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Alaska Ann Wyatt Klawock Cooperative Association



National Tribal Air Association P.O. Box 15004 Flagstaff, AZ 86011-5004

February 20, 2020

Administrator Andrew Wheeler Environmental Protection Agency 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Mail Code 1101A Washington, DC 20460

Re: EPA's Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for Control of Air Pollution from New Motor Vehicles: Heavy-Duty Engine Standards Docket ID EPA-HQ-OAR-2019-0055

Dear Honorable Administrator Wheeler:

The National Tribal Air Association (NTAA) is pleased to submit these comments regarding the action cited above. The NTAA is a member-based organization with 149 principle member Tribes. The organization's mission is to advance air quality management policies and programs, consistent with the needs, interests, and unique legal status of Indian Tribes. As such, the NTAA uses its resources to support the efforts of all federally recognized Tribes in protecting and improving the air quality within their respective jurisdictions. Although the organization always seeks to represent consensus perspectives on any given issue, it is important to note that the views expressed by the NTAA may not be agreed upon by all Tribes. Further, it is also important to understand interactions with the organization do not substitute for government-to-government consultation, which can only be achieved through direct communications between the federal government and Indian Tribes.

Importance of Emissions Control Standards

The NTAA believes that this is a critically important updating of the standards, particularly since the standards for on-highway heavy-duty trucks have not been updated in close to 20 years. As stated on EPA's website, "Air pollution emitted from transportation contributes to smog, and to poor air quality, which has negative impacts on the health and welfare of U.S. citizens. Pollutants that contribute to poor air quality include particulate matter (PM), nitrogen oxides (NOx), and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). The transportation sector is responsible for over 55% of NOx total emissions inventory in the U.S."¹ Furthermore, as stated in EPA's Cleaner Trucks Initiative webpage, "Heavy-duty vehicles are the largest contributor to mobile source emissions of NOx and will be one of the largest mobile source contributors to ozone in 2025."² Because of the importance of this rulemaking, we urge the EPA to not rush the process, complete the necessary analyses, and give time for a full range of comments. NTAA seeks a thorough review process to achieve a sufficiently protective standard.

¹ <u>https://www.epa.gov/transportation-air-pollution-and-climate-change/smog-soot-and-local-air-pollution</u>
² https://www.epa.gov/regulations-emissions-vehicles-and-engines/cleaner-trucks-initiative



While NOx exposure has deleterious impacts on the human respiratory system in the areas nearest its release (such as near highways and other areas with dense traffic), it also can transport great distances and has a negative effect on ecosystems once it has entered the atmosphere. For example, NOx can damage leaves and reduce their growth and resilience.³ NOx as well as sulfur dioxide and mercury can be deposited on Earth's surface through both wet and dry deposition, creating concerns at local, regional, and global scales.⁴ There is even strong evidence that nitrogen deposition from air pollution (in the form of both NOx and ammonia) blown in from the Los Angeles area is leading to an increase in invasive species in Joshua Tree National Park and the surrounding Mojave Desert, which are then threatening the existence of the iconic Joshua trees.⁵ Other impacts from NOx include acidifying surface water, contributing to coastal eutrophication, increasing regional haze, and speeding the rate of weathering.⁴ Both regional haze and increased rates of weathering are of particular concern to Tribes, as they can damage culturally significant archeological sites.

Tribal nations experience disproportionate health impacts from air pollution,⁶ and have heightened concerns regarding ecosystem impacts due to their greater reliance on subsistence systems and culturally important natural resources. For example, deposition of NOx into lakes in Minnesota has been shown to raise the acidity as well as lead to eutrophication and harmful algal blooms, which are all "harmful to fish and other aquatic life forms,"⁷ on which many Tribes in Minnesota depend on for subsistence living.

