

EPA tries to put to rest 'myth' of farm dust rules

The Associated Press

In the Sacramento Bee, San Diego Tribune and other papers, Monday, Oct. 17, 2011

WASHINGTON — The EPA is trying to put to rest what it calls a "myth" that it is going to crack down on farm dust.

In letters to two senators last week, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson said the agency won't expand its current air quality standards to include dust created by agriculture. The agency released the letters Monday.

Republicans and some farm-state Democrats have used the issue on the campaign trail, arguing that the EPA is set to penalize farmers for everyday activities. Republican presidential candidate Herman Cain said in a recent debate that the agency is "out of control" and was preparing to regulate dust.

The House GOP has pushed a host of measures aimed at weakening, delaying or scrapping environmental regulations in recent months, saying they view them as job killers. Similar efforts are not expected to be successful in the Democratic-controlled Senate.

Obama administration officials have tried to deflect talk of a dust rule for months, to little avail. A statement released by the agency Monday said that "EPA hopes that this action finally puts an end to the myth that the agency is planning to expand regulations of farm dust."

National Farmers Union President Roger Johnson said there has been considerable anxiety in farm country about the possibility of increased regulation on agriculture.

"We hope this action finally puts to rest the misinformation regarding dust regulation and eases the minds of farmers and ranchers across the country," Johnson said.

Nebraska Sen. Mike Johanns and South Dakota Rep. Kristi Noem, both Republicans, have pushed legislation that would block the dust rule if it had been proposed.

Noem issued a statement Monday saying that the announcement does nothing to change the fact that the agency has the ability to regulate farm dust. But Johanns called the EPA statement a "victory," saying he would abandon an amendment on the issue he planned to offer to a spending bill this week.

"EPA has finally provided what I've been asking for all along," Johanns said. "Unequivocal assurance that it won't attempt to regulate farm dust."

[Letter to the Stockton Record, Tuesday, Oct. 18, 2011:](#)

Air pollution problem must be addressed

Given the serious air pollution problem in the Central Valley, I was disappointed to read that the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors is supporting efforts to roll back federal clean air laws.

The assertion that easing rules on ozone would provide "breathing room" for Valley residents couldn't be further from the truth. San Joaquin Valley residents suffer from some of the worst air pollution in the country, according to the American Lung Association's 2011 State of the Air report.

Children, the elderly, and those who suffer from chronic lung diseases are most at risk for health problems from ozone.

For these residents, breathing smog-polluted air can lead to coughing and wheezing, increased asthma attacks, hospital visits and even death.

The health and economic costs of air pollution in the Valley add up to more than \$6 billion annually.

Yes, the Valley has improved, but there is still a long way to go before the public is protected from harmful air pollution.

Without life-saving rules in place to further reduce ozone levels, Valley residents will continue to suffer high rates of smog-related illness.

The American Lung Association in California urges Valley elected leaders to demonstrate concern for the thousands of children with asthma and all those with heart and lung disease in our region by supporting strong implementation of the Federal Clean Air Act and resisting any weakening changes.

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