



FY 2020-2021 Agency Priority Goal Action Plan

Improve Air Quality by Reducing the Number of Areas Not Meeting Air Quality Standards

Goal Leader:

Elizabeth Shaw, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Air and Radiation

Deputy Goal Leader:

Peter Tsirigotis, Director, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards

Overview

Goal Statement

- **Improve air quality by reducing the number of areas not meeting air quality standards.** By September 30, 2021, EPA, in close collaboration with states, will reduce the number of nonattainment areas to 121 from a baseline of 147.

Challenge

- EPA's authority to approve a state's request to redesignate nonattainment areas hinges on the state meeting the minimum requirements of the Clean Air Act (CAA), which include:
 - A demonstration that the area has air quality that is attaining the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS);
 - Establishing that pollution reductions are due to implementing permanent and enforceable measures;
 - A 10-year maintenance plan that includes contingency measures to be triggered in the event of a re-violation of the NAAQS; and,
 - Satisfying any other applicable and outstanding attainment planning and emissions control requirements.
- Under the CAA, states are responsible for initiating the redesignation process, a process that demands time and resources from states which may be limited for such purposes.
- The CAA does not require states to request redesignation, and in some cases states may determine that undertaking a redesignation is a lower priority.

Opportunity

- A number of nonattainment areas have attained a NAAQS or are close to attaining a NAAQS, which is a key step toward redesignation.
- Maintain regular communication between EPA regional offices and air agencies to discuss prioritizing redesignation requests and identify solutions to challenges/disincentives that may create barriers for states to request redesignation.

Leadership & Implementation Team

Goal Leader:

Elizabeth Shaw

Deputy Assistant Administrator,
Office of Air and Radiation

Deputy Goal Leader:

Peter Tsirigotis

Director, Office of Air Quality
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Goal Structure and Strategies

Strategy 1 – EPA will work with state, local and tribal air agencies to facilitate submittal of timely and approvable attainment plans (as a means of bringing areas into attainment) and redesignation requests, as appropriate.


- Develop and provide data, analysis, and technical tools and assistance to industries, states, communities, and tribes to meet CAA obligations and other statutory requirements.
- Continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the State Implementation Plan/Tribal Implementation Plan (SIP/TIP) process, including the Agency's own review process, with a goal of maximizing timely processing of state/tribal-requested implementation plan actions.
- Explore opportunities for reducing air agency burden by considering options for streamlining the redesignation process.
- Continue tracking air quality improvements through the collection of monitoring data.

Strategy 2 – Through collaboration with state, local and tribal air agencies, EPA will take actions to improve air quality in nonattainment areas so these areas can expeditiously attain the NAAQS. EPA will:

- Operate effective nationwide and multi-state emissions control programs, including:
 - The Acid Rain Program and the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule, which address global, national, and regional air pollutants from the power sector and other large stationary sources;
 - National mobile source emissions standards, which address emissions from highway and off-road vehicles, small engines, locomotives, and marine vessels; and
 - New source performance standards and preconstruction permit review program, which ensure the best demonstrated emission control technologies are installed as industrial infrastructure is modernized.
- Fulfill the NAAQS implementation oversight role using tools available under the CAA to hold states accountable for fulfilling attainment planning responsibilities. Examples include:
 - Taking action on state implementation plans (SIPs); and
 - Determining whether an area has attained a NAAQS by the required attainment date.

Summary of Progress – FY 2020 Q1

EPA has reduced the number of nonattainment areas to 142, meeting the FY 2020 Q1 target of 142.

Indicator	Jumping Off Point		FY 2020 Q1	FY 2020 Q2	FY 2020 Q3	FY 2020 Q4	FY 2021 Q1	FY 2021 Q2	FY 2021 Q3	FY 2021 Q4	Pref Dir	Trend
Number of Nonattainment Areas	147	Target	142	141	133	132	129	129	129	121	↓	
		Actual	142									

Accomplishments:

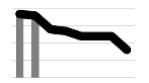
- EPA was able to reduce the number of nonattainment areas to 142 as of FY 2020 Q1, meeting the target. Specific actions that occurred in FY 2020 Q1 (including the met target above) that advanced EPA toward achieving the APG include:
 - EPA acted on redesignation requests submitted by the states; and
 - EPA continues to encourage states with nonattainment areas that have attaining air quality to develop approvable maintenance plans and submit redesignation requests.

Challenges:

- None identified during the Q1 performance review.

Summary of Progress – FY 2020 Q2

EPA has reduced the number of nonattainment areas to 139, exceeding the FY 2020 Q2 target of 141.

