



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 4

ATLANTA FEDERAL CENTER
61 FORSYTH STREET
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-8960

FEB - 6 2013

The Honorable Pat McCrory
Governor, State of North Carolina
State Capitol
20301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-0301

Dear Governor McCrory:

Thank you for your staff's recommendations dated June 2, 2011, with updates on July 23, 2012, and January 23, 2013, on air quality designations for the State of North Carolina for the 2010 revision to the primary National Ambient Air Quality Standard for sulfur dioxide (SO₂). Reducing levels of SO₂ pollution is an important part of the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency's commitment to a clean, healthy environment. Exposure to SO₂ can cause a range of adverse health effects, including narrowing of the airways which can cause difficulty breathing and increased asthma symptoms. This letter is to notify you of the EPA's preliminary intentions regarding your recommended designations.

On June 3, 2010, the EPA strengthened the health-based or "primary" standard for SO₂ by establishing a standard for 1-hour average SO₂ concentrations at a level of 75 parts per billion. The Clean Air Act requires the EPA to complete the initial designations process within two years of promulgating a new or revised standard. If the Administrator has insufficient information to make these designations, the EPA has the authority to extend the designation process by up to one year. On July 27, 2012, the EPA announced that it had insufficient information to complete the designations for the 1-hour SO₂ standard within two years and extended the designations deadline to June 3, 2013.

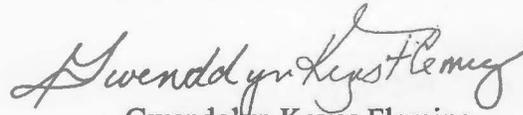
At this time, the EPA is proceeding with designating as nonattainment most areas in locations where existing monitoring data from 2009-2011 indicate violations of the 1-hour SO₂ standard. The EPA intends to address the designations for all other areas in separate future actions. With input from a diverse group of stakeholders, the EPA has developed a comprehensive implementation strategy for these future actions that focuses resources on identifying and addressing unhealthy levels of SO₂. The strategy is available at: <http://www.epa.gov/airquality/sulfurdioxide/implement.html>. The EPA will continue to work closely with you and our other partners at the state, tribal and local levels to ensure health-protective, commonsense implementation of the 1-hour SO₂ standard.

The EPA's review of the most recent monitored air quality data from 2009-2011 shows no violations of the 2010 SO₂ standard in any areas in North Carolina. Consequently, the EPA is not yet prepared to propose designation action in North Carolina and is therefore currently deferring action to designate areas in North Carolina. The EPA expects to be able to proceed with designation action in North Carolina once additional data are gathered pursuant to our comprehensive implementation strategy. In a separate future action or actions the EPA will notify you of our intended designations for these areas,

and seek public comment on these actions, no later than 120 days prior to promulgating any final designations.

We look forward to a continued dialogue with you and your staff as we work together to implement the 2010 primary SO₂ standard. For additional information regarding initial designations on the SO₂ standard, please visit our website at www.epa.gov/so2designations. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 404-562-8357 or Beverly Banister of my staff at 404-562-9326.

Sincerely,


Gwendolyn Keyes Fleming
Regional Administrator

cc: John E. Skvarla, III
Secretary, North Carolina Department
of Environment and Natural Resources

Sheila Holman
Director, Division of Air Quality

David Brigman
Director, Western North Carolina Air Quality

Don R. Willard
Deputy Director, Mecklenburg County Land Use and
Environmental Services Agency

William M. Barnette
Director, Forsyth County Environmental Affairs Department

Gina McCarthy, Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation

Stephen D. Page, Director, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards