



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 6  
1445 ROSS AVENUE, SUITE 1200  
DALLAS, TEXAS 75202 – 2733

Office of the Regional Administrator

February 11, 2016

The Honorable Greg Abbott  
Governor of Texas  
Post Office Box 12428  
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Governor Abbott:

Thank you for your recommendations dated September 18, 2015, on air quality designations for the state of Texas for the 2010 revision to the primary National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>). Reducing levels of SO<sub>2</sub> pollution is an important part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 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. 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,<sup>1</sup> the EPA must complete the remaining SO<sub>2</sub> 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 SO<sub>2</sub> NAAQS based on the most recent three 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 emitted in 2012 either (i) more than 16,000 tons of SO<sub>2</sub> or (ii) more than 2,600 tons of SO<sub>2</sub> with an annual average emission rate of at least 0.45 pounds of SO<sub>2</sub>/mmBTU.

After carefully considering Texas' recommendations and other available technical information, the EPA intends to designate as nonattainment or unclassifiable/attainment the following areas, including the following counties or portions of counties:

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



Intended Nonattainment Area

Freestone-Anderson Counties,  
Texas (parts of)\*

Rusk-Gregg-Panola Counties,  
Texas (parts of)\*

Titus County, Texas (part)\*

Intended Nonattainment Counties

Freestone County (p) and  
Anderson County (p)

Rusk County (p), Gregg County  
(p), and Panola County (p)

Titus County (p)

(p) indicates portion of county

Intended Unclassifiable/Attainment  
Area

Atascosa County, Texas  
Goliad County, Texas  
Lamb County, Texas  
Limestone County, Texas  
Robertson County, Texas

Intended Unclassifiable/Attainment  
Area Counties

Atascosa County  
Goliad County  
Lamb County  
Limestone County  
Robertson County

The asterisk (\*) indicates the designation and boundary for the intended nonattainment areas represents a modification to the designation and boundary that you have recommended.

Because the EPA has insufficient information to determine whether the following areas are meeting or not meeting the SO<sub>2</sub> NAAQS, the EPA intends to designate these areas as unclassifiable:

Intended Unclassifiable Area

McLennan County, Texas\*  
Milam County, Texas\*  
Potter County, Texas\*  
Fort Bend County, Texas\*

Intended Unclassifiable Counties

McLennan County  
Milam County  
Potter County  
Fort Bend County

The asterisk (\*) indicates the designation for these intended unclassifiable areas represents a modification to the designation that you have recommended.

As noted above, we intend to designate Fort Bend County as unclassifiable. On January 25, 2016, the EPA received a revised modeling submittal from industry for the area surrounding the W.A. Parish Electric Generating Station located in Fort Bend County, Texas. The EPA's review of this latest modeling is currently underway. Due to the date of receipt of the latest modeling from industry relative

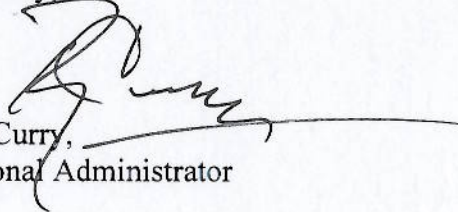


to our scheduled timeline for proposing designations in order to meet the court-ordered deadline, we have not had sufficient time to thoroughly review the January 25, 2016 submittal to determine if the modeling is sufficient to support a designation of unclassifiable/attainment. The EPA will continue our review of industry's January 25, 2016 submittal and will take it into consideration in our final designation for the area around W.A. Parish Electric Generating Station.

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 SO<sub>2</sub> standard. For additional information regarding designations under 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 Mr. Guy Donaldson of my staff at (214) 665-7242, or via email at [Donaldson.guy@epa.gov](mailto:Donaldson.guy@epa.gov).

Sincerely,

  
Ron Curry,  
Regional Administrator

Enclosure

cc: Richard A. Hyde, P.E.  
Executive Director, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

Steve Hagle, P.E.  
Deputy Director, Office of Air, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality