

Fact Sheet

Redesignation of Certain Unclassifiable Areas for the 2010 1-Hour Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂) Primary National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) – Final Rule

ACTION

- On June 30, 2021, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized a rule that redesignates as “attainment/unclassifiable” two separate “unclassifiable” areas in Nebraska and Texas for the 2010 1-hour SO₂ National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS). In 2016, as part of EPA’s Round 2 air quality designations for the 2010 1-hour SO₂ standard, EPA did not have sufficient information to determine if these areas attained the standard.
- Based on newly available air quality monitoring data for 2017 – 2019 that demonstrates attainment of the standard, EPA redesignates to “attainment/unclassifiable” the entirety of Lancaster County in Nebraska and the entirety of Milam County in Texas.
- In response to EPA’s SO₂ Data Requirements Rule (DRR) (80 FR 5102, August 21, 2015), for each area, the state selected the monitoring pathway to evaluate SO₂ air quality. Each state either identified existing SO₂ monitors and/or installed and began operating new monitors in accordance with the DRR. Each area now has at least one monitor with a complete, valid 3-year design value, for the 2017-2019 period, that is attaining the 2010 1-hour SO₂ NAAQS.
- Nebraska and Texas have each submitted redesignation requests for their respective areas, which EPA also approves.

BACKGROUND

- After EPA sets a new NAAQS or revises an existing standard, the Clean Air Act (CAA) requires the agency to designate areas in the United States as “attainment” (meeting), “nonattainment” (not meeting) or “unclassifiable” (insufficient data).
- In June 2010, EPA set a 1-hour average, health-based national air quality standard for SO₂ at 75 parts per billion. The revised standard improves public health protection, especially for children, the elderly and people with asthma. These groups are susceptible to health problems, including narrowing of the airways which can cause difficulty breathing and increased asthma symptoms, associated with breathing SO₂.
- CAA Section 107(d)(3)(A) provides that the Administrator may notify the Governor of any state that the designation of an area should be revised “on the basis of air quality data, planning and control considerations, or any other air quality-related considerations the Administrator deems appropriate.”

- The CAA further provides (section 107(d)(3)(D)) that even if the Administrator has not notified a Governor that a designation should be revised, the Governor may submit a request to revise the designation of any area, and the Administrator must approve or deny the request.
- Areas that are redesignated to “attainment/unclassifiable” must meet the relevant NAAQS and must not contribute to ambient air quality in a nearby area that does not meet the NAAQS.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Interested parties can download this final rule from the EPA's web site at: <https://www.epa.gov/sulfur-dioxide-designations/sulfur-dioxide-designations-regulatory-actions>.
- This final rule and other background information are also available electronically at <https://www.regulations.gov/>, EPA’s electronic public docket and comment system. It can be accessed using Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2020-0292.
- For general information about this final rule, contact Gobeil McKinley at (919) 541-5246 and mckinley.gobeil@epa.gov, of the EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards.