



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

MEMORANDUM

APR 03 2006

FROM: George Gray  
Assistant Administrator  
Office of Research and Development

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William Wehrum  
Acting Assistant Administrator  
Office of Air and Radiation

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TO: Marcus Peacock  
Deputy Administrator

RE: Review of Process for Setting National Ambient Air Quality Standards

On December 15, 2005, you requested that we form an Agency workgroup to review the process the Agency uses in setting the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and to provide specific recommendations by April 3, 2006. We are pleased to present you with the attached workgroup report that reflects extensive and excellent work done by staff from several offices. In particular, we would like to recognize Lydia Wegman and Kevin Teichman for their leadership and Karen Martin with much help from Robert Fegley for primary authorship of the attached report. We also would like to thank the number of current and former Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) members and stakeholders who provided their detailed comments on what works well and what can be improved in terms of the NAAQS review process. In addition to carefully considering these comments, we have attached meeting summaries and all written comments.

The workgroup report summarizes the current NAAQS review process, presents various options for improving the process, and makes conclusions and recommendations on how to improve the process. To organize the internal deliberations and stakeholder comments, we have focused on answering the four key issues that we identified in our follow-up discussions with you:

1. Timeliness of the NAAQS review process;
2. Consideration of the most recent available science;
3. Distinctions between science and policy judgments; and,
4. Identifying, characterizing, quantifying, and communicating uncertainties in scientific information.

Importantly, this document identifies some of the key tradeoffs and resource implications that should be considered when reviewing the recommendations and identifies further work that can be done should you elect to pursue these recommendations.

After carefully considering the recommendations put forward by the workgroup, we are forwarding them on for your consideration with our endorsement. We also recommend the overall NAAQS criteria and standards review process be considered in the context of four activities: planning, science assessment, risk/exposure assessment, and rulemaking initiated by the policy assessment document. These activities are interrelated and in some cases overlap and proceed on a parallel track. This process will promote the timeliness for setting air quality standards, provide increased consistency with other Agency rulemakings, and enable a more thorough review of the latest science on air quality. Our specific recommendations fall into these four activities:

- *Planning*: The preparation of an integrated, policy-relevant plan as described in the workgroup report should immediately follow the completion of the prior NAAQS review.
- *Science Assessment*: The science assessment document should be a more concise evaluation, integration, and synthesis of the most policy-relevant science, including key science judgments that will be used in conducting the risk and exposure assessments. In addition, the Agency should also provide for a more continuous process of identifying and evaluating new scientific studies. We recognize that this recommendation is potentially resource-intensive and we request additional time to explore how best to implement it.
- *Risk/Exposure Assessment*: The risk/exposure assessment document should be more concise and include supporting materials in comprehensive annexes. We recommend that you ask the Science Advisory Board (SAB) Staff Office to form a CASAC subcommittee on risk/exposure assessments to provide more focused feedback and advice on the planning, methodology, and characterization of uncertainties in the risk/exposure assessments.
- *Policy Assessment/Rulemaking*: We agree with the workgroup that, provided other recommendations are followed, the Staff Paper should be replaced with a more narrowly focused policy assessment document. We have concluded that it is appropriate for the policy assessment document to reflect the Agency's views, consistent with EPA practice in other rulemakings. We believe that serious consideration should be given to furthering the public involvement in the rulemaking process by publishing the policy assessment document as an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, which would also receive review by CASAC. It is important to note that the workgroup report does not make recommendations on these two issues.

If you agree with these recommendations, we can take immediate actions to begin implementing them. However, individual components of these recommendations would benefit from additional consideration, including resource evaluation and further consultation with CASAC members and the public.

In closing, we would like to note that the NAAQS review process has evolved over the course of three decades, and the recommendations presented today represent the most recent potential refinements to that process. We thank you for an opportunity to offer these recommendations.

Attachment