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Submitted by email at: DAPC-Comments@epa.ohio.gov

Amelia Brown
Ohio Environmental Protection Agency,
DAPC
Lazarus Government Center
P. O. Box 1049
Columbus, Ohio 43216-1049

Ms. Anne Vogel
Regional Administrator
U.S. EPA, Region 5
77 West Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, Illinois 60604

**Re: Submittal to U.S. EPA - Supplement to the Recommended
Nonattainment Area Designations for the 2024 Revised Primary
Annual PM2.5 Standard**

Dear Ms. Brown and Ms. Vogel:

The Midwest Ozone Group¹ ("MOG") is pleased to offer these comments² in support of the April 9, 2025, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency ("OEPA") document titled "Submittal to U.S. EPA - Supplement to the Recommended Nonattainment Area Designations for the 2024 Revised Primary Annual PM2.5 Standard ("Supplement").

MOG is an affiliation of companies and associations that draws upon its collective resources to seek solutions to the development of legally and technically

¹ The membership of the Midwest Ozone Group includes: Ameren, American Electric Power, American Forest & Paper Association, American Iron and Steel Institute, American Wood Council, Appalachian Region Independent Power Producers Association, Associated Electric Cooperative, Berkshire Hathaway Energy, Big Rivers Electric Corp., Buckeye Power, Inc., Citizens Energy Group, City Water, Light & Power (Springfield IL), Cleveland-Cliffs Inc., Council of Industrial Boiler Owners, Duke Energy Corp., East Kentucky Power Cooperative, ExxonMobil, Monongahela Power Company, Indiana Energy Association, Indiana-Kentucky Electric Corporation, Indiana Municipal Power Agency, Indiana Utility Group, Hoosier Energy REC, inc., LGE/ KU, Marathon Petroleum Company, National Lime Association, North American Stainless, Nucor Corporation, Ohio Utility Group, Ohio Valley Electric Corporation, Olympus Power, Steel Manufacturers Association, and Wabash Valley Power Alliance.

² These comments were prepared with the technical assistance of Gregory M. Stella of Alpine Geophysics LLC; gms@alpinegeophysics.com.

sound air quality programs that may impact on their facilities, their employees, their communities, their contractors, and the consumers of their products. MOG's primary efforts are to work with policy makers in evaluating air quality policies by encouraging the use of sound science. MOG has been actively engaged in a variety of issues and initiatives related to the development and implementation of air quality policy, including the development of transport rules (including exceptional events demonstrations, implementation of NAAQS standards, nonattainment designations, petitions under Sections 126, 176A and 184(c) of the Clean Air Act ("CAA"), NAAQS implementation guidance, the development of Good Neighbor State Implementation Plans ("SIPs"), the development of greenhouse gas and Mercury and Air Toxics Standards Rules and related regional haze issues. MOG Members and Participants own and operate numerous stationary sources that are affected by air quality requirements including those related to the application of PM_{2.5} NAAQS to the subject area.

The OEPA Supplement revises the nonattainment recommendations for both Jefferson and Stark Counties. In the Supplement, OEPA is amending its original nonattainment designation recommendation for Jefferson County and recommends this area not be included in Ohio's nonattainment areas for the 2024 revised annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS. Originally, OEPA recommended that Stark County in the Canton-Massillon, OH area be designated unclassifiable.

OEPA notes that, with the addition of 2024 air monitoring data and EPA concurrence with previously submitted exceptional events demonstration for the Canton-Massillon, OH area, Stark County monitors attain the 2024 revised annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS and, accordingly, OEPA recommends it not be included in Ohio's nonattainment areas. Finally, OEPA advises that, with the accepted exclusion of the two previously requested dates (June 8, 2023, and June 29, 2023) and EPA concurrence with a new additionally requested date (July 17, 2023), the Toledo, OH area will be attaining the 2024 revised annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS.

The Clean Air Act (CAA) Section 319(b)(3)(A)(v) stipulates that air quality data should be carefully screened to ensure that events unlikely to recur—such as temporary pollution spikes—are accurately represented in monitoring data and analyses. In the case of the recent PM_{2.5} evaluations, wildfire smoke has significantly affected air quality, particularly in the years 2021 and 2023, which experienced the highest wildfire smoke-day frequencies in the Upper Midwest and Great Lakes states in recent years.

The Lee & Jaffe 2024 paper³, "Wildfire Impacts on O₃ in the Continental US Using PM_{2.5} and a Generalized Additive Model (2018-2023)", underscores the significant impact of wildfires on air quality during these years. Figure 2 of that paper specifically highlights that these years have elevated wildfire smoke days that are not representative of typical air quality conditions. As such, the inclusion of data from these years in regulatory decisions may distort the evaluation of air quality. Therefore, it is crucial that the EPA uses accurate, representative data when analyzing air quality and formulating recommendations.

MOG supports the OEPA Supplement to the Recommended Designations for the 2024 Revised Annual PM_{2.5} National Ambient Air Quality Standard, submitted on April 9, 2025. This supplement reflects a thoughtful and data-driven approach to air quality management and demonstrates Ohio's commitment to safeguarding public health while ensuring regulatory accuracy.

OEPA's revised recommendations, particularly the recommendation to amend the nonattainment designation for Jefferson and Stark Counties, are grounded in the latest air quality data and a comprehensive five-factor analysis. By incorporating 2024 monitoring data and accounting for the permanent shutdown of the Mountain State Carbon facility in 2022, Ohio has provided compelling evidence that Jefferson County no longer violates the revised annual PM_{2.5} standard. And by submitting an additional exceptional event demonstration for the Canton-Massillon area, OEPA has established that Stark County demonstrates attainment with the current PM NAAQS. These proactive adjustments ensure that designations are based on current conditions, avoiding unnecessary regulatory burdens while maintaining environmental integrity.

Ohio's commitment to transparency and public engagement throughout the designations process, including the submission of exceptional events demonstrations for wildfire smoke impacts, underscores the agency's dedication to accurate and equitable air quality management. MOG further encourages OEPA to prepare and U.S. EPA to concur with exceptional events demonstrations that have regulatory impact on monitors within the state and help to achieve clean air standards.

MOG commends OEPA for its diligent efforts in updating the recommended designations and urges the U.S. EPA to approve these revised recommendations. This collaborative approach will help ensure that air quality standards are met in a

³ <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est4c05870>

manner that is both scientifically sound and responsive to the evolving environmental landscape.

MOG appreciates the opportunity to offer these comments and urges OEPA to carefully consider these comments and the agency to assess both the timing and content of its final recommendation.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Edward L. Kropp". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Edward "Skipp" Kropp
Legal Counsel
Midwest Ozone Group