



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 1

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BOSTON, MA 02109-3912

February 7, 2013

The Honorable Margaret Hassan
Office of the Governor
107 North Main Street
State House – Room 208
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Dear Governor Hassan:

Thank you for your recommendations dated July 6, 2011 on air quality designations for the state of New Hampshire for the 2010 revision to the primary National Ambient Air Quality Standard for sulfur dioxide (SO₂). Reducing levels of sulfur dioxide pollution is an important part of the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 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, 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.

Consistent with the Clean Air Act, after carefully considering New Hampshire's recommendations and all of the associated technical information for the 2010 SO₂ standard, including the most recent air quality data from 2009-2011, the EPA intends to designate as nonattainment the following areas, including the following counties or portions of counties:

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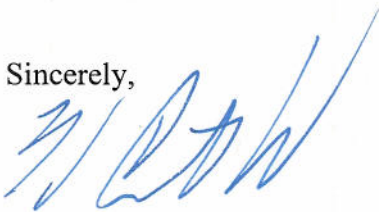
<u>Nonattainment Area</u>	<u>County</u>
Central New Hampshire	Hillsborough (p)
	Merrimack (p)
	Rockingham (p)

(p) indicates portion of county

The EPA will continue to work with state officials regarding the appropriate boundary for the area in Central New Hampshire. If New Hampshire has additional information that you would like the EPA to consider, please submit it to us by April 8, 2013. We also will be publishing a notice in the Federal Register announcing a 30-day period for the public to provide input on EPA's preliminary designation decisions regarding the areas that we would designate as nonattainment based on monitoring data. We intend to promulgate these designations for areas with monitored violations of the 2010 SO₂ standard by June, 2013. We are not yet prepared to propose designations action or seek public comment on other areas.

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, or have your staff contact Donald Dahl of my staff at (617) 918-1657 or dahl.donald@epa.gov.

Sincerely,



H. Curtis Spalding,
Regional Administrator

Enclosure

cc: Thomas S. Burack, Commissioner, NH DES
Craig A. Wright, Acting Air Resources Director, NH DES

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