

**Oral Testimony of Leah Weiss
on U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Proposed Rule on the
National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter
(71 FR 2620-2708)
March 8, 2006
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

My name is Leah Weiss. I am speaking on behalf of NESCAUM's eight Northeast states on EPA's proposal to revise the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for secondary fine and coarse particulate matter. My comments focus on visibility aspects of a revised secondary standard, an important public welfare benefit that a PM_{2.5} secondary NAAQS should address.

PM_{2.5} at current levels in the air, which are well below the existing PM_{2.5} primary and secondary NAAQS, severely degrade visibility in urban areas. While scenic vistas in our country's national parks, wilderness areas, and other cherished landscapes are well worth on-going efforts to improve visibility, city dwellers are also deserving of better views in the urban areas where they spend much of their time.

With this in mind, we agree that EPA should revise the current PM_{2.5} secondary NAAQS from its existing level of 65 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, 24-hr average, 98th percentile averaged over three years. Monitors in the NESCAUM region never exceed the current PM_{2.5} secondary NAAQS, yet a camera from the Northeastern regional haze camera network routinely documents extremely hazy days obscuring city skylines and adjacent views. This shows that virtually all of the PM_{2.5} effects on visibility in the Northeast are occurring below the present secondary standard, justifying EPA's

proposal to revise the existing standard. Unfortunately, EPA's proposed new secondary standard is not adequate.

We disagree that the proposed secondary standard should be identical to the proposed primary NAAQS. EPA's Staff Paper found that available information on visibility "may well provide a basis for a distinctly defined standard." NESCAUM supports this view. Survey findings cited by EPA clearly demonstrate the public is sensitive to poor visibility at PM_{2.5} levels well below the proposed PM_{2.5} primary NAAQS. The public survey methods cited by EPA in its proposal amply and consistently demonstrate publicly acceptable visual ranges of 40 to 60 km. These visual ranges correspond to PM_{2.5} levels on a sub-daily basis well below the 35 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ 24-hr average proposed by EPA.

We agree that visibility relates most directly to sub-daily levels of PM_{2.5} that can vary dramatically over a few hours. As noted in EPA's Staff Paper, this calls for a shorter-term standard of less than a 24-hour averaging period focused on daylight hours.

NESCAUM recommends that EPA promulgate a PM_{2.5} secondary NAAQS that is a sub-daily four-hour average over the daylight hours from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. in the range of 20 to 25 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, 95th or 96th percentile form averaged over three years. This sub-daily standard is consistent with EPA's staff recommendations that the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee also supported (with one dissent).

Our recommendation corresponds to a visual range from 30 to 35 km. While this is less than what the public considers acceptable, it is a good first step at improving views in our urban areas, as well as in regions affected by transported urban pollution. EPA can strengthen the standard in the future as additional studies warrant.

An improved secondary standard will also complement EPA's Regional Haze Rule and better address winter haze in Northeast cities and other urban areas. During the winter, haze events are often more local in nature, thus the Regional Haze Rule will not be adequate for visibility protection in urban areas as it targets federal Class I areas primarily in rural regions.

We believe that the Clean Air Act requires secondary standards be set to eliminate *at least some of the risk* of adverse welfare effects. Equating the secondary with the primary standard as sufficient to protect welfare effects renders the Act's statutory language on secondary standards superfluous and meaningless.

With regard to PM-coarse, we disagree with EPA's proposed exemptions. If finalized, there would be no regulatory PM-coarse or PM10 standards in non-urban areas. The proposal to exempt rural windblown dust and agricultural and mining PM sources is inappropriate, not supported by the science, and should be removed. By redefining the standards as EPA proposes, public health protection would be denied to significant portions of the U.S. population.

We will be submitting more detailed written comments into the docket. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.