal lands as attainment/unclassifiable for the revised 2008 ozone NAAQS, and to inform you of our approach for completing the designations for the revised ozone NAAQS.

On March 12, 2008, the EPA revised its national air quality standards for ground-level ozone to provide increased protection of public health and the environment. The EPA lowered the primary 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. The 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.

Within one year of promulgation of a new or revised NAAQS, the Clean Air Act requires the governor of each state to submit to the EPA a list of all areas in the state, recommending designations with respect to the new or revised standard. Therefore, states were asked to submit their designation recommendations, including appropriate area boundaries, to the EPA by March 12, 2009, with respect to the revised ozone standards. Although tribes are not required to submit recommendations, we encouraged them to participate in the designations process, and provided them with an opportunity to submit recommendations if they chose to do so. The EPA received a recommendation from the Cherokee Nation on February 13, 2009.

As a first step in implementing the 2008 ozone standards, the EPA asked states and tribes to submit their designation recommendations, including appropriate area boundaries, by March 12, 2009. In September 2009, the EPA announced it was reconsidering the 2008 ozone standards. The agency later took steps to delay the designation process for the 2008 ozone standards pending the outcome of the reconsideration. However, in September 2011, the Office of Management and Budget returned to the EPA the draft final rule addressing the reconsideration of the 2008 ozone standards. On September 22, 2011, the EPA restarted the implementation effort by issuing a letter to clarify for state and local agencies the status of the 2008 ozone standards and to outline plans for moving forward to implement them. This letter was also provided to the tribes. In addition, several conference calls were held with the tribes to describe the overall designations process. The EPA indicated that it would proceed with initial area designations for the 2008 standards, and planned to use the recommendations states and tribes made in 2009 as updated by the most current, certified air quality data from 2008-2010. While the EPA did not request that states and tribes submit updated designation recommendations, the agency provided the opportunity for them to do so. We did not receive an

updated recommendation letter from the Cherokee Nation. However, because the EPA is required to designate all areas of the country, we intend to promulgate an appropriate designation for your area of Indian country. More information regarding this designation is included below.

As required by the Clean Air Act, the 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, the 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 there are no monitoring data for the area, and the EPA has not made a determination that the area is contributing to a violation in a nearby area.

After considering the Cherokee Nation's February 13, 2009, ozone designations recommendation and other relevant technical information, including 2008-2010 air quality data, the EPA intends to support the Cherokee Nation's recommended area designation and to designate your area of Indian country as attainment/unclassifiable along with the surrounding state area.

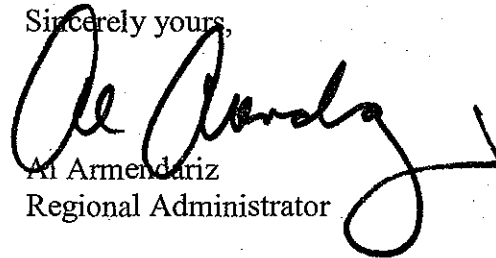
Please notify us if you are interested in consulting with us regarding the designations process. When requested, consultation will be conducted in accordance with the *EPA Policy on Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribes* (www.epa.gov/tribal/consultation/consult-policy.htm).

The 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, the agency plans to promulgate final ozone designations in the spring of 2012.

The 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 smog-forming pollution and will protect public health in communities across the country.

We look forward to working with you and your staff to develop area designations under the 2008 ozone NAAQS in a timely manner. If your tribe is interested in consultation, please do not hesitate to contact me at (214) 665-2100, or our Tribal Consultation Advisor, Ms. Jeannine Hale, at (214) 665-2136. If the tribe has technical concerns or questions about the designation process, you may contact Mr. Guy Donaldson at (214) 665-7242.

Sincerely yours,



Al Armendariz
Regional Administrator

cc: Mr. Tom Elkins, Administrator for Environmental Programs
Cherokee Nation

Ms. Nancy John, Environmental Director
Cherokee Nation