



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 4
ATLANTA FEDERAL CENTER
61 FORSYTH STREET
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-8960

AUG 19 2014

The Honorable Nathan Deal
Office of the Governor
206 Washington Street
111 State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Dear Governor Deal:

Thank you for the letters dated December 13, 2013, May 30, 2014, and June 2, 2014, from Judson H. Turner, Director, Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Environmental Protection Division (EPD), providing your recommendations of air quality designations for the 2012 revised primary annual fine particle (PM_{2.5}) National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) throughout Georgia. I appreciate the information Georgia shared with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as we move forward to improve PM_{2.5} air quality. This letter is to notify you of the EPA's preliminary response to Georgia's recommendation and to inform you of our approach for completing the initial area designations for the 2012 revised primary annual PM_{2.5} standard.

On December 14, 2012, the EPA promulgated a revised primary annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS (78 FR 3086, January 15, 2013). In that action, the EPA revised the primary annual PM_{2.5} standard, strengthening it from 15.0 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) to 12.0 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$; retained the existing 24-hour PM_{2.5} standard at 35 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$; retained the existing 24-hour PM₁₀ (coarse particle) standard at 150 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$; and retained the current suite of secondary PM standards. The EPA revised the primary annual PM_{2.5} standard based on an integrated assessment of an extensive body of new scientific evidence, which substantially strengthens our body of knowledge regarding PM_{2.5}-related health effects. The revised primary annual PM_{2.5} standard will provide increased protection for children, older adults, persons with pre-existing heart and lung disease, and other at-risk populations against an array of PM_{2.5}-related adverse health effects, including premature mortality, increased hospital admissions and emergency department visits, and development and exacerbation of chronic respiratory disease.

History shows us that better health and cleaner air go hand-in-hand with economic growth. Working closely with the states and tribes, the EPA is implementing the standards using a commonsense approach that improves air quality and minimizes the burden on state, local, and tribal governments. As part of this routine process, the EPA is working with the states and tribes to identify areas in the country that meet the standards and those that need to take steps to reduce PM_{2.5} air pollution. Within one year of promulgating a new or revised air quality standard, the Clean Air Act (CAA) requires the Governor of each state to submit to the EPA a list of all areas in the state, with a designation

recommendation for each area. As a first step in implementing the 2012 annual PM_{2.5} standard, Governors were to submit their designation recommendations, including appropriate area boundaries, by December 13, 2013.

As required by the CAA, the EPA then promulgates designations for all areas across the country. The EPA designates an area as “nonattainment” if it is violating the 2012 annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS or if it is contributing to a violation of the NAAQS in a nearby area. Consistent with designations for previous PM_{2.5} standards, the EPA intends to use a designation category of “unclassifiable/attainment” for areas that are monitoring attainment or do not have monitors, but for which the EPA has reason to believe are likely attaining the NAAQS and are not contributing to nearby violations. Additionally, the EPA intends to designate as “unclassifiable” those areas where the EPA cannot determine based on available information whether the area is meeting the NAAQS or where the EPA has not determined that the area contributes to a nearby violation. At this time, the EPA is proceeding with intended initial area designations using quality-assured, certified air quality monitoring data for most areas from 2011 to 2013.

The EPA has considered the annual PM_{2.5} designation recommendations submitted by Georgia on December 13, 2013, May 30, 2014, and June 2, 2014, and has reviewed the relevant technical information, including 2011-2013 air quality data. EPA does not have sufficient air quality data to make determinations for the Albany, Atlanta, Augusta, Brunswick, Columbus, Savannah, Valdosta, and Washington County areas because the monitoring data at the Georgia monitors in these areas is incomplete. Because of these data completeness issues, the EPA cannot determine whether these areas are or are not meeting the NAAQS based on 2011-2013 data. However, the EPA believes that an additional year of monitoring data from the Georgia monitors in the Augusta, Columbus, Savannah, Valdosta, and Washington County areas will likely result in the three years of complete and valid data needed for a designation for these five areas. Accordingly, the EPA intends to defer a designation and use the additional time available to it as provided under section 107(d)(1)(B) of the CAA to assess these data and promulgate an initial area designation for Brooks, Chatham, Columbia, Dougherty, Effingham, Lowndes, Muscogee, Richmond, and Washington Counties. The EPA does not believe that an additional year of monitoring data for the Albany, Atlanta, and Brunswick areas will result in the three years of complete and valid data necessary for designation. Therefore, EPA intends to designate the counties in these three areas as unclassifiable. A Technical Support Document, which provides additional detail regarding the status of data for Georgia and the rationale to support the EPA’s unclassifiable designations, is enclosed and is also available on the EPA’s website at <http://www.epa.gov/pmdesignations/2012standards/state.htm>. If Georgia has additional information for the EPA to consider, please submit it to us by October 29, 2014. The EPA intends to designate the remainder of the State of Georgia as unclassifiable/attainment.

The EPA will 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 the additional information we receive, the EPA plans to promulgate final annual PM_{2.5} designations in December of 2014 for all non-deferred areas.

The EPA is committed to working with the states and tribes to share the responsibility of reducing PM_{2.5} air pollution. Current and upcoming federal standards and safeguards - including pollution reduction rules for power plants, vehicles, and fuels - will ensure steady progress to reduce PM_{2.5}-forming pollution and will protect public health in communities across the country. We look forward to

a continued dialogue with you and your staff as we work together to implement the 2012 annual PM_{2.5} standard. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (404) 562-8357, or Beverly H. Banister, Director, Air Pesticides and Toxics Management Division, at (404) 562-9077, or have your staff contact Scott Davis, Chief, Air Planning Branch, at (404) 562-9127.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Heather McTeer Toney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Heather McTeer Toney
Regional Administrator

cc: Judson H. Turner, Director, EPD
Keith Bentley, Director, Air Protection Branch, EPD
Janet G. McCabe, Acting Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation
Stephen D. Page, Director, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards