



More Improvements Needed in State Air Quality Protections Natural Resources Board to Accept Federal Clean Air Standards in State Rules

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 13, 2016

CONTACT: Sarah Geers, Staff Attorney, sgeers@midwestadvocates.org, (608)251-5047 x 5
Stacy Harbaugh, Communications Director, sharbaugh@midwestadvocates.org, (608)251-5047 x 1

MADISON, WI – Tomorrow, the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board may approve rule changes on air quality standards, but the changes don't go far enough to improve the pollution permitting practices and air quality protections for those living near industrial activities like frac sand mining.

[The Natural Resources Board is poised to adopt proposed rules that incorporate National Ambient Air Quality Standards for fine particulate matter \(PM_{2.5}\) in our air.](#) State statutes require this adoption in order for our state to comply with the federal Clean Air Act's protections of human health. The EPA published the improved air quality standards in January, 2013 and they formally went into effect in March 2013.

However, [it took a lawsuit by the Midwest Environmental Defense Center and Clean Wisconsin in 2014 to force the state agency to comply with the law.](#) A settlement of the lawsuit last year included an agreement that the state agency would make changes in state rules to incorporate the improved protections from the respirable dust associated with industrial pollution.

"The Board's adoption of these standards is welcome news," said Staff Attorney Sarah Geers. "But there is more work to be done. This step does not address DNR's guidance that has weakened air quality permits for facilities like frac sand mines and facilities that emit PM_{2.5} through mechanical processes. Updating the standards is of limited use when the agency is ignoring PM_{2.5} emissions from one known source of this pollutant, namely, mechanical processes."

[Last month, Midwest Environmental Advocates, on behalf of the Ho-Chunk Nation and the John Muir Chapter of the Sierra Club, petitioned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to object to an air pollution permit approved by the DNR for a frac sand mining operation.](#) The EPA has already shared comments and studies to the DNR that such mechanical processes do emit PM_{2.5} and must be considered in the operation's estimation, monitoring and control of air pollutants.

"The Board's action today is progress, but the State of Wisconsin is still not fully complying with the Clean Air Act," said Geers. "Until the DNR recognizes the impact that industries like frac sand mining can have on our clean air, our state will continue to put the interests of mining operations' ahead of protecting human health."

Midwest Environmental Advocates is a public interest organization that uses the power of the law to support communities fighting for environmental accountability. Learn more about the Midwest Environmental Advocates on the web at midwestadvocates.org, like MEA on [Facebook](#) or follow @MidwestAdvocate on [Twitter](#).

###