



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 1  
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BOSTON, MA 02109-3912

February 7, 2013

The Honorable Lincoln D. Chafee  
Office of the Governor  
State House  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-1196

Dear Governor Chafee:

Thank you for your recommendations dated May 18, 2011 on air quality designations for the state of Rhode Island for the 2010 revision to the primary National Ambient Air Quality Standard for sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>). 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 SO<sub>2</sub> 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 your recommended designations.

On June 3, 2010, the EPA strengthened the health-based or "primary" standard for SO<sub>2</sub> by establishing a standard for 1-hour average SO<sub>2</sub> concentrations at a level of 75 parts per billion. The Clean Air Act requires the EPA to complete the initial designations process within two years of promulgating a new or revised standard. If the Administrator has insufficient information to make these designations, the EPA has the authority to extend the designation process by up to one year. On July 27, 2012, the EPA announced that it had insufficient information to complete the designations for the 1-hour SO<sub>2</sub> standard within two years and extended the designations deadline to June 3, 2013.

At this time the EPA is proceeding with designating as nonattainment most areas in locations where existing monitoring data from 2009-2011 indicate violations of the 1-hour SO<sub>2</sub> standard. The 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 SO<sub>2</sub>. The strategy is available at: <http://www.epa.gov/airquality/sulfurdioxide/implement.html>. The EPA will continue to work closely with you and our other partners at the state, tribal and local levels to ensure health-protective, commonsense implementation of the 1-hour SO<sub>2</sub> standard.

The EPA's review of the most recent monitored air quality data from 2009-2011 shows no violations of the 2010 SO<sub>2</sub> standard in any areas in Rhode Island. Consequently, the EPA is not yet prepared to propose designation action in Rhode Island and is therefore currently deferring action to designate areas in Rhode Island. The EPA expects to be able to proceed with designation action in Rhode Island once additional data are gathered pursuant to our comprehensive implementation strategy. In a separate future

action or actions the 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.

We look forward to a continued dialogue with you and your staff as we work together to implement the 2010 primary SO<sub>2</sub> standard. For additional information regarding initial designations on the SO<sub>2</sub> standard, please visit our website at [www.epa.gov/so2designations](http://www.epa.gov/so2designations). Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me, or have your staff contact Donald Dahl of my staff at 617-918-1657 or [dahl.donald@epa.gov](mailto:dahl.donald@epa.gov).

Sincerely,



H. Curtis Spalding,  
Regional Administrator

cc: Janet Coit, Director, RI-DEM  
Doug McVay, Air Chief, RI-DEM

Gina McCarthy, Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation  
Steve D. Page, Director, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards