

19 November 2018

US Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460
Docket Number: FRL-9985-90-OA

EPA Acting Administrator Andrew Wheeler and the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I am the research director at the Center for Science and Democracy at the Union of Concerned Scientists. On behalf of more than half a million citizens and scientists, we advocate for the use of science for a healthy planet and a safer world. The Center for Science and Democracy works to advance the roles of science and public participation in policy decision-making. We have never advocated for an ambient air quality standard different from the CASAC recommendation, only to ensure the proper process is followed and scientific advice is heeded.

With respect to the ozone standard update, I am concerned about this process. The greatly expedited schedule and document merging proposed in the draft Integrated Review Plan are likely to limit the ability of the EPA and its Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) to follow a science-informed process that leads to ozone standards protective of public health and welfare.¹ Typically, the process of EPA staff, CASAC, and the ozone review panel compiling, reviewing, and revising the Integrated Science Assessment, Risk and Exposure Assessment, and Policy Analysis requires far more time than this schedule allows.

Additionally, the expedited timeline with fewer public meetings will mean fewer opportunities for public input. Some 124 million Americans live in areas with ozone pollution levels that exceed the current standard, with serious public health consequences for many, including those with lung diseases such as asthma, children, and the elderly.² The public deserves sufficient opportunity to weigh in on a regulation with such far-reaching impacts.

The effects of this expedited timeline document skimming are compounded by the agency's failure to convene an ozone review panel. In past reviews of the ground-level ozone standard, the panel has provided vital expert input and necessary peer review of the wide-ranging fields represented in the Integrated Science Assessment. Indeed, for more than four decades, such expertise has helped ensure EPA leadership is presented with the best available science on

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[https://yosemite.epa.gov/sab/sabproduct.nsf//LookupWebProjectsCurrentCASAC/E18E92A94AF87D6C852582BB004CDF75/\\$File/O3-IRP-draft-Oct2018-ForRelease-Oct31-2018.pdf](https://yosemite.epa.gov/sab/sabproduct.nsf//LookupWebProjectsCurrentCASAC/E18E92A94AF87D6C852582BB004CDF75/$File/O3-IRP-draft-Oct2018-ForRelease-Oct31-2018.pdf)

² <https://www3.epa.gov/airquality/greenbook/popexp.html>

the effects of criteria pollutants on health and the environment. These panels provide the needed range of perspectives on critical science and science policy issues.

It would be challenging for any seven-member CASAC to compensate for this lapse of expert input. Moreover, because the current CASAC lacks experts in key fields, such as epidemiology, it is difficult to imagine that the EPA's science assessment will receive the robust scientific review that is necessary.³

The expediated timeframe and merged documents, combined with gaps in expertise on CASAC and the lack of review panel and public input opportunities, are likely to undermine the ability of the EPA to set a science-based standard for ozone, protective of public health with an adequate margin of safety, as required by the Clean Air Act.

I urge you to reconsider the decision not to convene an ozone review panel. As you hear in these comments, many qualified scientists are willing to volunteer their time and expertise for such a task, as they always have since the EPA began setting ambient air quality standards decades ago. An ozone review panel would help ensure that the EPA can make decisions based on solid scientific assessment.

I urge you to follow a careful, robust process to assess the current state of the science on ozone and health, regardless of whether it meets the arbitrarily aggressive timeline laid out in the Integrated Review Plan. And I urge you to ensure there are sufficient opportunities for public input for a pollutant standard that will affect more than a third of the nation's population. The EPA's mission, the Clean Air Act and broad public opinion compel you to make a decision that protects the public health.

Sincerely,

Gretchen T. Goldman, PhD

Union of Concerned Scientists
Washington, DC

³ <https://blog.ucsusa.org/gretchen-goldman/can-the-epa-protect-us-from-ozone-and-particulate-pollution-without-its-experts-what-to-watch>