

U.S. EPA FACT SHEET

Proposed Rule, Reclassification of the San Joaquin Valley as Serious Nonattainment for the 1997 PM_{2.5} Standards

December 18, 2014

Summary

- EPA is proposing to reclassify the San Joaquin Valley (SJV) “moderate” nonattainment area, including areas of Indian country within it, as a “serious” nonattainment area for the 1997 PM_{2.5} national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS).
- This proposed reclassification from “moderate” to “serious” is necessary because EPA has determined that the area cannot practicably attain these NAAQS by the applicable attainment date of April 5, 2015.
- The SJV Unified Air Pollution Control District requested this reclassification and submitted an analysis to demonstrate that the SJV cannot practicably attain the NAAQS by April 5, 2015. Today’s action is based on our review and concurrence with the District’s analysis, as well as EPA’s own independent analysis of air quality data.
- Upon final reclassification as a “serious” area, the SJV will need to meet more stringent requirements such as a lower permitting threshold for major sources.
- The area will have additional time to meet the standard but must do so as expeditiously as practicable. The State will be required to submit a plan demonstrating attainment by December 31, 2015, with a possible five year extension.

Background

- Standards for PM_{2.5} are periodically updated based on evidence from numerous studies demonstrating that serious health effects are associated with exposures to elevated levels of PM_{2.5}. Epidemiological studies have shown statistically significant correlations between elevated PM_{2.5} levels and premature mortality.
- PM_{2.5} standards are expressed as levels that should not be exceeded, averaged over specific time periods of either a year (annual standards) or a day (24-hour standards).
- On July 18, 1997, EPA established both an annual and a 24-hour standard for PM_{2.5}. The annual standard was set at 15.0 micrograms per cubic meter (µg/m³) and the 24-hour standard was set at 65 µg/m³. On April 5, 2005, the SJV was designated nonattainment for the 1997 PM_{2.5} standards. Today’s action pertains only to the 1997 PM_{2.5} standards, both annual and 24-hour.
- On October 17, 2006, EPA updated the 24-hour PM_{2.5} standard to 35 µg/m³. On December 14, 2012, EPA updated the annual PM_{2.5} standard to 12 µg/m³. The SJV continues to be nonattainment for both of these standards.
- Other important effects associated with PM_{2.5} exposure include aggravation of respiratory and cardiovascular disease (as indicated by increased hospital admissions, emergency room visits, absences from school or work, and restricted activity days), changes in lung function

and increased respiratory symptoms, as well as new evidence for more subtle indicators of cardiovascular health. Individuals particularly sensitive to PM2.5 exposure include older adults, people with heart and lung disease, and children.

Comment Period

- Today's proposed action will be published in the Federal Register and will include a 30-day public comment period from the date of publication.

More Information: Please visit: <http://www.epa.gov/region9/air/actions/ca.html>