



Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

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June 30, 2016

Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
Attention: Air Quality, Crop Residue Burning
1410 N. Hilton Street, Boise, Idaho 83706

RE: DRAFT 2 – Docket No. 58-0101-1601 – Rules for Air Quality

To whom it may concern:

On behalf of the members of the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, I write to express our comments regarding Draft 2 of the proposed rule change to the burning approval criteria for crop residue burning (CRB), and its different implementation options. We sincerely appreciate the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)'s efforts to coordinate stakeholder input during this negotiated rule making process, and are grateful to be able to share our thoughts concerning the topic.

Rule Implementation Option

Idaho Farm Bureau supports Implementation Option 2

Minimizing the disturbance felt by farmers/producers during this change of regulation needs to be a top priority of DEQ. The risk faced by producers from many factors that are outside of their control, will only be increased by further regulation from government agencies if this rule is not promptly and appropriately implemented. Option 1 severely threatens the use of CRB during the 2017 burn season and would enforce an overly burdensome regulation on producers. Option 3 appears to be legally uncertain and potentially risky for the department to uphold by law, and thus is not our preferred option. Understanding that Option 2 would allow the 2008 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) to be applied through February 2018 – protecting producers in the 2017 burn season from onerous regulations – Idaho Farm Bureau supports this option.

Burn Approval Criteria

Idaho Farm Bureau supports an ozone burning approval criterion of 90% of Ozone NAAQS and a PM_{2.5} criterion of 75% of PM_{2.5} NAAQS

Draft 2 of the proposed rule change to burning approval for CRB reflects a regulation that can be supported by the Idaho Farm Bureau. Adjusting the ozone burning criteria to a trigger of 90% of Ozone NAAQS, and leaving PM_{2.5} at 75% of PM_{2.5} NAAQS is a prudent action for several reasons. First, it has been discussed and scientifically proven that CRB has little if any impact on lingering ozone levels. Adjusting the ozone burning approval trigger to 90% of Ozone NAAQS represents a more appropriate criterion for CRB, allowing for more burn-days for producers, while also ensuring

a buffer of protection for public health. Farmers and producers are also sensitive to the importance of air quality. With the allowance of more burn-days, producers can better manage CRB events, spreading them throughout the burning season and significantly reducing their concentration.

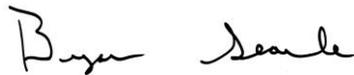
Second, the PM_{2.5} NAAQS is under evaluation by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with an assumption that more stringent standards will be enacted. The CRB Advisory Committee chose to wait for EPA to adjust the Ozone NAAQS prior to proposing any change to the burn approval criteria. We argue that such should be the action in regards to any change to the PM_{2.5} criteria. The 75% of the PM_{2.5} NAAQS burn criteria is consistent with the Nez Perce Tribe air quality program, which is sufficiently protective of human health. Furthermore, and as was stated by DEQ, there is no scientific evidence to justify a further lowering the PM_{2.5} trigger to ensure CRB does not cause or significantly contribute to a violation of the PM_{2.5} NAAQS. Arbitrarily adjusting the criterion of this pollutant for the sake of emotional equality, while knowing that the PM_{2.5} NAAQS will be adjusted in the near future, is irrational and unreasonable. **Idaho Farm Bureau respectfully requests that the PM_{2.5} criteria for burning approval remain at 75% of PM_{2.5} NAAQS until there is any adjustment to that standard made by EPA.**

Third, the collaborative work and dialog amongst the participating stakeholders has been admirable and noteworthy. Idaho Farm Bureau hopes that future meetings and negotiations continue to ensure that CRB remains a viable tool for producers while maintaining satisfactory air quality standards. As the air quality standards and regulations continue to evolve, we anticipate all stakeholders coming together as in the past to discuss and develop Idaho policy that is acceptable and workable to all interest. This negotiated rule making will likely not be the last policy change for this issue, and it can be reasonably assumed that this topic will be further addressed in the future.

Conclusion

Whereas CRB is an important management tool for producers, and appropriate air quality standards should be set to protect human health, the Idaho Farm Bureau supports both Implementation Option 2 and Draft 2 of the proposed rule change to the burning criteria for CRB. We believe that as drafted, this proposed rule will protect public health concerns and ensure CRB as a viable management practice for producers. On behalf of the members of the Idaho Farm Bureau, I thank you for your consideration of our comments. Please contact Braden Jensen at 342-2688 if you have any questions regarding this topic.

Sincerely,



Bryan Searle, President
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation