



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION III
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-2029**

FEB 06 2013

The Honorable Robert McDonnell
Governor of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building Third Floor
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor McDonnell:

Thank you for your staff's recommendations on air quality designations for the Commonwealth of Virginia for the 2010 revision to the primary National Ambient Air Quality Standard for sulfur dioxide (SO₂). Reducing levels of sulfur dioxide pollution is an important part of the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) commitment to a clean, healthy environment. Exposure to SO₂ can cause a range of adverse health effects, including narrowing of the airways which can cause difficulty breathing and increased asthma symptoms. This letter is to notify you of EPA's preliminary intentions regarding your recommended designations.

On June 3, 2010, EPA strengthened the health-based or "primary" standard for SO₂ by establishing a standard for 1-hour average SO₂ concentrations at a level of 75 parts per billion. The Clean Air Act requires EPA to complete the initial designations process within two years of promulgating a new or revised standard. If EPA has insufficient information to make these designations, the Agency has the authority to extend the designation process by up to one year. On July 27, 2012, EPA announced that it had insufficient information to complete the designations for the 1-hour SO₂ standard within two years and extended the designations deadline to June 3, 2013.

At this time, EPA is proceeding with designating nonattainment areas in locations where existing monitoring data from 2009-2011 indicate violations of the 1-hour SO₂ standard. EPA intends to address the designations for all other areas in separate future actions. With input from a diverse group of stakeholders, EPA has developed a comprehensive implementation strategy for these future actions that focuses resources on identifying and addressing unhealthy levels of SO₂. The strategy is available at www.epa.gov/airquality/sulfurdioxide/implement.html. EPA will continue to work closely with you and our other state, tribal, and local partners to ensure health-protective, commonsense implementation of the 1-hour SO₂ standard.

EPA's review of the most recent monitored air quality data from 2009-2011 shows no violations of the 2010 SO₂ standard in any areas in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Consequently, EPA is not yet prepared to propose designation action in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and is therefore currently deferring action to designate areas in the Commonwealth of Virginia. EPA expects to be able to proceed with designation action in the Commonwealth of Virginia once additional data are gathered pursuant to our comprehensive implementation strategy. In a separate future action or actions EPA will notify you of our intended designations for these areas, and seek public comment on these actions, no later than 120 days prior to promulgating any final designations.

EPA looks forward to a continued dialogue with you and your staff as we work together to implement the 2010 primary SO₂ standard. For additional information regarding initial designations on the SO₂ standard, please visit our website at www.epa.gov/so2designations. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or have your staff contact Dr. Jennie Saxe, EPA's Virginia Liaison, at (215) 814-5806.

Sincerely,



Shawn M. Garvin
Regional Administrator

cc: The Honorable Doug Domenech
Secretary of Natural Resources