Commonwealth of Kentucky
Energy and Environment Cabinet

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Northern Kentucky Meets Fine Particle Standards for Air Quality

Boone, Campbell, and Kenton Counties Re-designated "Attainment" by EPA

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Dec. 15, 2011) – Air quality is officially better in three northern Kentucky counties, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA announced that it has approved Northern Kentucky's re-designation to "attainment" for fine particle pollution, effective today, after monitors showed significant improvement in air quality.

The Clean Air Act requires states to meet National Ambient Air Quality Standards for specific pollutants to protect human health and the environment. On Jan. 27, 2011, the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet's (EEC) Division for Air Quality (DAQ) submitted a request for the U.S. EPA to recognize Boone, Campbell and Kenton counties as meeting the health-based annual standard for fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$).

"This is great news for public health, the environment, and the economy," said EEC Secretary Len Peters. "Re-designation to attainment means Northern Kentuckians are breathing easier. It's especially positive for economic development since it eliminates the need for stricter permitting requirements."

The Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky area has been out of compliance with the health-based standard for a number of years, most recently due to monitored violations in Ohio. In order to demonstrate attainment, air monitors in the area must not show exceedances of the standard, set at 15 micrograms per cubic meter. Because of various emission reduction programs, air quality in northern Kentucky has steadily improved since the standard was finalized in 1997.

$PM_{2.5}$ refers to microscopic particles or droplets in the air that measure 2.5 microns or less in diameter which is about 30 times smaller than the width of a human hair. Particles of this size are hazardous to human health because they can easily be inhaled deep into lungs and even cross into the bloodstream. Major sources of $PM_{2.5}$ include vehicle exhaust as well as fossil fuel and wood burning.

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