



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 4

ATLANTA FEDERAL CENTER
61 FORSYTH STREET
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-8960

August 19, 2008

The Honorable Michael F. Easley
Governor of North Carolina
State Capitol
20301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-0301

Dear Governor Easley:

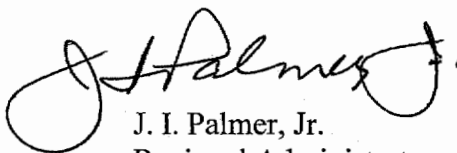
As you are aware, reducing fine particle pollution ($PM_{2.5}$) represents one of the most significant challenges to improving air quality in our nation today. Health studies link these tiny particles – about $1/30^{\text{th}}$ the diameter of a human hair – to serious human health problems, including aggravated asthma, increased respiratory symptoms like coughing and difficult or painful breathing, chronic bronchitis, decreased lung function, and even premature death in people with heart and lung disease. Fine particle pollution can remain suspended in the air for long periods of time and create public health problems far away from emission sources. Reducing levels of $PM_{2.5}$ is an important part of our nation's commitment to clean, healthy air.

We have reviewed the December 10, 2007, letter from William G. Ross, Jr., Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources (NCDENR), submitting North Carolina's recommendations on air quality designations for the 2006 24-hour $PM_{2.5}$ standards. In accordance with the Clean Air Act, I write to inform you that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) agrees that all areas in North Carolina are attaining the 2006 24-hour $PM_{2.5}$ standards at this time. In the near future, EPA will publish a notice in the Federal Register to solicit public comments on our intended designation decisions. We intend to make final designation decisions for the 2006 24-Hour $PM_{2.5}$ standards by December 18, 2008.

EPA has taken steps to reduce $PM_{2.5}$ across the country, such as implementing the Clean Diesel Program to dramatically reduce emissions from highway, nonroad and stationary diesel engines. In addition to on-going initiatives, state programs to attain the 1997 $PM_{2.5}$ standards will also help to reduce unhealthy levels of fine particulate matter.

I appreciate the leadership and attention provided by you and the management and staff of NCDENR in protecting air quality. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (404) 562-8357. We look forward to continuing to work with you and NCDENR officials in implementing the PM_{2.5} standards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. I. Palmer, Jr.", with a large, stylized initial "J" and a flourish at the end.

J. I. Palmer, Jr.
Regional Administrator

cc: William G. Ross, Jr., Secretary, NCDENR