



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

OFFICE OF THE
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

AUG 19 2014

The Honorable Neil Abercrombie
Executive Chambers, State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Governor Abercrombie:

Thank you for your recommendation, dated November 18, 2013, of air quality designations for the 2012 annual fine particle National Ambient Air Quality Standard (2012 annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS) throughout Hawaii. This letter is to notify you of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) preliminary response to Hawaii's recommendation and to inform you of our approach for completing the initial area designations for the 2012 annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS.

The EPA agrees with your recommendation. We have considered the annual PM_{2.5} designation recommendation submitted by Hawaii on November 18, 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 Hawaii or contribution to any nearby area. Accordingly, the EPA intends to designate the entire state of Hawaii as unclassifiable/attainment.

This intended unclassifiable/attainment designation includes the EPA's review and concurrence of submitted exceptional event claims. On July 10, 2014, the EPA approved as exceptional events due to volcanic emissions 268 exceedances of the 2012 annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS that occurred at the Kona monitoring station from 2011 through 2013. See letter from Jared Blumenfeld, Regional Administrator, U.S. EPA Region 9 to Nolan Hirai, Manager, Clean Air Branch, Hawaii Department of Health, dated July 10, 2014.

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.

As background, 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.

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, and that 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 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 from 2011 to 2013.

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} NAAQS. Should you have any questions, please contact me, or have your staff contact Deborah Jordan of my staff at 415-947-8715, or jordan.deborah@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Blumenfeld', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jared Blumenfeld

cc: Dr. Linda M. Rosen, Director of Health, Hawaii Department of Health
Gary L. Gill, Deputy Director, Hawaii Department of Health
Stuart Yamada, P.E., Chief, Environmental Management Division, Hawaii Department of Health
(via email) Nolan Hirai, Manager, Clean Air Branch, Hawaii Department of Health