

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 8

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DEC 08 2011

Ref: 8P-AR

The Honorable Pearl Casias, Chairwoman
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
P.O. Box 737
Ignacio, CO 81137-0737

Dear Chairwoman Casias:

Thank you for the Tribe's March 9, 2009, recommendation on air quality designations for the revised 2008 ozone national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) on behalf of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe. The purpose of this letter is to notify you of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's preliminary decision to designate the Southern Ute Indian Reservation as unclassifiable/attainment 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 to 0.075 parts per million (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, 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, 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 Southern Ute Indian Tribe on March 9, 2009 for a designation of unclassifiable/attainment.

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 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. This memorandum 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.

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 Southern Ute Indian Tribe's March 9, 2009 ozone designations recommendation and other relevant technical information, including 2008-2010 air quality data, the EPA intends to concur with the Southern Ute Indian Tribe's recommended area designation and to designate your reservation as unclassifiable/attainment separately from surrounding areas.

Please notify us by February 29, 2012, 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 spring 2012.

We are 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 ensure 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 or participating in further discussions or meetings with the EPA officials about the designations process, please do not hesitate to contact me or Carl Daly, of my staff, at (303) 312-6416 or daly.carl@epa.gov.

Sincerely,


James B. Martin
Regional Administrator

cc: Thomas Johnson, Environmental Programs Division Head
Brenda Jarrell, Air Quality Program Manager

Gina McCarthy, Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation
Steve Page, Director, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards