

FEATHER RIVER AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
MEMORANDUM
02/27/2023

TO: FRAQMD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

FROM: Christopher D. Brown, AICP, APCO

SUBJECT: Informational Item on Exceptional Event Demonstrations for Wildfire Smoke Events in 2020 and 2021.

BACKGROUND:

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) sets health based ambient air quality standards for several pollutants. These standards are known as National Ambient Air Quality Standards, or NAAQS. The NAAQS are issued for pollutants for which a level can be established to protect public health and welfare, including ground level ozone and particulate matter.

After the US EPA sets a NAAQS, the agency uses monitoring data to determine whether areas are meeting the standards. Areas not meeting the standard are designated as “nonattainment” and are required to submit plans, known as State Implementation Plans or SIPS, to attain the standard by a specified date.

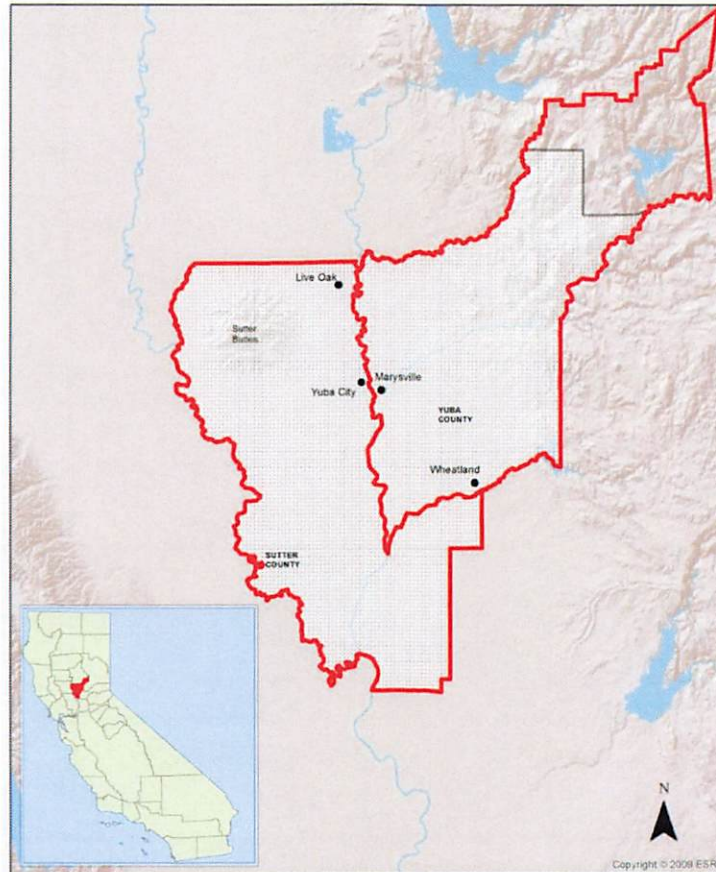
Nonattainment areas that have demonstrated that they now are meeting the standard through real and permanent reductions in air pollutants are redesignated to attainment. A nonattainment area that has been redesignated to attainment is classified as a being in a maintenance period, which lasts for 20 years.

The Yuba City – Marysville area was designated as nonattainment for the 2006 daily fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) NAAQS in 2009. The Yuba City – Marysville area met the standard and was redesignated to attainment effective January 2015.

The Exceptional Events Rule allows an air district to request exclusion of monitoring data that are caused by events outside the air district’s regulatory authority, such as smoke from a wildfire, from a regulatory determination.

The Yuba City-Marysville PM_{2.5} nonattainment area includes all of Sutter County and most of Yuba County, as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1: Yuba City-Marysville Nonattainment Area for PM2.5



The second maintenance plan for the 2006 PM2.5 NAAQS is due January 2023, eight years after the effective date of the redesignation and is under development by the District staff with contributions from the California Air Resources Board (CARB), the Sacramento Council of Governments (SACOG), and the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA).

DISCUSSION:

The District staff, with assistance from CARB, has prepared an Exceptional Events Demonstration for wildfire smoke events in 2020 and 2021. The Demonstration shows a clear causal relationship that the smoke from regional wildfires caused exceedances at the Yuba City – Almond Street monitoring station. The exceedances are outside the District’s ability to control. The exceedances resulted in the Yuba City – Marysville maintenance area exceeding the 2006 PM2.5 NAAQS and have a regulatory impact in regards to the second maintenance plan for the area.

The District is currently taking public comment on the 2020 and 2021 Exceptional Events Demonstrations. The Demonstrations will be available for public comment until March 17, 2023. The District will then forward the Demonstrations and public comments received to the CARB for submittal to the US EPA.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The District’s staff time preparing the Plan was included in the current fiscal year’s budget.