



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 8**

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AUG 19 2014

Ref: 8P-AR

The Honorable Steve Bullock
Governor of Montana
Montana State Capitol Building
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, Montana 59620-0801

Dear Governor Bullock:

Thank you for your recommendations dated December 2, 2013 of air quality designations for the 2012 revised primary annual fine particle (PM_{2.5}) National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) throughout Montana. I appreciate the information Montana 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 Montana's recommendations 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 (µg/m³) to 12.0 µg/m³; retained the existing 24-hour PM_{2.5} standard at 35 µg/m³; retained the existing 24-hour PM₁₀ (coarse particle) standard at 150 µg/m³; 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.

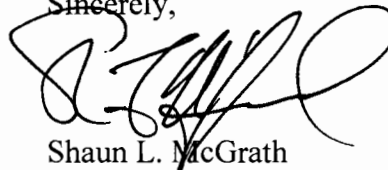
As required by the CAA, the EPA then promulgates designations for all areas across the country. The EPA designates an area as "nonattainment" if it is violating the 2012 annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS or if it is contributing to a violation of the NAAQS in a nearby area. Consistent with designations for previous 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 attainment 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 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 from 2011 to 2013.

We have considered the annual PM_{2.5} designation recommendations submitted by Montana on December 2, 2013, and have reviewed the relevant technical information, including 2011–2013 air quality data. These data do not indicate any violation of the 2012 annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS in Montana or contribution to any nearby area. Accordingly, the EPA intends to designate the entire state of Montana 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.

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, or have your staff contact Crystal Ostigaard of my staff at (303) 312-6602 or ostigaard.crystal@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shaun L. McGrath", written over a horizontal line.

Shaun L. McGrath
Regional Administrator

cc: Tracy Stone-Manning, Director, DEQ
Dave Klemp, Chief, ARMB

Janet G. McCabe, Acting Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation
Stephen D. Page, Director, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards