

represent the interests of the general public pursuant to 39 U.S.C. 505 in the specific case or controversy at issue (regardless of normally assigned duties); and

(4) Contractors, consultants, and others hired by the Commission to provide an independent analysis of issues before the Commission (and Commission employees assigned thereto).

§ 3008.5 Prohibitions.

(a) Ex parte communications between Commission decision-making personnel, and the Postal Service or public stakeholders is prohibited.

(b) Commission decision-making personnel shall not rely upon any information obtained through ex parte communications.

(c) Paragraph (a) of this section does not constitute authority to withhold information from Congress.

§ 3008.6 Required action upon ex parte communications.

(a) Commission decision-making personnel who receive ex parte communications relevant to the merits of the proceeding shall decline to listen to such communications and explain that the matter is pending for determination. Any recipient thereof shall advise the communicator that the communication will not be considered, and shall promptly and fully inform the Commission in writing of the substance of and the circumstances attending the communication, so that the Commission will be able to take appropriate action.

(b) Commission decision-making personnel who receive, or who make or knowingly cause to be made, ex parte communications prohibited by this part shall promptly place, or cause to be placed, on the public record of the proceeding:

- (1) All such written communications;
- (2) Memoranda stating the substance of all such oral communications; and
- (3) All written responses, and memoranda stating the substance of all oral responses, to the materials described in (b)(1) and (2) of this section.

(c) Requests for an opportunity to rebut, on the record, any facts or contentions contained in an ex parte communication which have been placed on the public record of the proceeding pursuant to paragraph (b) of this section may be filed in writing with the Commission. The Commission will grant such requests only where it determines that the dictates of fairness so require. In lieu of actually receiving rebuttal material, the Commission may in its discretion direct that the alleged

factual assertion and the proposed rebuttal be disregarded in arriving at a decision.

§ 3008.7 Penalty for violation of ex parte communication rules.

(a) Upon notice of a communication knowingly made or knowingly caused to be made by a participant in violation of § 3008.5(a), the Commission or presiding officer may, to the extent consistent with the interests of justice and the policy of the underlying statutes, require the participant to show cause why his/her claim or interest in the proceeding should not be dismissed, denied, disregarded, or otherwise adversely affected on account of such violation.

(b) The Commission may, to the extent consistent with the interests of justice and the policy of the underlying statutes administered by the Commission, consider a violation of § 3008.5(a) sufficient grounds for a decision adverse to a party who has knowingly committed such violation or knowingly caused such violation to occur.

[FR Doc. 2016-00544 Filed 1-13-16; 8:45 am]

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

40 CFR Part 52

[EPA-R06-OAR-2015-0647; FRL-9941-20-Region 6]

Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; Arkansas; Crittenden County Base Year Emission Inventory

AGENCY: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing to approve a revision to the Arkansas State Implementation Plan (SIP) submitted to meet the Clean Air Act (CAA) emissions inventory (EI) requirement for the Crittenden County ozone nonattainment area. EPA is approving the SIP revision because it satisfies the CAA EI requirement for Crittenden County under the 2008 8-hour ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The inventory includes emission data for Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). EPA is approving the revisions pursuant to section 110 and part D of the CAA and EPA's regulations.

DATES: Written comments should be received on or before February 16, 2016.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be mailed to Ms. Mary Stanton, Chief, State Implementation B, Ozone and Infrastructure Section (6MM-AB), Environmental Protection Agency, 1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200, Dallas, Texas 75202-2733. Comments may also be submitted electronically or through hand delivery/courier by following the detailed instructions in the **ADDRESSES** section of the direct final rule located in the rules section of this **Federal Register**.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Colin Schwartz, (214) 665-7262, Schwartz.Colin@epa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In the final rules section of this **Federal Register**, the EPA is approving the State's SIP submittal as a direct rule without prior proposal because the Agency views this as noncontroversial submittal and anticipates no adverse comments. A detailed rationale for the approval is set forth in the direct final rule. If no relevant adverse comments are received in response to this action no further activity is contemplated. If the EPA receives relevant adverse comments, the direct final rule will be withdrawn and all public comments received will be addressed in a subsequent final rule based on this proposed rule. The EPA will not institute a second comment period. Any parties interested in commenting on this action should do so at this time.

