UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 1
1 CONGRESS STREET, SUITE 1100
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02114-2023

July 31, 2003

OFFICE OF THE
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

The Honorable John Elias Baldacci
Governor of Maine
1 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0001

Dear Governor Baldacci:

Thank you for your letter of July 15, 2003, forwarding Maine's recommendations on air quality designations for the national health-based standard for ground-level ozone, a major constituent of smog. As you know, breathing ozone and fine particles can cause serious respiratory and cardiovascular effects. Many health studies have correlated increased exposure to fine particles with increases in premature death. In 1997, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) revised its national ambient air quality standards for these two pollutants. After prevailing in a lengthy court battle, we are now working with states to take the steps necessary to protect the public from these pollutants. Your letter is an important step toward providing citizens in Maine with critical information about air pollution levels in their community.

We intend to carefully review the recommendations and work with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection in determining final designations. The EPA must make its final official designation decisions for ozone by April 15, 2004. For the fine particle standards, states are to make these recommendations by February 2004, and EPA will make its final decisions by December 15, 2004.

Once EPA officially designates an area as not meeting one of these air quality standards, Maine will be required to develop and submit to EPA a plan for cleaning up the air in those designated nonattainment areas. These plans will be due no later than three years after the date that an area is designated as nonattainment. The level of emission controls and the dates for achieving clean air in these nonattainment areas will vary depending upon the severity of the problem.

We hope that you will encourage the communities in Maine to take early actions to improve their air quality. My staff are available to help identify appropriate pollution control measures. We will also work with other affected states to take necessary steps to reduce air pollution.

We look forward to working with Maine in the coming months on designations. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me or David Conroy, Manager of the Air Quality Planning Unit, at (617) 918-1661.

Sincerely,

Robert W. Varney
Regional Administrator

cc: Dawn Gallagher, ME DEP
James Brooks, ME DEP