

TITLE 17. CALIFORNIA AIR RESOURCES BOARD

Adoption of Amendments to Divide the Southeast Desert Air Basin into Two Air Basins and to Modify the Boundary of the South Coast Air Basin and Amendments to the Related Agricultural Burning Regulations

UPDATED INFORMATIVE DIGEST

Sections Affected

California Code of Regulations, Title 17, amended Sections 60104, 60109, and 80280 and added Sections 60114 and 80311.

Background

California Health and Safety Code (H&SC) Section 39606(a) directs the ARB to divide the State into air basins. Assembly Bill 421 (AB 421), authored by Assemblyman Olberg and enacted in 1995, added Section 39606.1 to the H&SC. This section requires the ARB to adopt regulations by January 1, 1997, to further divide the current Southeast Desert Air Basin (SEDAB) into two new air basins. Also, Section 39606.1 specifies that one new air basin, named the "Mojave Desert Air Basin," include at least the SEDAB portions of Kern and Los Angeles Counties and all areas under the jurisdiction of the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District (Mojave Desert AQMD). The areas under the jurisdiction of the Mojave Desert AQMD include the SEDAB's portion of San Bernardino County and an easterly segment of the SEDAB's portion of Riverside County. The ARB may include any additional areas contiguous to the areas mentioned above that the ARB determines appropriate for inclusion, based upon similar meteorological and geographical conditions and consideration for political boundary lines whenever practicable. A second new air basin would consist of those areas of the SEDAB that are not included by the ARB in the new Mojave Desert Air Basin.

Unrelated to AB 421, the South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD) requested that the ARB realign air basin boundaries so that the San Geronio Pass area, currently a part of the SEDAB, would become a part of the South Coast Air Basin (SOCAB). The South Coast AQMD believes that the San Geronio Pass is more similar in terms of both climate and geography to adjacent areas of the SOCAB than it is to the SEDAB. After a review of the District's request, the ARB staff recommended that the Board support the request.

Description of the Regulatory Action

The California Air Resources Board (Board) held a public hearing on May 30, 1996, to consider adopting amendments and additions to the air basin boundary regulations and related agricultural burning regulations. The Board amended Sections 60104, 60109, and 80280 and added new Sections 60114 and 80311, Title 17, California Code of Regulations (CCR). The amendments and additions were adopted as proposed without change.

The Board adopted the staff's proposal as follows: (1) divided the Southeast Desert Air Basin into two new air basins called the "Mojave Desert Air Basin" and the "Salton Sea Air Basin;" and (2) altered the boundary of the South Coast Air Basin (SOCAB) by including the San Geronio Pass area in the SOCAB. As a result, there will be a total of 15 air basins in California, and there will no longer be an air basin called the "Southeast Desert Air Basin."

The new Mojave Desert Air Basin (MDAB) will consist of the previous SEDAB portions of Kern, Los Angeles, and San Bernardino Counties and also that segment of Riverside County that lies to the east of the southwestern boundary line of Hydrologic Unit Number 18100100 in central Riverside County. This Hydrologic Unit line joins the ridge lines of the Little San Bernardino Mountains and the Chuckwalla Mountains. The Hydrologic Unit is identified on the Hydrologic Unit Map, 1978, State of California (Southern Half), Department of the Interior, Geological Survey, Reston, Virginia (Reprinted 1987), which is to be incorporated by reference in the regulation.

The new Salton Sea Air Basin (SSAB) will consist of all of Imperial County and that segment of the previous SEDAB portion of Riverside County, except the San Geronio Pass area, that lies to the west of the aforementioned Hydrologic Unit boundary line.

The South Coast Air Basin, as modified, will consist of all the territories previously in that air basin plus the San Geronio Pass area of Riverside County.

In addition to these changes in the air basin boundaries, the Board also adopted the staff's proposed changes to the related agricultural burning regulations. These regulations establish meteorological criteria for declaring permissive burn days in each air basin. The previous meteorological criteria for the SEDAB will be used for the new SSAB. The same criteria will be used for the new MDAB, except that the criterion on wind direction, which does not apply to the MDAB, will be deleted. The Board did not make any changes to the criteria for the South Coast Air Basin.

Comparable Federal Regulations

The State has sole responsibility for dividing California into air basins and making necessary changes to the air basin boundaries as it deems appropriate, pursuant to the authority given in the Health and Safety Code, Section 39606(a). These air basin boundaries are used by federal, state, and local agencies in air quality planning efforts. Air basin boundary changes are made only at the State level, and there are no related federal or local requirements.