



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 4

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

August 19, 2008

The Honorable Haley Barbour
Governor of Mississippi
State Capitol
Sillers Building, 19th Floor
550 High Street
Jackson, Mississippi 39201

Dear Governor Barbour:

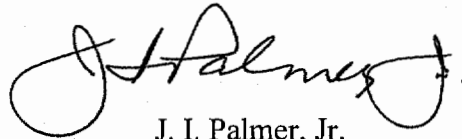
As you are aware, reducing fine particle pollution (PM_{2.5}) represents one of the most significant challenges to improving air quality in our nation today. Health studies link these tiny particles – about 1/30th the diameter of a human hair – to serious human health problems, including aggravated asthma, 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 your October 18, 2007, letter submitting Mississippi'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 Mississippi 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 Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) 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 MDEQ 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" that loops around the first part of the name.

J. I. Palmer, Jr.
Regional Administrator

cc: Ms. Trudy Fisher, Executive Director, MDEQ