



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

DEC - 3 2015

OFFICE OF
AIR AND RADIATION

The Honorable Ed Whitfield
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter of November 24, 2015, to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy requesting an extension of the comment period for the proposed Clean Air Act rules and draft guidance to reduce emissions of smog-forming volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and greenhouse gases, most notably methane, from the oil and natural gas industry. The Administrator asked that I respond on her behalf.

As you know, methane has a much greater global warming potential than carbon dioxide and accounts for about 10 percent of all greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions resulting from human activity in the United States. The Obama Administration is committed to addressing this source of GHG emissions, and on August 18, 2015, the EPA proposed, and posted to its website, a suite of commonsense requirements for the oil and gas sector that together will help combat climate change, reduce air pollution that harms public health, and provide greater certainty about Clean Air Act permitting requirements for the oil and natural gas industry. Together, these cost-effective requirements will reduce emissions from this rapidly growing industry, helping ensure that development of these energy resources is safe and responsible.

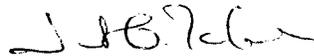
The proposed rules and draft guidance were the outgrowth of more than a year of public engagement that began with five technical white papers the agency issued in April 2014 for peer and public review. The agency noted at that time that it would use those papers, along with the input received from peer reviewers and the public, to determine how to best address additional emissions of volatile organic compounds and greenhouse gases from the sources covered in the papers. The EPA received more than 43,000 public comments on the white papers.

Drawing on the technical white papers and the comment and input we received in response, the Administration on January 14, 2015 announced a strategy to address methane and VOC emissions from the oil and gas industry to ensure continued, safe and responsible growth in U.S. oil and natural gas production. The strategy outlined the steps the Agency planned to take to reduce methane pollution from new sources in this rapidly growing industry, reduce VOCs from existing sources in areas that do not meet federal ozone health standards (many controls to reduce VOCs also reduce methane as a co-benefit), and build on work that states and industry are doing to address emissions from existing sources elsewhere. All of this information demonstrates that technology is now available that can significantly reduce emissions of methane and VOCs from oil and gas activities.

The proposed rules and draft guidance announced in August follow the steps outlined in the strategy and were developed with significant input, through meetings with the regulated industry, nongovernmental organizations, and a structured outreach process with state, local and tribal air agencies that volunteered to participate. The EPA has continued outreach since announcing the proposed rules and draft guidance on August 18, 2015. In the more than 100 days since the EPA announced the proposals, we have had substantive conversations with members of the regulated community and other stakeholders that have given us valuable input on all four EPA actions, and we held hearings in Dallas, Denver and Pittsburgh to hear comments from the public on the proposals. On November 3, 2015, the EPA announced that we were extending the comment period on the proposed rules to December 4, 2015. To date, we have received more than 460,000 public comments on the proposed New Source Performance Standards, including more than 17,000 unique comments.

In light of these extensive opportunities to provide input on these proposals, the December 4, 2015 comment deadline will remain in place. Again, thank you for your interest in these important rulemakings. If you have further questions, please contact me, or your staff may contact Kevin Bailey in the EPA's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations at bailey.kevinj@epa.gov or (202) 564-2998.

Sincerely,



Janet G. McCabe
Acting Assistant Administrator