

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

40 CFR PART 81

[EPA-HQ-OAR-2017-0223; FRL-]

Withdrawal of Extension of Deadline for Promulgating Designations for the 2015 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards

AGENCY: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

ACTION: Withdrawal of extension of deadline for promulgating designations.

SUMMARY: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is announcing that it is withdrawing the 1-year extension of the deadline for promulgating initial area designations for the ozone national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) that were promulgated in October 2015. Thus, unless and until the Administrator takes additional final action, the 2-year deadline for promulgating designations provided in the Clean Air Act (CAA) applies.

DATES: The deadline for the EPA to promulgate initial designations for the 2015 ozone NAAQS is October 1, 2017.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For questions regarding this action, contact Carla Oldham, Air Quality Planning Division, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards, Mail Code C539-04, Environmental Protection Agency, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina 27711; telephone number: (919) 541-3347; email address: oldham.carla@epa.gov

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. General Information

A. Does this action apply to me?

Entities potentially affected by this action include state, local and tribal governments that would participate in the initial area designation process for the 2015 ozone standards.

B. Where can I get a copy of this document and other related information?

The EPA has established a docket for designations for the 2015 ozone NAAQS under Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2017-0223. All documents in the docket are listed in the <http://www.regulations.gov> index. Although listed in the index, some information is not publicly available, e.g., confidential business information or other information whose disclosure is restricted by statute. Certain other material, such as copyrighted material, will be publicly available only in hard copy. Publicly available docket materials are available either electronically in <http://www.regulations.gov> or in hard copy at the EPA Docket Center, WJC West Building, Room 3334, 1301 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC. The Public Reading Room is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding legal holidays. The telephone number for the Public Reading Room is (202) 566-1744, and the telephone number for the EPA Docket Center is (202) 566-1742.

An electronic copy of this notice is also available at <http://www.epa.gov/ozone-designations> along with other information related to designations for the 2015 ozone NAAQS.

II. Designations Requirements

On October 1, 2015, the EPA signed a notice of final rulemaking that revised the 8-hour primary and secondary ozone NAAQS (80 FR 65292; October 26, 2015). Both standards were lowered from 0.075 parts per million (ppm) to a level of 0.070 ppm.

After the EPA establishes or revises a NAAQS pursuant to CAA section 109, the CAA directs the EPA and the states to begin taking steps to ensure that those NAAQS are met. The first step is to identify areas of the country that meet or do not meet that NAAQS. This step is known as the initial area designations. Section 107(d)(1)(A) of the CAA provides that, “By such date as the Administrator may reasonably require, but not later than 1 year after promulgation of

a new or revised national ambient air quality standard for any pollutant under section [109], the Governor of each State shall * * * submit to the Administrator a list of all areas (or portions thereof) in the State” that designates those areas as nonattainment, attainment, or unclassifiable.

The CAA further provides, “Upon promulgation or revision of a national ambient air quality standard, the Administrator shall promulgate the designations of all areas (or portions thereof) * * * as expeditiously as practicable, but in no case later than 2 years from the date of promulgation of the new or revised national ambient air quality standard. Such period may be extended for up to one year in the event the Administrator has insufficient information to promulgate the designations.” 42 U.S.C. § 7407(d)(1)(B)(i).

In the EPA guidance, “Area Designations for the 2015 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards,” the EPA indicated it expected to complete the initial area designations by October 1, 2017, consistent with the statutory requirement that the EPA designate areas no later than 2 years following promulgation of a revised NAAQS.¹

III. Withdrawal of Extension of Deadline for Promulgating Designations for the 2015 Ozone NAAQS

In letters sent to states on June 6, 2017, and in a **Federal Register** notice published on June 28, 2017 (82 FR 29246), the EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt announced that he was using his authority under section 107(d)(1)(B)(i) of the CAA to extend by 1 year, to October 1, 2018, the deadline for promulgating initial area designations for the 2015 ozone NAAQS. At that time (i.e., in early June), it was not clear that the agency would be in the position to complete designations for all areas for the 2015 ozone NAAQS in accordance with the 2-year statutory

¹ Memorandum from Janet G. McCabe, Acting Assistant Administrator, to Regional Administrators, Regions 1-10. February 25, 2016.

deadline of October 1, 2017. For a variety of other NAAQS in the past, previous EPA Administrators have used the authority under section 107(d)(1)(B)(i) to take additional time to complete designations.² The Administrator decided to similarly invoke the extension with regard to designations for the 2015 ozone NAAQS.

The EPA has continued to discuss and work with states concerning designations, and now understands that the information gaps that formed the basis of the extension may not be as expansive as we previously believed. The EPA now intends to reassess whether there are areas with underlying technical issues, whether there are state designation recommendations that the EPA intends to modify, and whether for any area there is insufficient information to promulgate the designation. The EPA believes this reevaluation will help ensure that more Americans are living and working in areas that meet national air quality standards. The agency believes that there may be areas of the United States for which designations could be promulgated in the next few months. Therefore, the EPA is withdrawing its prior announced 1-year extension of the deadline for promulgating initial area designations for the 2015 ozone NAAQS, and the 2-year deadline for promulgating designations provided in section 107(d)(1)(B) of the CAA applies. The Administrator may still determine that an extension of time to complete designations is necessary, but is not making such a determination at this time.

² For the 2008 ozone NAAQS, *see* 75 FR 2936 (January 19, 2010); for the 2008 lead NAAQS, *see* 75 FR 71033 (November 22, 2010); for the 2010 sulfur dioxide NAAQS, *see* 77 FR 46295 (August 3, 2012); and for the 2012 fine particulate matter NAAQS, *see* 80 FR 2206 (January 15, 2015).

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LIST OF SUBJECTS IN 40 CFR PART 81

Environmental protection, Air pollution control, National parks, Wilderness areas.

AUG 02 2017

Dated:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Scott Pruitt", is written over a horizontal line.

E. Scott Pruitt,
Administrator.