Indicator	Jumping Off Point		FY 2020 Q1	FY 2020 Q2	FY 2020 Q3	FY 2020 Q4	FY 2021 Q1	FY 2021 Q2	FY 2021 Q3	FY 2021 Q4	Pref Dir	Trend
Number of Nonattainment Areas	147	Target	142	141	133	132	129	129	129	121	↓	
		Actual	142	139								

Accomplishments:

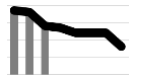
- EPA reduced the number of nonattainment areas to 139 as of FY 2020 Q2, exceeding the target. Specific actions that occurred in FY 2020, Q2 (including the met target above), that advanced EPA toward achieving the APG include:
 - EPA acted on redesignation requests submitted by the states;
 - EPA’s Region 8 finalized redesignations to attainment for three Utah areas for the 1987 particulate matter (PM10) standards (Salt Lake County, Utah County and Ogden City); and
 - EPA continues to encourage states with nonattainment areas that have attaining air quality to develop approvable maintenance plans and submit redesignation requests.

Challenges:

- OAR/Regional Offices are working with air agencies to address any challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, including stay-at-home orders and other relevant information that could potentially affect this APG.

Summary of Progress – FY 2020 Q3

EPA has reduced the number of nonattainment areas to 134, missing the FY 2020 Q3 target of 133 by 1. EPA published three additional PM-10 area redesignations on 6/26/2020; they will be effective on 7/27/2020 in Q4.

Indicator	Jumping Off Point		FY 2020 Q1	FY 2020 Q2	FY 2020 Q3	FY 2020 Q4	FY 2021 Q1	FY 2021 Q2	FY 2021 Q3	FY 2021 Q4	Pref Dir	Trend
Number of Nonattainment Areas	147	Target	142	141	133	132	129	129	129	121	↓	
		Actual	142	139	134							

Accomplishments:

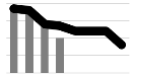
- EPA acted on redesignation requests submitted by the states.
- EPA redesignations in Q3 included:
 - Lead (2008): Muncie, IN
 - PM-10 (1987): New York County, NY
 - SO2 (2010): Indianapolis, IN
 - SO2 (2010): Lemont, IL
 - SO2 (2010): Pekin, IL
- EPA Region 8 finalized redesignations to attainment for three Montana areas for the 1987 particulate matter (PM-10) standards (Columbia Falls, Kalispell, and Salt Lake County) published on 6/26/2020. These areas will be counted in the redesignation totals when the actions are effective on 7/27/2020 (i.e., Q4).
- EPA released 2019 air quality design values in May 2020, almost two months earlier than previous years.
- EPA continues to identify areas with clean data and identify the next steps in state development of redesignation requests.
- EPA continues to encourage states with nonattainment areas that have attaining air quality to develop approvable maintenance plans and submit redesignation requests.

Challenges:

- OAR/Regional Offices are working with air agencies to address any challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, including stay-at-home orders and other relevant information that could potentially affect this APG.
- Portions of the country are experiencing ozone exceedances as the summer temperatures are above normal for this time of the year. This may result in EPA not being able to issue final approval of some pending ozone nonattainment area redesignation requests.

Summary of Progress – FY 2020 Q4

EPA has reduced the number of nonattainment areas to 125, meeting the FY 2020 Q4 target of 132.

Indicator	Jumping Off Point		FY 2020 Q1	FY 2020 Q2	FY 2020 Q3	FY 2020 Q4	FY 2021 Q1	FY 2021 Q2	FY 2021 Q3	FY 2021 Q4	Pref Dir	Trend
Number of Nonattainment Areas	147	Target	142	141	133	132	129	129	129	121	↓	
		Actual	142	139	134	125						

Accomplishments:

- EPA acted on redesignation requests submitted by the states.
- EPA redesignations in Q4 included:
 - Ozone-8Hr (2008): Inland Sheboygan County, WI
 - Ozone-8Hr (2008): Shoreline Sheboygan County, WI
 - PM-10 (1987): Flathead County; Columbia Falls and vicinity, MT
 - PM-10 (1987): Flathead County; Kalispell and vicinity, MT
 - PM-10 (1987): Lincoln County; Libby and vicinity, MT
 - SO2 (2010): Steubenville, OH-WV
 - PM-10 (1987): Pima County; Ajo planning area, AZ
 - SO2 (2010): Jefferson County, KY
 - SO2 (2010): Morgan County, IN
- EPA Region 9 finalized the redesignation to attainment for the 1987 particulate matter (PM-10) standards for the Imperial Valley, CA area published on 9/18/2020. This area will be counted in the redesignation totals when the action is effective on 10/19/2020 (i.e., Q1 of FY 2021).
- EPA continues to identify areas with clean data and to encourage states with such nonattainment areas that are attaining air quality to develop approvable maintenance plans and submit redesignation requests.

