



June 9, 2006

Air and Radiation Docket and Information Center
Environmental Protection Agency
Mailcode 6102T
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460

Re: Docket ID No. OAR-2005-0175
Docket ID No. OAR-2004-0018
Docket ID No. OAR-2001-0017

The Missoula City-County Health Department (MCCHD) agrees with comments submitted by the State and Territorial Air Pollution Program Administrators (STAPPA) and the Association of Local Air Pollution Control Officials (ALAPCO) in response to the proposed changes to the Particulate Matter (PM) National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). Specifically, we submit the following comments for consideration:

We urge EPA to follow the recommendations of its appointed scientific experts and lower the annual average PM_{2.5} standard to 13 or 14 µg/m³.

The Clean Air Act requires standards to be set at levels that protect public health and provide a margin of safety. Since the most recent studies demonstrate that adverse health effects occur when annual average PM_{2.5} concentrations reach 15 µg/m³, a PM_{2.5} annual standard of 15 µg/m³ clearly does not protect public health nor does it provide a safety margin. The standard must be set at 13 or 14 µg/m³ in order to meet Clean Air Act requirements.

We urge EPA to follow the recommendations of its appointed scientific experts and lower the PM_{2.5} daily standard to 32 µg/m³.

The Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee recommended that the daily standard be set between 30 and 35 µg/m³. Current research clearly demonstrates that health effects occur at daily concentrations of 40 µg/m³. Although results are less consistent at concentrations of 35 µg/m³, there is enough evidence of adverse health effects at this level to warrant provision of a safety margin below 35 µg/m³. Therefore, we urge the EPA to lower the daily standard to 32 µg/m³.

We support the adoption by EPA of a coarse particle (PM_{10-2.5}) standard that does not exclude certain sources.

MCCHD supports the adoption by EPA of a coarse particle (PM_{10-2.5}) standard. However, EPA's proposal to exclude certain sources from regulation is unprecedented, unsupported by research, and logistically unworkable.

EPA's proposed regulation describing the new standard provides that:

“The standard for PM_{10-2.5} includes any ambient mix of PM_{10-2.5} that is dominated by resuspended dust from high-density traffic on paved roads and PM generated by industrial sources and construction sources, and excludes any ambient mix of PM_{10-2.5} that is dominated by rural windblown dust and soils and PM generated by agricultural and mining sources. Agricultural sources, mining sources and other similar sources of crustal material shall not be subject to control in meeting this standard.”¹

EPA has never before set a NAAQS that requires certain source categories—in this case, agriculture and mining—to be altogether excluded from control requirements. EPA has provided no scientific evidence that categorically excluding these sources is warranted. In fact, there is ample evidence that agricultural and mining activities can contaminate coarse PM with toxic material, and that rural windblown dust can also contain toxic material. It is clear that these crustal materials can pose a public health risk and, therefore, EPA cannot categorically exempt these sources from a coarse PM NAAQS nor can EPA waive control of these sources in meeting the standard.

In addition to being unprotective of public health, a NAAQS that excludes certain sources from control is unworkable in practice. The requirement that PM not be dominated by rural windblown dust and soils and PM generated by agriculture and mining sources poses insurmountable problems for monitoring specialists; there simply is no methodology for providing data that excludes source categories.

For the reasons described above, we believe that a standard that excludes agriculture, mining and rural windblown dust is inconsistent with the mandate of the Clean Air Act to set NAAQS that protect public health and provide “an adequate margin of safety.”² CASAC recommended establishing a 24-hour coarse PM standard “with caveats to make exceptions for those types of rural dusts thought to have low toxicity.”³ CASAC did not recommend a wholesale exemption for all rural dust, only dust with *low toxicity*. If any exemptions are warranted, they should be handled in the rules and policies implementing the standard and not the standard itself.

EPA should promulgate a nationally applicable 24-Hour coarse PM standard that covers urban and rural populations.

¹ Proposed 40 CFR §50.13(a)(2)(B)(ii) in EPA, “National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter: Proposed Rule,” 71 *Federal Register* 2699 (January 17, 2006).

² Section 109(b)(1).

³ Letter from Rogene Henderson, Chair, CASAC, to the Honorable Stephen L. Johnson, Administrator, EPA; “Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) Particulate Matter (PM) Review Panel’s Peer Review of the Agency’s Review of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter: Policy Assessment of Scientific and Technical Information (Second Draft Staff Paper); and *Particulate Matter Health Risk Assessment for Selected Urban Areas: Second Draft Report* (Second Draft PM Risk Assessment, January 2005)” (June 6, 2005), at p.2.

The proposed rule's five-part suitability test for coarse PM monitor placement currently excludes Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) that contain fewer than 100,000 people.⁴ The monitoring requirements proposed by EPA for the coarse PM standard⁵ will, for all intents and purposes, mean that the PM coarse standard will not apply in smaller communities and rural areas. Yet, as mentioned in the previous section, coarse PM found in rural areas can be toxic; rural areas can also be affected by sources of coarse PM typically thought of as "urban," such as industry and transportation.

