

March 15, 2011

Urge the EPA not to Further Regulate Dust

Dear Colleague:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is considering new, more stringent standards for regulating Coarse Particulate Matter (PM10), or “dust,” that would be devastating to rural America. Americans are demanding commonsense, responsible solutions to economic recovery rooted in scientific evidence that encourage innovation and job creation. We are sending a message to the EPA: revised dust standards are unnecessary, would stifle economic growth in rural areas, and would cause severe economic strain our farmers and ranchers.

Many activities essential to farming and agribusiness involve dust, including driving down an unpaved road. The EPA is considering implementing regulations that could change the current standard from 150 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ to 65-85 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ which would push many areas in your states into or near “nonattainment”. This is unacceptable given the likelihood that once an area is designated as nonattainment, activities such as tilling soil, harvesting crops, moving livestock and driving down unpaved roads are likely to become regulated activities, subject to fines of \$37,500 a day for violations.

Finally, EPA acknowledges that more stringent standards are not necessary to protect public health. In fact, EPA’s own assessment acknowledges scientific uncertainty in the justification to change the current standard. In contrast, making the standard more stringent would prevent job creation, raise input costs for farmers, and greatly slow economic development throughout rural America. The answer is clear: we urge the EPA not to make rural America “collateral damage” in its efforts to control dust in urban America.

We encourage our colleagues to join us in this important mission for American farmers, agribusinesses, and the American people. To sign onto the letter, please contact Chris Davis in Rep. Fincher’s office; c.davis@mail.house.gov or Renee Latterell with Rep. Noem’s office; renee.latterell@mail.house.gov. Please respond by close of business Friday, March 18th.


The Honorable Stephen Fincher
Member of Congress


The Honorable Kristi Noem
Member of Congress

March 15, 2011

The Honorable Lisa Jackson
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson:

We write today to express our concerns about the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) potential revision to the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for Coarse Particulate Matter (PM₁₀), more commonly known as dust. Making the PM₁₀ standard more stringent would have a devastating impact on farmers, ranchers, and all of rural America. This could cost farmers and businesses millions of dollars in compliance costs, greatly slowing economic development in rural communities where job creation is desperately needed.

For many areas of the country, especially in rural America, dust occurs naturally and is a simple fact of life. There are many activities essential to farming such as plowing, planting, and harvesting which involve dust. Even driving down an unpaved road raises dust. These regulations could decrease the ability of the agriculture community in the United States to meet the world's food needs as well as decrease productivity, increase food prices, and incur job losses in rural America.

The potential revision of the NAAQS to a level of 65-85 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ is below naturally occurring levels of dust in some states, making it impossible to meet. By EPA's own admission, the number of counties in nonattainment would more than double. Not surprisingly, these areas are primarily located in rural, dry parts of the country. At a time when the focus of the Administration should be on economic development and job creation, the EPA is instead promulgating rules which may have the opposite effect. If implemented, the proposed standards could subject farmers, livestock producers, and industry to burdensome regulations which could result in fines amounting to \$37,500 a day for violations. Even EPA's 2nd Draft Policy Assessment acknowledges that uncertainties in scientific studies would allow the EPA to retain the current standard.

There are no better stewards of the land than America's agriculture community. Given the difficulty and expensive process of mitigating dust in most settings, the revised standards could have a devastating impact on rural economies and greatly reduce our nations' food security. If, as the agency has determined, rural fugitive dust has been found to be of less public health concern than dust in urban areas, there is no reason to adopt the revised standard. We strongly encourage the EPA not to implement the more stringent proposed standards.

Sincerely,