Challenges:

- Portions of the country are experiencing ozone exceedances as the summer temperatures are above normal for this time of the year. This may result in EPA not being able to issue final approval of some pending ozone nonattainment area redesignation requests.

Key Milestones

Strategy 1 – EPA will work with state, local and tribal air agencies to facilitate submittal of timely and approvable attainment plans (as a means of bringing areas into attainment) and redesignation requests, as appropriate

Key Milestones	Due Date	Status	Change from Last Quarter	Comments
Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the SIP/TIP process, including the Agency’s own review process with an emphasis on early engagement, and a goal of maximizing timely processing of state/tribal-requested implementation plan actions once submitted.	Quarterly	On Track	No Change	EPA continues to implement visual management systems and standard work products originally launched in FY 2018 as part of the EPA Lean Management System (ELMS). Where applicable, selected EPA air program executives began incorporating SIP-related ELMS project goals into their FY 2020 performance plans. The SIP Lean Toolkit was issued in December 2019 and is part of EPA’s SIP-related process improvements that focus on early engagement between EPA and air agencies during SIP development.
Continue to track air quality improvements through collection, analysis, and reporting of monitoring data.	Annual	On Track	No Change	In June 2020, EPA released its annual report on air quality, <i>Our Nation’s Air: Status and Trends Through 2019</i> , which documents the improvements in air quality across the United States over more than 45 years. This report highlights that, between 1970 and 2019, the combined emissions of six key pollutants dropped by 77%, while the U.S. economy grew more than three times (https://www.epa.gov/air-trends). In addition, design values for 2019 were released in late May, almost two months earlier than previous years (https://www.epa.gov/air-trends/air-quality-design-values). A design value is a statistic that describes the air quality status of a given location relative to the level of the NAAQS.

Key Milestones (continued)

Strategy 2 – Through collaboration with state, local and tribal air agencies, EPA will take actions to improve air quality in nonattainment areas so these areas can expeditiously attain the NAAQS