There are Tribal nations (such as the Morongo Band of Mission Indians and the Pechanga Band of Luiseno Indians) that live in non-attainment areas where heavy duty truck NOx reductions are the largest available action for successfully reaching attainment under their federally required Tribal Implementation Plans. Many Tribal members live in proximity to major urban centers with high NOx pollution from heavy-duty trucks (such as the Colorado front range, the Phoenix, and Salt Lake City areas, the lower Lake Michigan region, and the north east corridor, to name a few).

Strong National Standards to Promote 50 State Alignment

The NTAA appreciates EPA's cooperation thus far with the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and supports continued collaboration to develop the strongest emissions standards possible in the most expedient manner. The NTAA believes that it is extremely important to develop this national program, and that the research conducted by CARB and EPA has proven the feasibility of achieving a 90% reduction in NOx by the year 2027.⁸ In addition to CARB's research, the Manufacturers of Emission Controls Association (MECA) recently released a report titled

³ <u>http://www.icopal-noxite.co.uk/nox-problem/nox-pollution.aspx</u>

⁴ <u>https://archive.epa.gov/clearskies/web/pdf/overview.pdf</u>, pages 4-5

⁵ <u>https://www.nps.gov/articles/parkscience32_2_64-66_bell_allen_3838.htm</u> and <u>https://www.fs.usda.gov/treesearch/pubs/37082</u>

⁶ <u>https://www.ntaatribalair.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/2019-NTAA-White-Paper-on-Air-Pollution-and-Health.pdf</u>

⁷ <u>http://www.fdlrez.com/RM/downloads/Class1%20FDL%20Technical%20Report.pdf</u>

⁸ https://ww3.arb.ca.gov/msprog/hdlownox/white_paper_04182019a.pdf



*Technology Feasibility for Heavy-Duty Diesel Trucks in Achieving 90% Lower NOx Standards in 2027.*⁹ The three primary conclusions from this report include:

- 1. Commercially available engine efficiency technologies and advanced after-treatment system designs can achieve a 90% reduction in NOx by 2027;
- 2. Engine efficiency and powertrain emission control technologies can enable simultaneous reductions in CO₂ and NOx;
- 3. The estimated cost of emission controls hardware will add just 1% to the cost of a MY2027 truck.

The NTAA encourages EPA to reflect both the stringency and the timeline of CARB's standards and provide incentives to encourage early adoption, help push forward technology development, and reduce costs. This specific national program should be based on the scientific findings that CARB and MECA developed and shared with EPA to achieve the 90% reduction in NOx by 2027. We believe it is important for EPA to quickly align the country into one national program for engine manufacturers, in order to "allow manufacturers to implement a single redesign," *FR Vol. 85, No. 13, at 3311.* Manufacturers are already developing technologies that lower emissions, create greater fuel economy, improve performance, and will have broad market appeal.

Goals of the Program

EPA listed five key goals in the Federal Register notice for this ANPR and requested comment on them. The five goals are as follows:

- 1) Our program should not undermine the industry's plans to meet the CO₂ and fuel consumption requirements of the Heavy-duty Phase 2 program and should not adversely impact safety;
- 2) CTI should leverage "smart" communications and computing technology;
- 3) CTI will provide sufficient lead time and stability for manufacturers to meet new requirements;
- 4) CTI should streamline and modernize regulatory requirements;
- 5) CTI should support improved vehicle reliability.

While the individual stated goals are acceptable, the NTAA finds that EPA is overlooking the importance of valuing human and environmental health. Cost savings from the standards should be calculated from the health cost savings, not just savings to manufacturers, and this should be a stated goal of the EPA for this proposal. Additionally, Goal 1 should have a stated emphasis on greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

Reducing Emissions from Existing Fleets

EPA has requested comment on "the extent to which the technologies and solutions could be used by state, local, or tribal governments in reducing emissions from the existing, pre-CTI heavy-duty

⁹ http://www.meca.org/resources/MECA 2027 Low NOx White Paper FINAL.pdf



fleet. EPA's Clean Diesel Program, which includes grants and rebates funded under the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA), is just one example of a partnership between EPA and stakeholders that provides incentives for upgrades and retrofits to the existing fleet of on-road and nonroad diesel vehicles and equipment to lower air pollution."

The NTAA recently submitted a letter to EPA's Office of Transportation and Air Quality with recommendations on how to improve the Tribal DERA program. Please see Attachment A for the full letter of recommendations.

During the time period prior to adoption of the new standards, there will be fleet turnover that could benefit from EPA actions to encourage wider spread purchase of the cleanest technologies available. As commercialized products become available, EPA should incorporate these options into programs such as DERA or via manufacturer oriented programs such as national emissions crediting, banking, and trading structures to encourage further market growth. Examples of regulatory drivers that are already advancing commercialized products include CARB's MY2024-2026 NOx program, Advanced Clean Trucks, Innovative Clean Transit, and Zero Emission Airport Shuttle rules. Major fleet purchasing announcements like Amazon's 100,000 Zero Emission Vehicles¹⁰ (ZEVs) and UPS's 10,000 ZEVs¹¹ demonstrate that a shift is already underway.

Beyond the recommendations listed above and in Attachment A, the NTAA encourages EPA to incentivize early adoption of "bolt on" technology, or other easy retrofit technology, to speed the pathway to meaningful emissions reductions.

Emissions Controls Throughout Vehicle Life

Many heavy-duty vehicle owners (including Tribes) retain vehicles for as long as possible, or seek to purchase used vehicles to offset costs. Understanding this, EPA should support later life emissions control by requiring longer design life targets for emissions systems (Useful Life Period) commensurate with actual vehicle service lengths and better manufacturer support (Warranty Periods) to encourage robust design. Service information and tools should be made easily available and affordable for individual owners to diagnose and fix their own vehicles, which can be especially important for small businesses, Tribes, and those in rural areas with less ready access to original equipment manufacturer dealer networks.

Conclusions

The NTAA appreciates EPA's collaboration with CARB on this important rulemaking, and encourages EPA to align the standards with California's stringency and implementation timeline. If you have any questions or require clarification from the NTAA, please do not hesitate to contact the NTAA's Project Director Andy Bessler at 928-523-0526 or andy.bessler@nau.edu.

¹⁰ <u>https://www.cnbc.com/2019/09/19/amazon-is-purchasing-100000-rivian-electric-vans.html</u>
¹¹

https://www.pressroom.ups.com/pressroom/ContentDetailsViewer.page?ConceptType=PressReleases&id=15803 04360144-453&WT.mc_id=EXECADVOCACY_BB4_EV_PRESSRELEASE_012920



On Behalf of the NTAA Executive Committee,

Wilfred J Nabahe Chairman National Tribal Air Association

Cc: Anne Idsal, OAR Acting Assistant Administrator Sarah Dunham, OTAQ Bill Charmley, OTAQ Brian Nelson, OTAQ Pat Childers, OAR

Attachment A: January 10, 2020 Letter from NTAA to EPA's Anne Idsal on NTAA Recommendations for the Tribal DERA Program www.NTAATribalAir.org 928.523.0526 office

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Alaska Ann Wyatt Klawock Cooperative Association



National Tribal Air Association P.O. Box 15004 Flagstaff, AZ 86011-5004

ATTACHMENT A

January 10, 2020

Ms. Anne Idsal OAR Acting Assistant Administrator EPA Headquarters William Jefferson Clinton Building 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Washington, DC 20460

RE: NTAA Recommendations for the Tribal DERA Program

Dear Acting Assistant Administrator Idsal:

The National Tribal Air Association (NTAA) Executive Committee (EC) and their Mobile Sources Work Group (MSWG) have long been aware that the Tribal Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (Tribal DERA) program is an under-utilized grant program. The EC and MSWG therefore are pleased to provide input to you with recommendations for improving the program such that the goals of the Tribal DERA program can be more fully realized.

