



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

AUG 3 1 2010

OFFICE OF
AIR AND RADIATION

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Grassley:

Thank you for your letter of July 23, 2010, co-signed by 20 of your colleagues, expressing your concerns over the ongoing review of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for particulate matter (PM). The Administrator asked that I respond to your letter.

We appreciate the importance of NAAQS decisions to western portions of the country, as well as agricultural communities, and I respect your perspectives and opinions. NAAQS are set to protect public health from outdoor air pollution, and are not focused on any specific category of sources or any particular activity (including activities related to agriculture). The NAAQS are based on consideration of the scientific evidence and technical information regarding health and welfare effects of the pollutants for which they are set.

We are early in the process and far from making any decisions on whether the PM standards should be changed. The next step is consideration of public comments and advice from the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee on a draft Policy Assessment (PA) prepared by EPA staff. The PA is not a decision document; it will be used with other information to inform the Administrator so she is able to determine whether, and if so how, to propose a revision of the NAAQS. There is a significant amount of work to be done and a formal proposal and call for further public review and comments would not be issued until early 2011. Following consideration of public comments on a proposal, the Administrator would issue a notice of final rulemaking later in 2011.

I want to note a correction with regard to your statement that “[a] coarse PM NAAQS of 65-85 ug/m³ would be twice as stringent as the current standard.” This is incorrect. According to EPA’s draft PA, it would be appropriate to consider this range of alternative PM₁₀ numerical levels only in conjunction with a significant change in the method used to calculate whether an area attains the standard. Such a change in the calculation could provide more flexibility than the current standard and greater year-to-year stability for the states.

We remain committed to common sense approaches to improving air quality across the country without placing undue burden on agricultural and rural communities. We will continue discussing these options with the Agency’s science advisors and the public. This is all part of the

open and transparent rulemaking process that provides Americans with many opportunities to offer their comments and thoughts. Your comments and those of your colleagues will be fully considered as we proceed with our deliberations.

Again, the Administrator and I thank you for your letter. If you have further questions, please contact me or your staff may contact Josh Lewis in EPA's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations at (202) 564-2095.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gina McCarthy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "M".

Gina McCarthy
Assistant Administrator