



June 13, 2022

The Honorable Michael Regan, Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
William J. Clinton Building
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Sent via Regulations.gov

Re: Comments on Determinations of Attainment by the Attainment Date, Extension of the Attainment Date, and Reclassification of Areas Classified as Serious for the 2008 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards, EPA-HQ-OAR-2021-0741

Dear Administrator Regan:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on EPA's proposed determinations of the attainment status of several Serious nonattainment areas for the 2008 75 parts per billion (ppb) Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards based on their attainment deadlines.

The undersigned health organizations support the proposal to redesignate the nonattainment areas for the 2008 standards to Severe nonattainment. We urge EPA to finalize these bump-ups and to deny requests for a one-year attainment date extension.

Ozone is a powerful lung irritant. When inhaled, it causes inflammation and other damage that can impact multiple body systems. Ozone exposure can also shorten lives. Short-term exposure causes breathing problems such as chest tightness, coughing, shortness of breath and worsened symptoms for people with asthma and COPD.¹ Long-term exposure may cause lasting harm to respiratory health. Ozone exposure also increases the risk of metabolic disorders like diabetes;² harm to the central nervous

¹ U.S. EPA. Integrated Science Assessment for Ozone and Related Photochemical Oxidants. April 2020. EPA/600/R-20/012. Section 3.1.4.1.

² U.S. EPA. 2020, Section 3.2.4.6.

system;^{3,4} reproductive and developmental harm, including preterm birth and stillbirth;^{5,6} possible cardiovascular effects;⁷ and premature death.⁸

Among the Serious nonattainment areas for the 2008 designations that failed to meet the attainment deadline are the Chicago, Denver, Houston and Dallas metropolitan areas. All of these areas received failing grades for ozone pollution in the American Lung Association's 2022 "State of the Air" report.

These areas include states identified by EPA in its recent Good Neighbor FIP proposal⁹ to be contributing to the nonattainment of the 2015 ozone standard in downwind areas. The emissions from stationary and mobile sources in these areas are thus contributing to both local ozone pollution and transported pollution. Bumping up the nonattainment area status to Severe and requiring the implementation of further NOx and VOC control mechanisms is both urgent and essential if the public in these areas is to realize the benefits of the health-based ozone standard promulgated 14 years ago.

EPA is proposing to redesignate all portions of the Chicago-Naperville, IL-IN-WI metro area from Serious nonattainment to attainment for the 2008 ozone NAAQS.¹⁰ This proposal is based on the 2019-2021 3-year average of the fourth high daily maximum 8-hour ozone concentration, which just meets the 75 parts per billion (ppb) standard.

However, a closer examination of the 4th highest daily maximum 8-hour concentrations at several monitors in this region across the three states showed an upward trend which suddenly dropped in 2021 in some places. The years of 2020 and 2021 were characterized by the unusual and unique events related to the COVID-19 pandemic (including significant reductions in traffic) which could have significantly influenced the ozone levels in the region. Another factor potentially skewing the averaging is the likely removal of high ozone days via claims of exceptional events due to the large number of fires in the western states in 2020, which was among the top five years with largest wildfire acreage burned since 1960.¹¹

Therefore, we oppose EPA's proposed designation of the Chicago-Naperville metropolitan area as having attained the 2008 ozone standard. We recommend that EPA designate the region as being in Severe nonattainment.

³ U.S. EPA. 2020, Section 5.1.3.

⁴ U.S. EPA. 2020, Sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2.

⁵ Gao Q, Zang E, Bi J, Dubrow R, Lowe SR, Chen H, Zeng Y, Shi L, Chen K. Long-term ozone exposure and cognitive impairment among Chinese older adults: A cohort study. *J Env Int.* 2022; 160:107072.

⁶ U.S. EPA. 2020, Section 7.1.3.

⁷ Mendola P, Ha S, Pollack AZ, Zhu Y, Seeni I, Kim SS, Sherman S, Liu D. Chronic and acute ozone exposure in the week prior to delivery is associated with risk of stillbirth. *Int J Environ Res Pub Health.* 2017; 14:731.

⁸ U.S. EPA. 2020, Sections 4.1 and 4.2.

⁹ [2022-04551.pdf \(govinfo.gov\)](https://www.epa.gov/2022-04551.pdf)

¹⁰ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/03/10/2022-05020/air-plan-approval-illinois-redesignation-of-the-illinois-portion-of-the-chicago-naperville>

¹¹ Congressional Research Service (CRS). (2022, May 2). Wildfire Statistics. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/IF10244.pdf>

The Serious nonattainment areas for the 2008 NAAQS have had 13 years since the promulgation of the standard to attain it and yet failed to do so.¹² Requiring the expeditious deployment of reasonably available emission control technologies that are currently being used in areas in attainment is both essential and urgent. We ask EPA to adhere to the 12-month deadline for revised SIP submissions for the newly classified Severe nonattainment areas. We also oppose granting additional 1-year extensions to nonattainment areas that failed to attain the standard by the relevant Clean Air Act-prescribed deadlines.

Fully implementing and enforcing the 2008 standards is critical for the health of the communities we serve.

Signed,

Allergy & Asthma Network

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

American Lung Association

American Public Health Association

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

Children's Environmental Health Network

Medical Students for a Sustainable Future

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

National League for Nursing

Physicians for Social Responsibility

Public Health Institute

¹² <https://www.epa.gov/ground-level-ozone-pollution/ozone-naaqs-timelines>