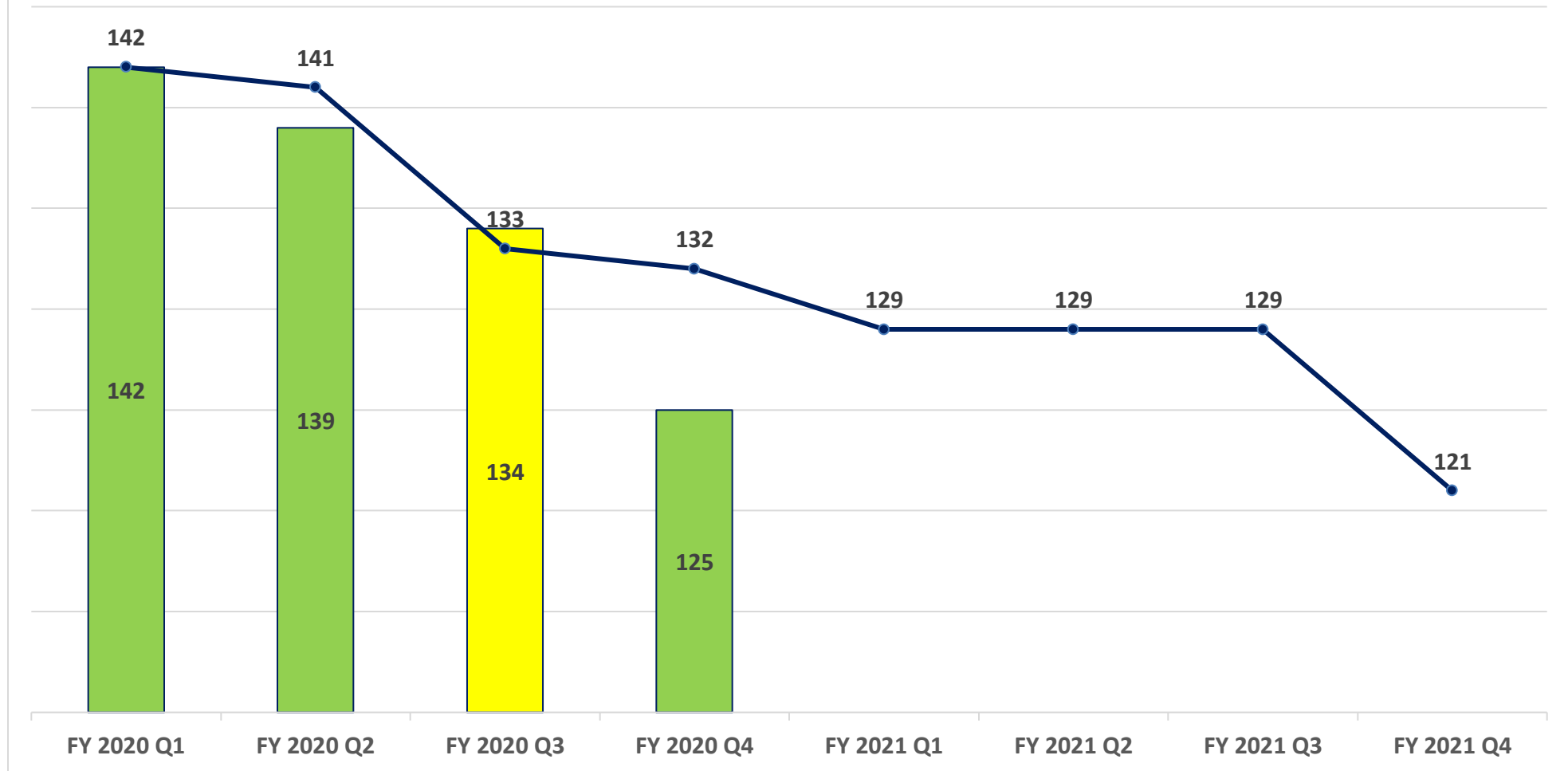
Key Milestones	Due Date	Status	Change from Last Quarter	Comments
Provide tools and guidance documents (as necessary).	Quarterly	On Track	No Change	EPA continued to work on guidance and technical support documents to assist states as they develop plans to attain/maintain air quality. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Released 2017 National Emissions Inventory (NEI) Data (April 2020). https://www.epa.gov/air-emissions-inventories/2017-national-emissions-inventory-nei-data
Operate nationwide and multi-state programs, the acid rain program and the cross-state air pollution rule; national mobile source emissions standards; new source performance standards; and preconstruction permit review program.	Quarterly	On Track	No Change	EPA continues nationwide and multi-state program operations for the Acid Rain Program and the cross-state air pollution rule; national mobile source emissions standards; new source performance standards; and preconstruction permit review program.
Take appropriate oversight actions required by the Clean Air Act (as necessary).	Quarterly	On Track	No Change	EPA continues to work with states in the development of NAAQS attainment plans and on the review and approval of such plans. To support EPA's strategic goal of reducing the number of nonattainment areas, EPA identified a list of 31 areas, representing 14 states and 1 tribe, across all NAAQS that have clean data for the 2017-2019 design value period and where certain states and tribes may be in a position to move toward redesignating those areas. In August, EPA sent letters to the states and tribe to encourage those with positive data trends to continue to take steps toward redesignation.