Missoula, for example, has multiple large and small industrial sources (including three large Title V sources), and many people live near major roadways where toxic emissions from diesel trucks and buses can contaminate coarse PM. However, because our population is less than 100,000, under EPA's proposal we would have no means to monitor coarse particulate levels. Without monitoring, our community (and many others like ours across the country) will not be able to ascertain whether or not we are subject to unsafe levels of coarse PM, even though our airshed is affected by sources commonly found in larger cities. People in rural communities are just as vulnerable to air pollution as those who live in urban areas, and EPA's apparent disregard for the health of millions of Americans who live in these areas is reprehensible.

The fourth part of the test requires that coarse monitors "may not be in source-influenced microenvironments."⁶ PM₁₀ monitors have never been so restricted. EPA states that its goal is to achieve equal stringency with the PM₁₀ standards for the new NAAQS, and that siting monitors near industrial sources could result in the coarse PM standard being *more* stringent than the PM₁₀ standard.⁷ This rationale is not persuasive and seems to ignore the fact many people potentially live in a "source-influenced microenvironments."

The final part of the five-part suitability test requires that the coarse PM indicator not be dominated by rural windblown dust and soils and PM generated by agriculture and mining sources.⁸ As mentioned previously, this part of the test not only raises serious public health concerns, but it also poses insurmountable problems for monitoring specialists, who simply have no methodology for providing data that excludes source categories. These exclusions are not supported by science or public health policy.

⁴ Proposed 40 CFR Part 58. See 71 *Federal Register* 2782 (January 17, 2006), *supra* note 18.

⁵ Proposed 40 CFR section 58(b)(1)-(5) sets forth a five-part suitability test for coarse PM monitors. It provides that, in order for data to be eligible for comparison with the PM_{10-2.5} NAAQS, the data must be from a monitoring site that meets all five conditions: 1) the site must be in an urbanized area as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau with a population of at least 100,000 people; 2) the site must be in a census block with a population density of at least 500 people per square mile (a lower population density is permitted if "the block group is part of an enclave that is not more than five square miles in land area"); 3) the site must be population-oriented; 4) the site may not be in "source-influenced microenvironments;" and 5) PM_{10-2.5} concentrations must be "dominated by resuspended dust from high-density traffic on paved roads and PM generated by industrial and construction sources, and must not be dominated by rural windblown dust and soils and PM generated by agricultural and mining sources," as determined in a site-specific assessment conducted by a state and approved by EPA. EPA, "Revisions to the Ambient Air Monitoring Regulations: Proposed Rule; Amendments," 71 *Federal Register* 2782 (January 17, 2006).

⁶ Proposed 40 CFR section 58. See 71 *Federal Register* 2782 (January 17, 2006), *supra* note 18.

⁷ *Id.* at 2738.

⁸ Proposed 40 CFR section 58. See 71 *Federal Register* 2782 (January 17, 2006), *supra* note 12.

To ensure populations in rural areas are protected from coarse PM, the 24-hour PM₁₀ standard should be retained until a nationally applicable coarse PM standard is promulgated.

The proposed rule revokes the 24-hour PM₁₀ standard except in areas that have one or more violating monitors and have populations of more than 100,000. The annual PM₁₀ standard is proposed to be immediately revoked upon promulgation. However, until such time as a nationally applicable coarse PM standard is promulgated and areas are designated, the 24-hour PM₁₀ standard should be maintained to protect urban and rural populations.

Multipollutant monitoring and other monitoring efforts should not be undertaken at the expense of criteria pollutant monitoring networks

EPA has proposed to require states to operate from one to three National Core (NCore) multipollutant monitoring sites as part of an overall strategy to move from single-pollutant networks to multi-pollutant networks with real-time reporting capability. As administrators of public health programs, our goal is attainment and maintenance of the NAAQS. Obtaining criteria pollutant information of continuing value, carrying out SIP development work, and other monitoring goals must continue to be our priorities. Under the Clean Air Act, these efforts cannot be sacrificed to fund the NCore effort. In addition, pollutant monitoring for NAAQS should not be cut to fund other monitoring activities such as the Clean Air Status and Trends Network (CASTNET) and the National Atmospheric Deposition Network (NADP).

EPA and state and local air agencies should arrive at criteria for exempting data from special purpose monitors from NAAQS comparisons.

The EPA's proposed regulations governing special purpose monitors (SPMs) are unnecessarily restrictive and inflexible. The proposed 40 CFR 58.20 requires that all data from SPMs be compared to the NAAQS for compliance purposes. We believe that a more flexible framework for deciding the circumstances in which data from SPMs should be compared to the NAAQS can and should be devised. Many SPMs are intended to shed light on long-range trends related to transport or health effects. We can most effectively further the goals of obtaining valuable scientific information by carefully defining SPMs, and by recognizing that some legitimate monitoring purposes are indeed special and are not related to compliance designations.

Sincerely,

Jim Carlson
Environmental Health Director

cc: Ellen Leahy, Health Officer
Missoula Air Pollution Control Board
Missoula Air Quality Advisory Council