For additional information, see the direct final rule which is located in the rules section of this **Federal Register**.

Dated: December 30, 2015.

Samuel Coleman,

Acting Regional Administrator, Region 6.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

40 CFR Part 52

[EPA-R07-OAR-2015-0587; FRL 9940-98-Region 7]

Approval of Missouri's Air Quality Implementation Plans; Early Progress Plan of the St. Louis Nonattainment Area for the 2008 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standard

AGENCY: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing to approve revisions to the State Implementation Plan (SIP) submitted by the State of

Missouri consisting of the Early Progress Plan and motor vehicle emissions budgets (MVEBs) for volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) for the St. Louis Nonattainment area under the 2008 8-hour National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS). On August 26, 2013, EPA received from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) an Early Progress Plan for the St. Louis area showing progress toward attainment under the 2008 Ozone NAAQS. This submittal was developed to establish MVEBs for the St. Louis 8-hour ozone nonattainment area. This approval of the Early Progress Plan for the St. Louis 8-hour ozone nonattainment area fulfills EPA's requirement to act on the MDNR SIP submission and to formalize that the MVEB is approved, and when considered with the emissions from all sources, demonstrates progress toward attainment from the 2008 base year through a 2015 target year. EPA found these MVEBs adequate for transportation conformity purposes in an earlier action on March 5, 2014.

DATES: Comments on this proposed action must be received in writing by February 16, 2016.

ADDRESSES: Submit your comments, identified by Docket ID No. EPA-R07-OAR-2015-0587, to <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the online instructions for submitting comments. Once submitted, comments cannot be edited or removed from Regulations.gov. The EPA may publish any comment

received to its public docket. Do not submit electronically any information you consider to be Confidential Business Information (CBI) or other information whose disclosure is restricted by statute. Multimedia submissions (audio, video, etc.) must be accompanied by a written comment. The written comment is considered the official comment and should include discussion of all points you wish to make. The EPA will generally not consider comments or comment contents located outside of the primary submission (*i.e.* on the web, cloud, or other file sharing system). For additional submission methods, the full EPA public comment policy, information about CBI or multimedia submissions, and general guidance on making effective comments, please visit.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Steven Brown, Environmental Protection Agency, Air Planning and Development Branch, 11201 Renner Boulevard, Lenexa, Kansas 66219 at 913-551-7718, or by email at brown.steven@epa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In the final rules section of this **Federal Register**, EPA is approving the state's SIP revision as a direct final rule without prior proposal because the Agency views this as a noncontroversial revision amendment and anticipates no relevant adverse comments to this action. A detailed rationale for the approval is set forth in the direct final rule. If no relevant adverse comments are received in response to this action,

no further activity is contemplated in relation to this action. If EPA receives relevant adverse comments, the direct final rule will be withdrawn and all public comments received will be addressed in a subsequent final rule based on this proposed action. EPA will not institute a second comment period on this action. Any parties interested in commenting on this action should do so at this time. Please note that if EPA receives adverse comment on part of this rule and if that part can be severed from the remainder of the rule, EPA may adopt as final those parts of the rule that are not the subject of an adverse comment. For additional information, see the direct final rule which is located in the rules section of this **Federal Register**. Again, please note that EPA found these MVEBs adequate for transportation conformity purposes in an earlier action (March 5, 2014, 79 FR 12504).

List of Subjects in 40 CFR Part 52

Environmental protection, Air pollution control, Carbon monoxide, Incorporation by reference, Intergovernmental relations, Lead, Nitrogen dioxide, Ozone, Particulate matter, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Sulfur oxides, Volatile organic compounds.

Dated: December 23, 2015.

Mark Hague,

Regional Administrator, Region 7.

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