Key Indicators

Number of Nonattainment Areas

Jumping Off Point: 147

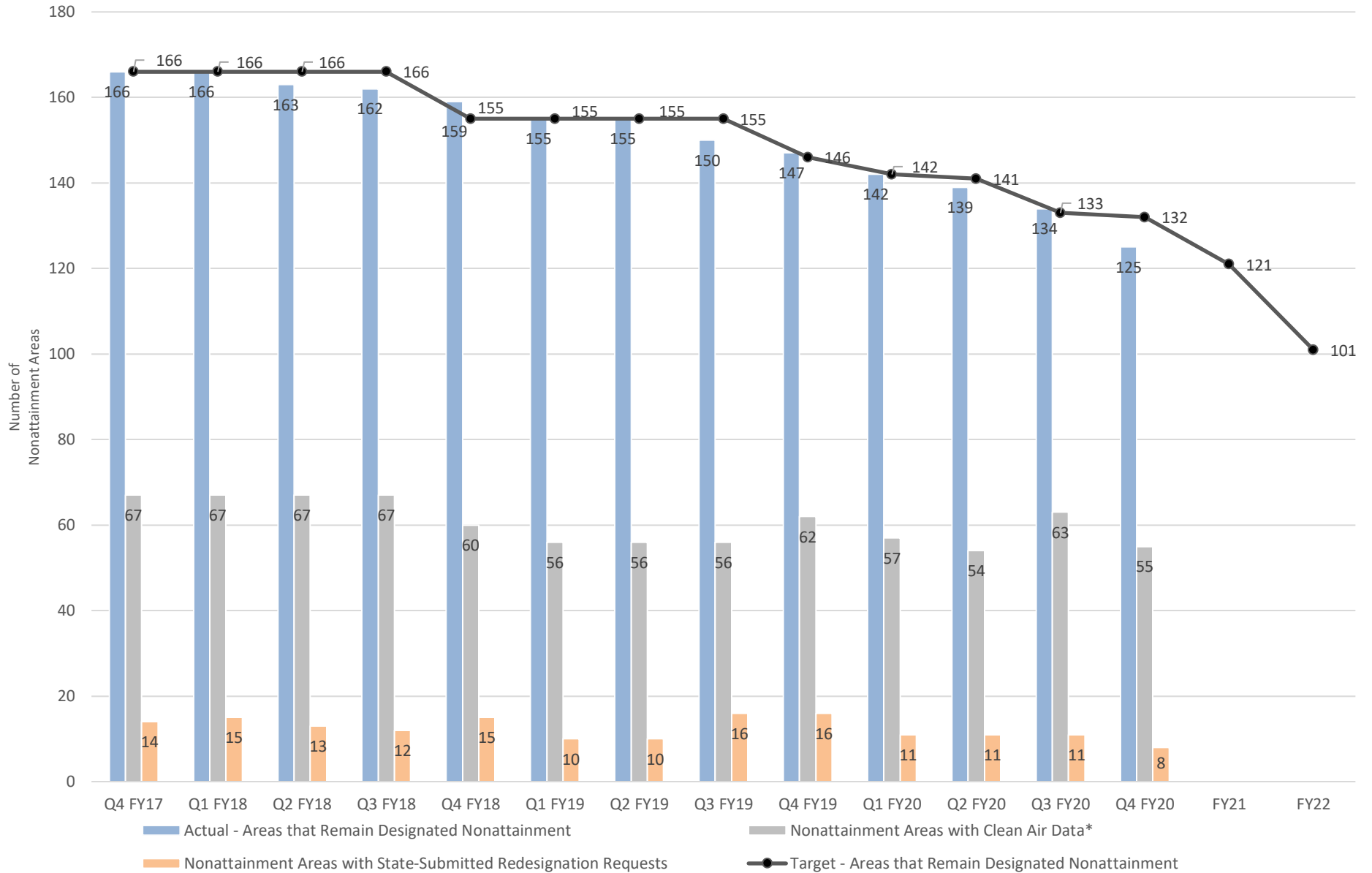
Preferred Direction: *Lower Than Target*



100% of target met or exceeded 75-99% of target met <75% of target met Target

Key Indicators (continued)

