



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION III
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-2029**

DEC 20 2017

The Honorable Larry Hogan
State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Governor Hogan:

Thank you for your recommendations, dated March 23, 2017, on air quality designations for the revised 2015 ozone national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS). I appreciate the information Maryland shared with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as we move forward to improve ozone air quality. This letter is to notify you of EPA's preliminary response to Maryland's recommendations and to inform you of our approach for completing designations for the revised ozone standards.

On October 1, 2015, EPA lowered the primary 8-hour ozone standard from 0.075 parts per million (ppm) to 0.070 ppm to provide increased protection of public health. 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. Working closely with the states and tribes, EPA is implementing the standards using a common sense approach that improves air quality and minimizes the burden on state and local governments. As part of this routine process, EPA is working with the states to identify areas in the country that meet the standards and those that need to take steps to reduce ozone pollution.

As a first step in implementing the 2015 ozone standards, in the fall of 2016, EPA asked states to submit their designation recommendations, including appropriate area boundaries. In a first round of designations proposed on November 16, 2017, consistent with states' recommendations, EPA designated as Attainment/Unclassifiable most of the country.

As required by the Clean Air Act, EPA will designate an area as Nonattainment if there is certified, quality-assured air quality monitoring data showing a violation of the 2015 ozone standards or if EPA makes a determination that the area is contributing to a violation of the standards in a nearby area. EPA designates as Attainment/Unclassifiable areas that are not measuring or contributing to a violation of the standards.

After considering Maryland's March 23, 2017 ozone designation recommendations, which were based on preliminary 2014-2016 air quality data, as well as other relevant technical information, EPA intends to designate the areas listed in Enclosure 1 as Nonattainment and to designate all other areas in



the State not previously designated in November 2017 as Attainment/Unclassifiable. The Technical Support Document (TSD), available at EPA's ozone designations website at <https://www.epa.gov/ozone-designations/2015-ozone-standards-state-recommendations>, provides a detailed analysis to support our preliminary decisions for the areas of the Commonwealth not previously designated. If Maryland wants EPA to consider more current (i.e., 2015-2017) air quality data in the final designation decisions for any area, the State must submit certified, quality-assured 2015-2017 air quality monitoring data for the area to EPA by February 28, 2018.

EPA will continue to work with State officials regarding the appropriate boundaries for the Nonattainment areas in the State. If Maryland has additional information that you would like EPA to consider, please submit it to us by February 28, 2018. Please submit additional information by sending to the EPA's public docket for these designations, EPA-HQ-OAR-2017-0548, located at www.regulations.gov, and sending a copy to EPA Region III. 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 any additional information we receive, EPA plans to promulgate final ozone designations in spring of 2018.

EPA is committed to working with the states and tribes to reduce ozone air pollution. We look forward to a continued dialogue with you and your staff as we work together to implement the 2015 ozone standards. Should you have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me at 215-814-2900 or have a member of your staff contact Cristina Fernandez, Director of the Air Protection Division, at 215-814-2178.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cosmo Servidio", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cosmo Servidio
Regional Administrator

Enclosure