



League of Women Voters of La Plata County

To: Environmental Protection Agency

RE: Docket No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2005-0172
National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Ozone
January 29, 2010 Federal Register/Vol. 75, page 2938

Date: February 7, 2010

The League of Women Voters of La Plata County (LWVLPC) strongly agrees that the Environmental Protection Agency should strengthen the national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) for ground-level ozone to the most stringent levels based on scientific evidence. The LWVLPC located in southwestern Colorado supports the State of Colorado and U.S. League positions on regulating and reducing pollution in order to preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of ecosystems and to protect public health.

The Four Corners area was once thought of as one of the most pristine areas in the United States with high desert and forested mountains. Today we are experiencing air quality issues related to industrial development, drought, and climate change that are affecting our vistas and public well-being.

La Plata County has thousands of gas wells and 4 natural gas plants that contribute to greenhouse gas pollution. A June 2009 greenhouse gas emissions report requested by our County Commissioners showed that the gas industry accounted for nearly 80% of all greenhouse gases generated in the La Plata County. They traced direct gas industry emissions of methane from fugitive sources such as leaks, venting from production equipment, direct venting during initial well completion, and emissions from methane seeps at the Fruitland outcrop. Prevailing winds in the Four Corners combine these methane emissions with those from thousand of gas wells in NW New Mexico and NOx and VOC emissions from three old coal-fired power plants in NW New Mexico and NE Arizona to raise our ground-level ozone levels and reduce visibility.

Recent drought has increased the number of forest and brush fires and controlled burning. Pollutants producing ground-level ozone not only are having an impact on public health in the area but also a negative impact on the sensitive vegetation of quaking aspen, ponderosa pine and cottonwood in the San Juan Mountains and the Weminuche Wilderness Area. An unprecedented number of dust storms and smog from coal-fired power plants have also impacted air quality and visibility at Mesa Verde National Park, a Class I Federal Area.

To protect our public health with an adequate margin of safety and our ecosystem, please reconsider the primary and secondary NAAQS that was set in March 2008 to the lowest levels possible.

Stephanie Huss, President
League of Women Voters of La Plata County
65 Sunrise Lane
Durango, CO 81301
stephanie@frontier.net
970-259-7263