The NTAA is a member-based organization with 149 principal member Tribes. The organization's mission is to advance air quality management policies and programs, consistent with the needs, interests, and unique legal status of Indian Tribes. As such, the NTAA uses its resources to support the efforts of all federally recognized Tribes in protecting and improving the air quality within their respective jurisdictions. Although the organization always seeks to represent consensus perspectives on any given issue, it is important to note that the views expressed by the NTAA may not be agreed upon by all Tribes. Further, it is also important to understand interactions with the organization do not substitute for government-to-government consultation, which can only be achieved through direct communication between the federal government and Indian Tribes.

The following six points are the primary recommendations of the EC and the MSWG, and will be expanded upon below:

- 1. Eliminate or reduce matching funds requirement
- 2. Provide more informational, educational, and technical support for Tribes
- 3. Expand the qualifying categories and/or allow for flexibility
- 4. Remove the minimum operating hours constraint
- 5. Allow for hardship waivers and provide capacity support
- 6. Include options for electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure



1. Eliminate or reduce matching funds requirement

Between the years 2009 and 2017, the Tribal cost share (combined mandatory and voluntary) amounted to an average of 36% (or \$167,891), with a range from an average low of 22% in 2011 to an average high of 60% in 2013, and a low absolute dollar amount of \$12,489 to a high absolute dollar amount of \$699,797. These might be reasonable amounts for larger Tribes or Tribes with access to significant income. However, for Tribes that have fewer financial resources, these amounts are often prohibitive. Less wealthy Tribes are better served in holding onto vehicles for as long as possible and replacing parts as needed, and often are unable to anticipate which vehicle should be prioritized for upgrades, as highlighted by the following examples from the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa:

Red Cliff:

Replacing an engine in a dilapidated vehicle does not change the fact that the remainder of the vehicle is essentially unusable. Doing so would be money wasted. Most smaller Tribes have 3^{rd} , 4^{th} , and 5^{th} hand vehicles that take thousands of dollars just to keep in service. If the hydraulics, drive train, axles, frame, braking system, and frame/body are dilapidated, replacing the exhaust controls would mean nothing. Many small Tribes cannot afford to replace a vehicle as the allowable funding through DERA for replacement is set at 50%.

Fond du Lac:

The Band is not always able to have a vehicle replacement budget in place ahead of time. It is hard to commit a year or more in advance to replacing a certain vehicle when there are additional vehicles that may require replacement before that one vehicle.

Furthermore, the Tribal Authority Rule¹² states:

EPA agrees with the commenters that tribal resources generally are not adequate to warrant the level of match required of states and that equivalent resources are unlikely to become available in the foreseeable future. A high match requirement would likely discourage interested tribes from developing and implementing air programs. It is not appropriate to compare the resources available for the development of state programs to that of tribes because tribes often lack the resources or tax infrastructure available to states for meeting cost share requirements. Furthermore, a low match requirement, with a hardship waiver, is consistent with federal Indian policy, which encourages the removal of obstacles to self-government and impediments to tribes implementing their own programs.

While this statement is in reference to developing and implementing air programs, the same reasoning holds true for projects that have historically required a minimum match of 20%. The

¹² EPA Indian Tribes: Air Quality Planning and Management, Vol. 63, No. 29 (February 12, 1998), page 7265



Tribal DERA RFA for FY2018/19¹³ included an option to replace the full vehicle/equipment on page 13 at I.B.2.g.1. However, the cost share ranged from 40%-50%, depending on the type of vehicle, which is a prohibitive cost for most Tribes. The EPA uses match requirements to determine if the resources and ability of a Tribe are sufficient for the Tribe to see a grant through to completion. However, many of the Tribes that would benefit most from the availability of such important funding are excluded due to this match requirement, which can and should be reduced or eliminated.

Apart from eliminating or reducing the match requirement such as through a hardship waiver (as described below in point 5), EPA should allow Tribes to utilize awards from the Volkswagen Settlement fund as their non-federal match requirement. This would ease the financial burden and potentially allow for greater penetration rates of the Tribal DERA program, as well as give Tribes the same rights states are given in the use of Volkswagen Settlement funds.