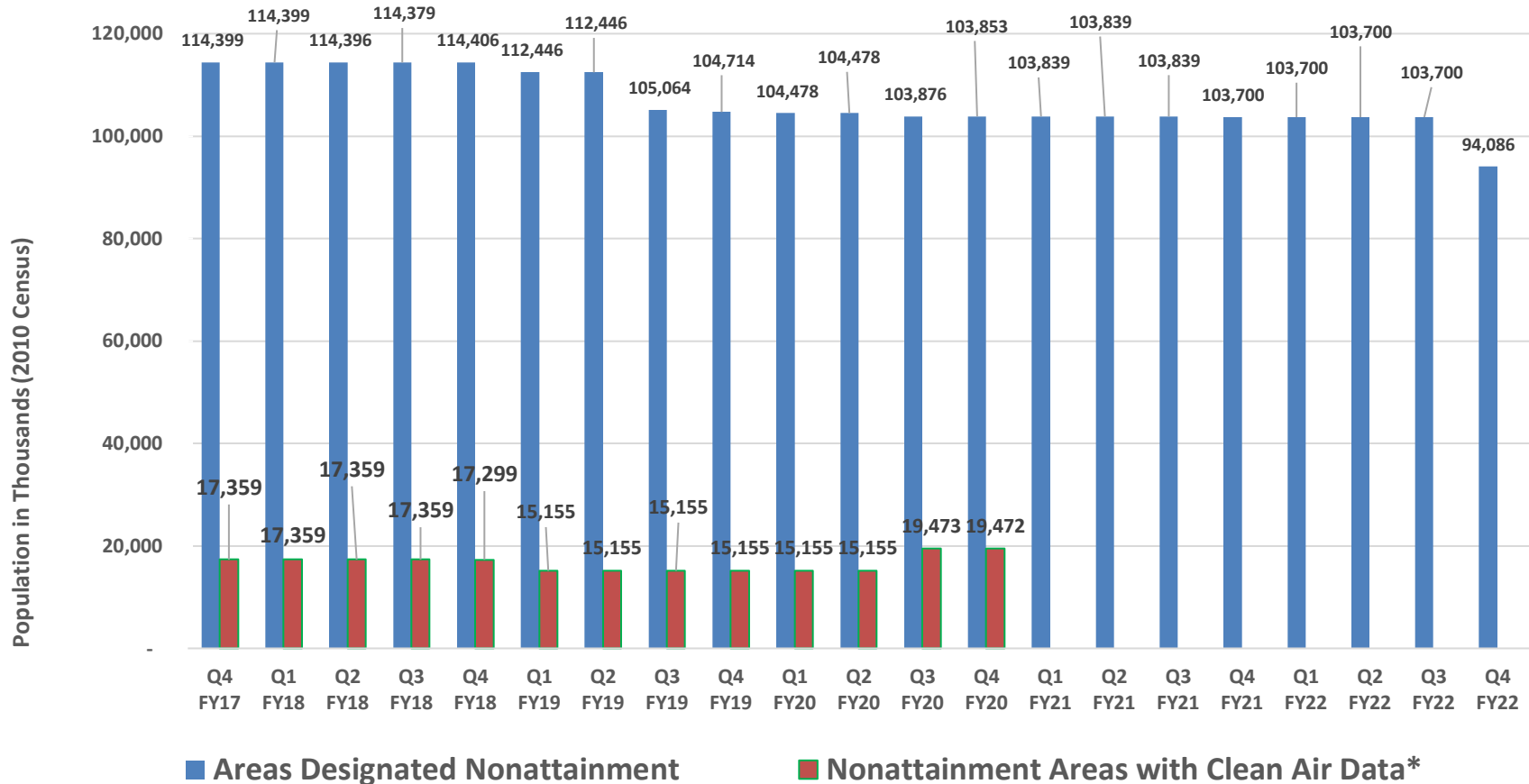
Reduce Number of Nonattainment Areas



*Clean air data is a key step to redesignation to attainment and occurs when an area's air quality