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

December 22, 2008

THE ADMINISTRATOR

The Honorable Chet Culver
Governor, State of Iowa
State Capitol
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0001

Dear Governor Culver:

Thank you for your continued work toward improving air quality. Together, I believe we have made considerable progress in reducing air pollution and its impacts on public health and the environment.

There are many tasks which the Clean Air Act imposes upon the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in coordination with state, tribal and local governments. One of these obligations concerns the designations of areas that are considered to be in nonattainment with National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).

In this regard, I am writing to share with you the EPA finding that levels of fine particles in the outdoor air of some of your communities do not meet the 24-hour NAAQS for fine particles ($PM_{2.5}$). Fine particle pollution is a complex mixture of extremely small particles and liquid droplets. When breathed in, this pollution can cause a variety of significant health problems, including premature death in people with heart or lung disease. Fine particle pollution is also the main cause of visibility impairment in the nation's cities and our national parks.

On September 21, 2006, EPA strengthened the 24-hour fine particle standard. The Agency lowered the standard by nearly 50 percent, from 65 to 35 micrograms per cubic meter. EPA strengthened this standard based on the latest science and public health information. Subsequently, in accordance with provisions contained in the Clean Air Act requiring governors to submit a list of nonattainment, attainment, and unclassifiable areas, EPA solicited state and tribal recommendations as to what areas both met and exceeded the 24-hour fine particle NAAQS based on recent air quality data. In August 2008, EPA sent letters to tribal leaders and governors indicating the Agency's assessment of what areas did not meet the 24-hour standard. A public comment period was held with respect to these initial determinations, which closed on October 2, 2008.

Today represents the next step in the process of implementing the $PM_{2.5}$ NAAQS. In a *Federal Register* notice being signed today, I will be acting on the information and recommendations I have received and will be designating nonattainment areas for the 24-hour fine particle NAAQS. This action is part of the broader federal, tribal, and state effort to bring

all areas of the country into compliance. For areas in your State that are designated as "nonattainment," additional actions to achieve a common goal of cleaner, healthier air will be required. For areas in your State that attain the standard, you will need to continue your efforts and act to sustain air that meets federal standards. The enclosed table lists the nonattainment areas in your State and identifies the included counties.

In addition to the initial letters and information sent to recommend designations, I would note that EPA has also reviewed additional data and materials which were submitted for many areas. The considered review of all information that the Agency has received led to the determinations rendered today.

Today's area designations are based on air quality monitoring data for the years 2005, 2006 and 2007. These designations will take effect 90 days after the *Federal Register* notice I signed today is published – likely early April, 2009. As we are very near the end of 2008, I invite you to accelerate the review of your State's 24-hour $PM_{2.5}$ air quality monitoring data for the year. If you would like EPA to consider a change to an area designation based on 2006 – 2008 data, please submit to your EPA Regional contact complete, quality assured, certified 24-hour $PM_{2.5}$ air quality data for 2008 by February 20, 2009. For additional technical information, please visit http://www.epa.gov/pmdesignations.

Reducing fine particle pollution will require continued efforts from EPA as well as our valued partners at the State, Tribal and Local environmental agencies. EPA has taken many actions that will reduce fine particle pollution both regionally and across the country. The Clean Diesel Program, for example, will dramatically reduce particle forming emissions from highway, non-road and stationary diesel engines. In addition, the implementation plans States develop to attain the annual $PM_{2.5}$ standard (set in 1997 and implemented through designations that were finalized in 2005) will help us achieve our clean air goals. The development and implementation of plans for the 24-hour fine particle NAAQS represents the next step in our drive to bring air quality in line with health-based standards.

Thank you again for your work to achieve clean air.

Sincerely,

Stephen L. Johnson

Enclosure

cc: Wayne Gieselman
Environmental Commissioner, Iowa

John Askew
Regional Administrator, Region 7

Enclosure – Final Nonattainment Areas, Iowa

State	Area Name	Nonattainment Counties
Iowa	Davenport-Moline-Rock Island, IA-IL	Scott (p)
	Muscatine, IA	Muscatine (p)

(p) partial county