2. Provide more informational, educational, and technical support for Tribes

Many Tribes are limited in staffing capacity to address the request for applications (RFA) in the depth necessary to apply for funding for projects that are both relevant for their Tribe and within the boundaries of the RFA. There are some misconceptions among Tribal environmental staff about what projects qualify under DERA. For example, many Tribes mistakenly believe there is an upper age limit for the vehicles that can be replaced, and are therefore not applying for funding to replace those vehicles, when in reality the RFA does not specify an upper age limit. Other Tribes are under the impression there is a minimum allowable project cost. Adding to the confusion are inconsistencies between the Tribal DERA and Volkswagen Settlement funding qualification process, despite those having a formal nexus. Without strong outreach and education on each year's RFA, Tribal staff may be unaware of options that might make it worthwhile for them to apply, or misconstrue that their project does not meet the minimum requirements. While the informational sessions offered by EPA are helpful, they seem to be insufficient, as evidenced by the persisting misconceptions.

One of the reasons for the success in the application rate of the Volkswagen Settlement is that dedicated funds from the Settlement were set aside in order to ensure a Technical Assistance Provider was established. The Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals (ITEP) was awarded this role, and continues with efforts to ensure that exceptional outreach and technical guidance are provided for Tribes. Additionally, fillable forms and templates are made available through ITEP with consultation and review processes in place to ensure forms are completed correctly, which aids Tribes in streamlining the process before submitting documents to the agency.

3. Expand the qualifying categories and/or allow for flexibility

A major problem that Tribes encounter is that they often have vehicles or engines that need replacement but are not listed in the program category options, and therefore do not qualify for

¹³ https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-02/documents/tribal-clean-diesel-funding-assistance-program-fy-2018-rfa.pdf



replacement. It is important then that options are unrestricted by categorical definitions so that Tribes can retire old vehicles, replace the polluting vehicles as quickly as possible, and accordingly realize the emissions reductions intended by the program.

As the "Questions and Answers: Tribal Clean Diesel funding Assistance Program FY 2018"¹⁴ document states at C.1 and the FY2018/19 RFA¹³ states at III.D.8, vehicles that will be retired within three years are not eligible for funding. However, these are the very vehicles that Tribes need financial support in replacing, and are the very vehicles that are polluting Tribal communities and are otherwise in need of upgrading. Additionally, the three-year point to attrition could be indeterminable or uncontrollable or occur while the vehicle is still running. The three-year cut-off is something that perhaps looks good on paper, but in fact does not work in reality. EPA is not meeting its own diesel emissions reduction goals that form the DERA program by disallowing the replacement of diesel vehicles that Tribes need in their fleet and intend to replace.

Tribes (and, more broadly, other rural communities) often have a different inventory of vehicles or engines than do urban centers or marine-proximate communities. In order to fully support Tribal sovereignty (as is federally-mandated), the EPA should allow Tribes to determine their own needs for diesel engine and vehicle replacement.

Additionally, the DERA Programmatic Priorities prioritize areas of non-attainment over locations in attainment. However, since many Tribes live in rural areas that are in attainment, this program focus creates bias against Tribes: who is to say that replacing diesel engines in a non-attainment area is of more value than replacing diesel light-duty trucks driven on a Tribal elementary school campus or that are otherwise impacting a local population? The DERA program needs to recognize Tribal interests as distinct from non-attainment designations and, more broadly, leave equipment decisions to each Tribal community, so that each may exercise its federal rights of self-determination.

Flexibility must be added to the qualifying criteria, consistent with the Tribal community profile. The following example from the White Mountain Apache Tribe exemplifies this situation:

White Mountain Apache Tribe

The White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT) owns and operates a ski resort as a wholly Tribal enterprise. That venture requires that the WMAT utilize snowcats and other snow-related equipment, all of which have very high price points and can be highly polluting. The WMAT is challenged to upgrade to newer or less polluting equipment because of the purchase costs, and this type of equipment is not encompassed in the DERA program. Instead of purchasing, then, the WMAT is compelled to lease such equipment. The WMAT then remains in the disadvantaged position of limited vendor leasing term options, rather than utilizing the Tribal competitive bidding process that purchasing would involve. This then perpetuates the WMAT being shut out of the DERA program, as it may have no equipment to retire should the "qualifying" categories be

¹⁴ https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-03/documents/fy18-tribal-faq_03_25_19.pdf



expanded. Finally, such a cascade then perpetuates a state of disadvantage that a better-structured DERA program could have alleviated.