attains the federal standard.

Key Indicators (continued)

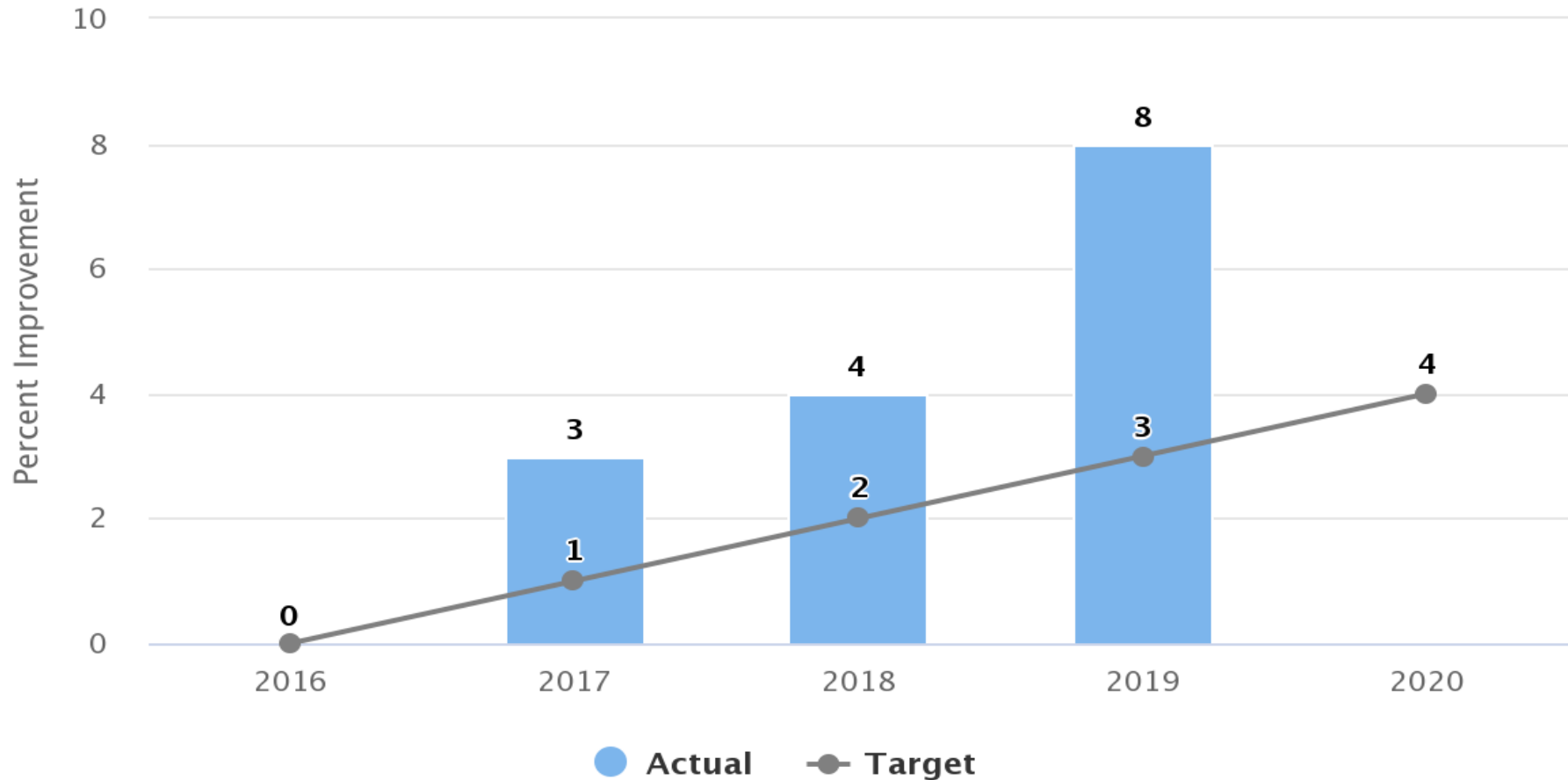
Population Living in Areas Designated Nonattainment – Projections start at Q4 FY20



