

State of California Air Resources Board

Board Item Summary

Item # 24-1-1: Public Hearing to Consider Proposed 2023 Amendments to Area Designations for State Ambient Air Quality Standards

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends the California Air Resources Board (CARB or Board) approve the proposed amendments to the area designations regulations to reflect current air quality data.

Discussion:

CARB is required to annually review and designate areas of California with respect to the State ambient air quality standards and amend the designations if appropriate. Based on a review of air quality data collected during 2020 through 2022, CARB staff recommends the Board change the designations of several areas for the State ozone, hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) air quality standards. These recommendations were developed with public input, including a public workshop held on October 4, 2023.

For the State ozone standard, CARB staff recommends the Board change the designation of Lake Tahoe Air Basin, Amador, Calaveras, and Placer Counties in the Mountain Counties Air Basin, Butte, Sutter, and Yuba Counties in the Sacramento Valley Air Basin, and San Francisco Bay Area Air Basin from nonattainment to nonattainment-transitional. For H₂S, CARB staff recommends the Board change the designation of Riverside County in the Salton Sea Air Basin from unclassified to nonattainment. For PM_{2.5}, CARB staff recommends the Board change the designation of Butte County in the Sacramento Valley Air Basin from nonattainment to attainment.

Summary and Impacts:

The area designations are labels that describe the healthfulness of the air quality in each area. Because these regulations by themselves are labels of an area's air quality, they do not contain any specific requirements for action. However, there may be legal requirements based on an area's designation status, including a reporting requirement for local air districts. As a result, in most cases, changes to area designations have no specific, direct economic impact. In general, this regional approach to categorizing air quality allows each district to identify the most cost-effective and efficient approach to achieve the State ambient air quality standards.

The proposed change in ozone designation from nonattainment to nonattainment-transitional provides the option to suspend some reporting requirements for local air districts that oversee air quality planning. These local air districts may experience some costs to updating triennial report and some cost savings to updating annual reports, if they choose to suspend the reporting. These costs were not quantified because the changes to the triennial and annual reports are anticipated to be minor, and it is not certain if the districts would choose to suspend reporting.