

## MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Additional Guidance On Defining Area Boundaries for PM-2.5 Designations

FROM: Lydia N. Wegman, Director  
Air Quality Strategies and Standards Division (C504-01)

TO: Air Division Directors, Regions I-X

This memorandum provides additional guidance for determining boundaries of PM-2.5 areas in the PM-2.5 designations process. Our April 2003 boundary guidance establishes the metropolitan area (i.e. the larger of the Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) or Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)) as the presumptive boundary for PM-2.5 nonattainment areas<sup>1</sup>. The boundaries of CMSAs and MSAs, which were delineated by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 1999, include populated areas associated with core urban areas. Our April 2003 guidance recognized that OMB planned to publish revised urban area definitions sometime in 2003, but, because the specific release date was not known at that time, the guidance stated that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) anticipated using the 1999 definitions for the PM-2.5 designation process.

OMB subsequently issued revised urban area definitions on June 6, 2003. The definitions established core-based statistical areas (CBSAs) (or CBSAs, comprised of “metropolitan” and “micropolitan” areas), and combined statistical areas (CSAs) (or CSAs, comprised of two or more core-based statistical areas)<sup>2</sup>. While we are not requiring States and Tribes to use the recently-defined CSA and CBSA as the presumptive boundaries for determining PM-2.5 nonattainment areas, we ask that in your review of State and Tribal recommendations that you assess all counties included in any relevant CSA or CBSA under the 2003 definitions, as well as any adjacent counties, using the 9 factors identified in the April 1, 2003 guidance. We believe this approach is appropriate because the new OMB definitions group together counties having a

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<sup>1</sup> Memorandum from Jeffrey R. Holmstead, Assistant Administrator, to EPA Regional Administrators, “Designations for the Fine Particle National Ambient Air Quality Standards,” April 1, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> A list of the 2003 OMB metropolitan area definitions and associated information may be found at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/estimates/metroarea.html>.

high degree of social and economic integration with a central core area, reflecting the latest technical information available about significant growth and commuting rates. While EPA is not requiring that States use the 2003 OMB boundary definitions as the presumptive boundaries, please ask that your respective States and Tribes fully document the basis for their recommendations, using the 9 factors identified in the April 2003 guidance.

All other information contained in the April boundary guidance continues to apply, and States and Tribes should continue to follow the guidance in making the boundary recommendations by February 15, 2004, as required in our guidance and the Consolidated Appropriations Bill for FY-2004.<sup>3</sup> In addition, as we requested in the April 2003 guidance we encourage States and Tribes to make every effort to process the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2003 air quality data as quickly as possible so it can be taken into account in the February recommendations. Also, stated in the April 2003 guidance, EPA will make available on our website information submitted in connection with designation recommendations. Therefore, we request that each State and Tribe submit to EPA its designation recommendations, description of the proposed area boundaries, associated maps, and other supporting documentation in electronic format as well as in a hard-copy format.

The Regional Offices should share this additional guidance with States and Tribes and work closely with them to resolve any issues related to the submittal of their area recommendations and supporting information. Staff in OAQPS are available to provide assistance and consultation throughout the designation process. Questions related to this memorandum may be directed to Larry Wallace of my staff at 919-541-0906 or Rich Damberg at 919-541-5592.

cc: Stephen D. Page, OAQPS  
Margo Oge, OTAQ  
Joe Paisie, OAQPS  
Kevin McLean, OGC  
Geoffrey Wilcox, OGC  
Air Program Managers, Regions I-X

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<sup>3</sup> The Consolidated Appropriations Bill for FY-2004 (Public Law 108-199), signed by the President on January 23, 2004, codifies the dates for State recommendations and final EPA action on PM-2.5 designations.