*Clean air data is a key step to redesignation to attainment, which can occur once an area's air quality attains the federal standard.

Key Indicators (continued)

Percent of Measured Air Quality Improvement in Counties Not Meeting the NAAQS from a 2016 Baseline

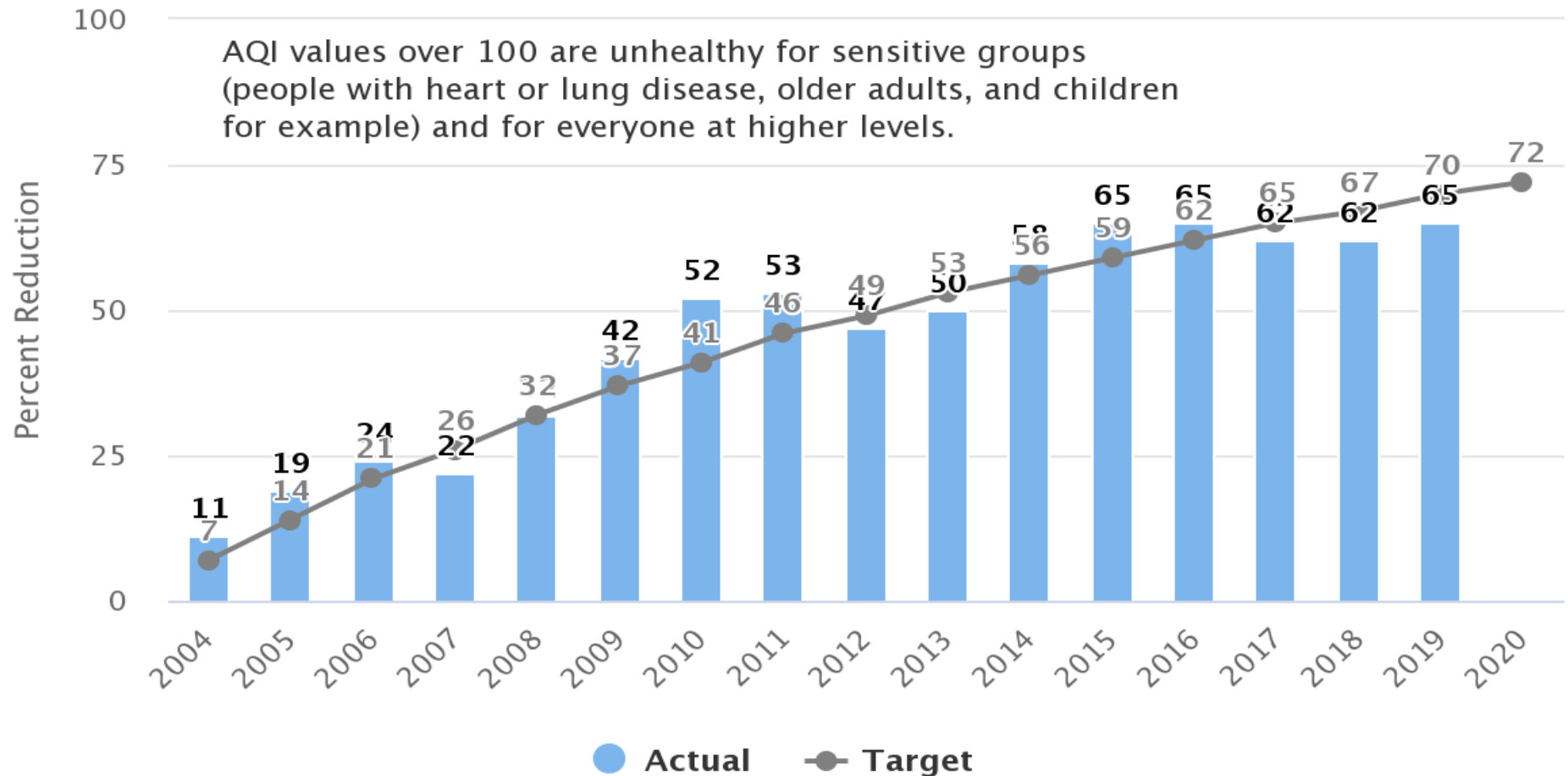


Note: "Improvement" refers to progress in reducing pollutant concentrations in counties not meeting one or more NAAQS relative to the 2016 calculated baseline.

*Data for the "actual" update are available August of the following year.

Key Indicators (continued)

Cumulative percent reduction in the number of days with Air Quality Index (AQI) values over 100



*Data for the “actual” update are available by August of the following year. Cumulative percent reduction is calculated from the baseline year 2003. This includes both nonattainment and attainment areas and may include days with AQI values over 100 due to wildfires or other exceptional events.

Data Accuracy and Reliability

Measurement and Baseline

- The nonattainment area metric tracks the status of 166 areas designated nonattainment for non-revoked National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) at the end of FY 2017 (9/30/2017).
- New areas designated nonattainment after 10/1/2017 will not be added to the baseline. Information about any redesignations of additional nonattainment areas identified after the baseline date will be reported in the APG quarterly updates, as appropriate.
- Limiting the measure to redesignations of areas that were in nonattainment as of the start of the *FY 2018-2022 EPA Strategic Plan* reflects the progress made during the performance period (FY 2018–2022).
- The other air quality indicators rely on data from EPA's Air Quality System and other information.

Data Sources

- The EPA Green Book, a public accessible website - <https://www.epa.gov/green-book>
- Federal Register notices documenting EPA final action on state redesignation requests.

Methodology

- EPA's monthly Green Book publication includes a summary of nonattainment areas, taking into account all final redesignation actions published in the Federal Register.
- Prior to publishing a new monthly Green Book report, an EPA contractor runs a quality assurance check.
- A Data Quality Record has been developed for the long-term performance goal associated with this APG: <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-05/documents/dqr-1-1-nonattainment-areas.pdf>.

Additional Information

Organizations

- Office of Air and Radiation (OAR)
 - Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards (OAQPS)
 - Office of Transportation and Air Quality (OTAQ)
 - Office of Atmospheric Programs (OAP)
- Regional offices
- State, local, and tribal air agencies (S/L/T)

Program Activities

- S/L/T develop State/Tribal Implementation Plans
- EPA develops regulations and guidance, as necessary, to facilitate S/L/T implementation
- EPA provides technical assistance and tools, as necessary, to facilitate S/L/T implementation

Regulations

- EPA regulations addressing NAAQS and NAAQS implementation include 40 CFR Parts 49 thru 99
- Air quality management and emissions limiting regulations established by other federal and state agencies, as applicable

Policies

- EPA and S/L/T policies related to NAAQS implementation (e.g., Procedures for Processing Requests to Redesignate Areas to Attainment, etc.)

Other Federal Activities

- Transportation conformity – Department of Transportation (Federal Highway Administration)
- Fire management – Department of Agriculture (U.S. Forest Service), Department of Interior (Park Service)
- International pollution management treaties – Department of State

Stakeholder / Congressional Consultations

- The nonattainment redesignation process is a federal and state partnership; EPA works with states and tribes to establish priorities including redesignations