4. Remove the minimum operating hours constraint

Many Tribes use older diesel generators for backup power in critical infrastructure facilities such as emergency management facilities that comprise, for example, casinos/resorts, hospitals, or EMS buildings, to name a few. These backup generators likely do not meet the minimum requirement of 500 operational hours, required under section III.D.14 in the 2018/19 RFA. Removing the minimum operating hours requirement would allow Tribes to upgrade or replace older back-up diesels with cleaner energy options (such as fuel cells, renewable generation, batteries, or microgrids) that are more reliable, cheaper to operate, and promote environmentally appropriate Tribal resiliency goals. It would also allow Tribes to pair the Tribal DERA program with other federal or state programs that promote climate resiliency solutions, such as the Department of Energy's Tribal Energy Deployment Grant, FEMA's Resiliency Grant, and the California Energy Commission's EPIC grant program.

Similar to point 3 above, removing the minimum operating hours constraint would allow Tribes to determine their own needs, and therefore exercise their sovereignty.

5. Allow for hardship waivers and provide capacity support

Although the NTAA's EC and its MSWG prefer that the match requirement be eliminated, another approach would be to allow Tribes to submit hardship waivers. A Tribe recently applied for a hardship waiver for their 5% non-federal match for their §105 Program, and was successfully granted a reduction to 0%. This application included statistics on the per capita income and unemployment rate of the Tribe: by percentage, their per capita income is lower than both the state and national per capita incomes, and the Tribal unemployment rate is higher than the national average. This information exemplified the true hardships Tribes face in being able to afford match requirements, and the benefit to all when those matches are waived or eliminated. Allowing Tribes to submit hardship waivers for the match requirements of the Tribal DERA program might encourage more Tribes to apply. However, the caveat is that small Tribes often are not only limited by funds, but also by capacity to complete the grant development and reporting processes. Therefore, in addition to allowing for hardship waivers, providing technical assistance and contract management resources would expand Tribes' capacity and capability in applying for and implementing grants (as stated above in point 2).

6. Include options for electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure

The Volkswagen Settlement has had far greater reach and utilization among Tribes than the Tribal DERA program. While this is due to more than one factor, one of the options that some Tribes have utilized is the option to use Volkswagen funds for establishing EV infrastructure such as charging stations. Tribes may have an interest in disposing of older diesel vehicles and purchasing EVs, if they were simultaneously able to establish the necessary charging infrastructure as they are under the Volkswagen Settlement.



That said, although EVs are becoming a more widely used technology, at this point in time repairs and maintenance of EVs may be cost prohibitive for Tribes in more remote areas. Additionally, quick charging stations require a three phase electrical source, which requires installing a three phase power line, which is, again, cost prohibitive for most Tribes or communities in rural areas. Therefore, while having EV infrastructure as an option might be useful for some Tribes and should be considered, many Tribes may find this option to be unfeasible.

The NTAA EC and MSWG appreciate your consideration in this matter. Tribes are excellent coregulators of air quality, and strive to reduce diesel emissions to the best of their abilities. The Tribal DERA program has great potential to achieve the goals set forth in the statute. Adoption of the recommendations in this letter would move the needle towards meeting the needs of Tribes and the goals of the DERA program.

On Behalf of the NTAA EC and the Mobile Sources Work Group,

Wilfred J. Nabahe NTAA EC Chairman

Craig Kreman Mobile Sources Work Group Lead

Cc: Sarah Dunham, OTAQ Pat Childers, OAR Christine Koester, OTAQ Lucita Valiere, OTAQ Leila Cook, OTAQ