



Nezperce Prairie Grass Growers Association

Pride of the Prairie - We Make Your World Green

May 24, 2016

Director John Tippetts
DEQ State Office
1410 N. Hilton
Boise, ID 83706

Re: Air Quality - Docket No. 58-0101-1601 - Negotiated Rule Making

Director Tippetts:

The Nezperce Prairie Grass Growers Association, representing blue grass seed producers in five northern Idaho counties, appreciates the opportunity to comment on Docket No. 58-0101-1601 and the Department's initiation of the negotiated rules process. Our growers have continued to follow, comment, participate, and engage in the crop residue program administered by DEQ since its inception. We have a vested interest in seeing the program continue into the future, and over the past decade, we have valued the willingness of stakeholders to work together to find equitable resolutions.

Our Board of Directors met after the May 18 negotiated rule making meeting in Boise, and discussed the draft proposal concerning air quality standards. In that discussion the Board agreed that it is vital to continue to support a strong Crop Residue Burn Program that addresses the concerns of the environmental advocacy community and allows farmers to participate in basic and approved agricultural practices to raise their crops. We also agreed that the proposed state standard of 90% of EPA's revised ozone standard of 70 parts per billion is beneficial. Though the national standard is being tightened, Idaho has consistently fallen well below the ceiling of the standard due to a successful agreement and a program that has taken on the responsibility of weighing both health concerns and the necessities of agriculture.

We have great concern with the segment of the proposal that would tighten the state standard of 75% for $PM_{2.5}$ to 65% of EPA's $PM_{2.5}$ standard ($35 \mu g/m^3$). The Clean Air Act requires EPA set national air quality standards and also requires EPA to periodically review and to update those standards as necessary. The circumstances leading to the promulgation of negotiated rule making by DEQ and a proposal to revise the state statute after eight years, is due to the revision made by EPA on October 1, 2015, to the Ozone (NAAQS) standard. EPA has initiated the next review of the PM (NAAQS) standard and our concern lies primarily with the likelihood that this standard will change. Whether the standard for PM decreases, increases, or stays the same, we do not see the haste or necessity to change the state standard of $PM_{2.5}$ that has been agreed upon to protect health and be well below EPA's standard. It is both logical and equitable to only address the national standards that have changed and we will anticipate being at the table with growers and the environmental advocacy community to work towards compromise on $PM_{2.5}$ at that time.

We also request that any agreements negotiated through the rules process and supported by all the stakeholders and Idaho Legislature, be fostered by DEQ and through EPA without interruption to the 2017 crop residue burn season. We suggest recommendations to the EPA in the interim and during the review of the State Implementation Plan include either; 1) the continuation of the current program standards for the 2017 burn season or, 2) allowing the grass seed industry an exemption to maintain their crop and manage pests for the 2017 burn season.

The grass growing community has taken comfort and great pride in knowing that there have not been adverse health effects while the state agreement has been in place. Our farmers have always taken ownership of keeping our communities healthy and the Nezperce Prairie Grass Growers Association thanks you for your consideration of our requests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin McLeod". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J".

Justin McLeod, President