



Maryland

Department of the Environment

Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor

Ben Grumbles, Secretary
Horacio Tablada, Deputy Secretary

May 29, 2020

Mr. Cosmo Servidio
Regional Administrator
U.S. EPA Region 3
1650 Arch Street, 16th Floor, 3RA00
Philadelphia, PA 19103-2029

Dear Mr. Servidio:

Maryland appreciates the opportunity to present the EPA with a recommendation for the designation of areas under the 2010 primary, 1-hour National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for SO₂. The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) formally requests that the USEPA designate Allegany County, Maryland as attainment with respect to the 2010 1-hour SO₂ NAAQS. This request is based on recent events relative to the principal stationary source of SO₂ emissions in the area. These events are summarized below:

- The Verso Corporation announced the closure of the Luke Paper Mill on April 30, 2019 and the last day of employment at the facility was June 30, 2019. The Luke Paper Mill has not operated since this time.
- On May 7, 2020, Verso Luke LLC officially notified the MDE of its request for a complete closure of the Luke Mill Facility and termination of all associated air quality permits. The notification letter also acknowledged that Verso or any potential new owner of the facility must apply for and obtain all new air quality permits in order for this facility to begin operations any time in the future. The letter is included as an addendum (see Attachment 1).
- The Luke Paper Mill is the only major source of SO₂ emissions in the area, and with its shutdown, there are no other major SO₂ sources emitting into the ambient air in the area.
- MDE and Verso Luke elected the monitoring pathway to characterize the air quality in the Luke Paper Mill area. The Luke Paper Mill contracted with AECOM, and in cooperation with MDE and EPA, sited three SO₂ monitors in the area in accordance with EPA's SO₂ NAAQS Designations Source-Oriented Monitoring Technical Assistance Document (TAD). Dispersion modeling, using the EPA-approved AERMOD model, assisted in determining the appropriate locations of the three SO₂ Data Requirements Rule (DRR) monitors. The modeling protocol, report and results were all previously submitted to EPA.
- Since the facility ceased all activities in June 2019, the three SO₂ DRR monitors have measured hourly concentrations of 0.0 parts per billion (ppb) to 6.3 ppb. The level of the NAAQS at 75 ppb is offered as a comparison. The post-shutdown monitor values are included as an addendum (see Attachment 2).

- The Luke Paper Mill was the sole source of SO₂ emissions included in the modeling. Removing the Luke Paper Mill emissions from that modeling, would result in background levels of concentration of SO₂ and thus attainment of the standard. The Verso Luke Mill Stationary Ambient Air Quality Measurements Program, Quality Assurance Project Plan (previously submitted to EPA) is included as Attachment 3. Had MDE conducted modeling to determine 1-hour SO₂ emission limits for the Luke Mill the 1-hour SO₂ background used would have been 3.51 ppb.
- The federally enforceable permit surrender and lack of any emissions from the Luke Paper Mill provide a more realistic characterization of the current air quality in the area, than the 2019 1-hour SO₂ design value based on data collected from the DRR monitors while the Luke Mill was operating much of the time.

After EPA sets a new NAAQS or revises an existing standard, the Clean Air Act (CAA) requires the agency to designate areas in the United States as "attainment" (meeting), "nonattainment" (not meeting) or "unclassifiable" (insufficient data).¹ Although EPA has not used the simple designation of "attainment" in the past for 1-hour SO₂ designations, preferring the designation "attainment/unclassifiable", it is not outside the bounds of the CAA. The "unclassifiable" designation is typically reserved for areas that have insufficient data to designate an area as "attainment" or "nonattainment". The post-closure monitoring data, closure of the facility and surrender of air permits provide EPA with enough information to remove the "unclassifiable" portion of Maryland's previous designation recommendation of "attainment/unclassifiable" for the county. MDE recommends that the area be designated attainment of the 2010 SO₂ NAAQS.

If you have any questions about this submittal, please contact me or Mr. George (Tad) S. Aburn, Jr., Director of the Air and Radiation Administration, at 410-537-3255, or by email at george.aburn@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

Ben Grumbles
Secretary

cc: George Aburn, Director, Air and Radiation Administration

¹ <https://www.epa.gov/sulfur-dioxide-designations>