



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

August 21, 2008

OFFICE OF THE
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

The Honorable Benigno R. Fitial, Governor
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Office of the Governor
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Governor Fitial:

This letter is to advise you that EPA intends to designate the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) as attainment/unclassifiable for the 2006 24-hour fine particle ($PM_{2.5}$) health standard. We are aware that there currently are no $PM_{2.5}$ monitors in CNMI and therefore, lacking data, EPA will use the attainment/unclassifiable designation for your area. This designation will not impose on CNMI any additional responsibilities with regard to the revised fine particle standard. The designation for CNMI will appear in Part 81 of the Code of Federal Regulations. If you would like to provide additional information about the $PM_{2.5}$ status of CNMI, please provide it to us by October 20, 2008.

Although CNMI does not currently have monitors for fine particulates, we think the population in the CNMI would be interested to learn that fine particle pollution represents one of the most significant barriers to clean air facing 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 such as 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 fine particle pollution is an important part of our nation's commitment to clean, healthy air.

We intend to make final designation decisions for the 2006 24-hour $PM_{2.5}$ standards by December 18, 2008. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to have your staff contact Deborah Jordan, Air Division Director, at 415-947-8715. We look forward to a continued dialogue with you as we work together to implement the $PM_{2.5}$ standards.

Sincerely,


Wayne NASTRI
Regional Administrator

cc: Frank M. Rabauliman, Director, CNMI Division of Environmental Quality