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October 6, 2017

VIA CERTIFIED MAIL

E. Scott Pruitt, Administrator
Office of the Administrator (1101A)
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20460

Re: Notice of Intent to Sue for Failure to Issue Designations for 2015 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards

Dear Administrator Pruitt:

Maryland hereby provides notice pursuant to Section 304(a)(2) of the Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. § 7604(a)(2), of its intent to commence litigation regarding EPA's failure to timely issue nonattainment designations on the national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) for ozone promulgated on October 1, 2015. See 65 Fed. Reg. 65,292 (Oct. 26, 2015).

As you are aware, EPA's promulgation of NAAQS sets in motion a process under the statute that several years later results in air quality benefits. See 42 U.S.C. § 7407(d)(1)(A), (B) (setting forth deadlines for state and EPA designation of nonattainment areas based on date the NAAQS was promulgated) and § 7410(a)(1) (deadline for states to submit implementation plan revisions tied to NAAQS promulgation date). Once EPA promulgates a NAAQS, states must propose designations of nonattainment areas within their borders within a year. 42 U.S.C. § 7407(d)(1)(A). EPA must then promulgate the designations (after making any necessary changes) "as expeditiously as practicable, but in no case later than 2 years from the date of promulgation of the new or revised [NAAQS]." Id., § 7407(d)(1)(B). The agency may extend this deadline by up to one year in the event that it has "insufficient information" to promulgate the designations. Id. A delay in any of these steps in the process in turn delays when the public receives the air quality benefits of a stronger standard.

Here, EPA has failed to issue the designations for nonattainment areas for the 2015 ozone standards as required under 42 U.S.C. § 7407(d)(1)(B). Under that statutory provision, the promulgation of the ozone NAAQS on October 1, 2015 started the clock ticking for EPA to issue the designations by October 1, 2017. On June 28, 2017, EPA promulgated a rule giving itself an extension of one year to issue the designations, stating that it had "insufficient information" to complete the designations. 82 Fed. Reg. 29,246 (June 28, 2017) (the "designations delay").

complete the designations. 82 Fed. Reg. 29,246 (June 28, 2017) (the “designations delay”). After a collection of states and environmental organizations challenged EPA’s designations delay in court, EPA abruptly reversed course and withdrew the designations delay. 82 Fed. Reg. 37,318 (Aug. 10, 2017). However, EPA was still equivocal on whether the 2015 ozone NAAQS designations would be made by the statutory deadline, noting that although there “may be areas of the United States for which designations could be promulgated” by the deadline, “[t]he Administrator may still determine that an extension of time to complete designations is necessary.” 82 Fed. Reg. at 37,319.

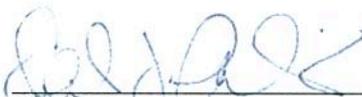
As of today, EPA has failed to promulgate nationwide designations for the 2015 ozone NAAQS. The agency’s failure to issue the designations constitutes a violation of a nondiscretionary duty under 42 U.S.C. § 7407(d)(1)(B) to promulgate timely nonattainment designations for the 2015 ozone NAAQS, subjecting the agency to suit under Section 304(a)(2) of the Act, 42 U.S.C. § 7604(a)(2). Accordingly, Maryland intends to file a lawsuit in federal district court to compel EPA to comply with its obligations under the statute.

If you would like to discuss this matter prior to expiration of the 60-day notice period, you may have your counsel contact us through Maryland Assistant Attorney General Leah Tulin at the address below.

Very truly yours,

BRIAN E. FROSH
Attorney General of Maryland

By:



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