



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

FEB 16 2016

OFFICE OF THE
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

The Honorable David Y. Ige
Governor, State of Hawaii
State Capitol Executive Chambers
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Governor Ige:

On May 19, 2011, then-Governor Neil Abercrombie submitted air quality designation recommendations for the State of Hawaii for the 2010 revision to the primary National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for sulfur dioxide (SO₂). Reducing levels of SO₂ pollution is an important part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) 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 the EPA's preliminary intentions regarding Hawaii's recommended designations.

On June 3, 2010, the 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. Within one year after a new or revised standard is established, the Clean Air Act requires the Governor of each state to submit to the EPA a list of all areas in the state, with recommendations for whether each area meets the standard. Through an interactive process, the EPA considers the recommendations and then promulgates designations for all areas across the country. On July 25, 2013, the EPA designated 29 areas in 16 states as nonattainment, but did not at that time designate other areas. Pursuant to a March 2, 2015, court-ordered schedule,¹ the EPA must complete the remaining SO₂ designations by three specific deadlines: July 2, 2016, December 31, 2017, and December 31, 2020.

This current round of designations, to be completed by July 2, 2016, addresses two groups of areas: (1) areas that have newly monitored violations of the 2010 SO₂ NAAQS based on the most recent 3 calendar years of certified monitored ambient air quality data, and (2) areas that contain any stationary source that had not been announced as of March 2, 2015 for retirement and that, according to the EPA's Air Markets Database, in 2012 emitted either (i) more than 16,000 tons of SO₂, or (ii) more than 2,600 tons of SO₂ with an annual average emission rate of at least 0.45 pounds of SO₂/mmBTU.

After carefully considering Hawaii's recommendations and other available technical information, the EPA intends to designate as unclassifiable/attainment the following county:

Intended Unclassifiable/Attainment Area:
Hawaii County, Hawaii

¹ *Sierra Club v. McCarthy*, No. 3-13-cv-3953 (SI) (N.D. Cal. Mar. 2, 2015).

We acknowledge that in Hawaii's May 19, 2011 recommendation, Hawaii County is recommended to be designated as unclassifiable. However, based on all information available, including the recent exceptional events concurrences discussed below, the EPA intends to designate Hawaii County as unclassifiable/attainment.

On December 17, 2015, Hawaii Department of Health (HDOH) submitted documentation to the EPA to demonstrate that exceedances of the 2010 1-hour SO₂ NAAQS that were recorded in 2012-2014 at the Hilo, Mountain View, Ocean View, and Pahala air monitoring stations located in Hawaii County (consisting of the Big Island of Hawaii) resulted from volcanic-related exceptional events, rather than due to emissions from power plants in the vicinity of these monitors. On February 4, 2016, the EPA concurred on these volcanic emissions exceptional events. With these concurrences, monitors in Hawaii County show no violations of the 2010 SO₂ NAAQS for calendar years 2012-2014. Because monitors in the county of Hawaii were recording violations of the standard prior to the recent exceptional events concurrence, the EPA is including the area in this round of designations.

The enclosed Technical Support Document provides a detailed analysis that supports our intended designation decisions. If your state has additional information that the EPA should consider prior to finalizing these designations, please submit it to us by April 19, 2016. We also will be publishing a notice in the *Federal Register* announcing a 30-day period for the public to provide input on the EPA's intended designation decisions. We will promulgate the designations for these areas by July 2, 2016. We will designate all other previously undesignated areas in the state on a schedule consistent with the prescribed timing of the court order, i.e., by December 31, 2017, or December 31, 2020.

We look forward to a continued dialogue with you and your staff as we work together to complete the area designations and implement the 2010 primary SO₂ standard. For additional information regarding designations under the SO₂ standard, please visit our website at www.epa.gov/so2designations. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me, or have your staff contact Kerry Drake, Associate Director, Air Division, of my staff at (415) 947-4157 or drake.kerry@epa.gov.

Sincerely,



Jared Blumenfeld

Enclosure

cc: Nolan Hirai, Manager, Clean Air Branch, Hawaii Department of Health
Elizabeth Adams, Acting Director, Region IX Air Division
Janet G. McCabe, Acting Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation
Stephen D. Page, Director, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards