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May 25, 2016

Paula Wilson
Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
1410 N. Hilton
Boise, ID 83706

Re: Preliminary Draft Negotiated Rule (Draft No. 1)
Docket No. 58-0101-1601, Dated May 4, 2016

Dear Ms. Wilson,

As the president of the Idaho Grain Producers Association (IGPA), I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes to Idaho's burn approval criteria. With over 600 wheat and barley farm families as members, IGPA is the key policy advocacy organization working on behalf of Idaho's grain industry with local, state, and federal leaders.

IGPA supports the use of burning as a Best Management Practice in managing heavy crop residue. Burning allows grain farmers to effectively and efficiently eradicate and prevent pests and diseases while maintaining yields, protecting water quality, decreasing chemical use, decreasing diesel use, and decreasing soil erosion on productive farm acres.

Ozone

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently reduced the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for ozone. Idaho's current statute allows for burning at 75 percent of the NAAQS – these two facts combined will result in a significant reduction of allowable burn days. At their meeting in March, the Crop Residue Burning Advisory Committee recommended a change to Idaho's ozone standard for burn approval criteria.

IGPA is very pleased to see the proposed rule change the requirement that ambient air quality levels not exceed 90 percent of the ozone NAAQS for burns to be approved. Agency staff suggested that this change will result in anywhere from 20 – 80 additional high quality burn days per year, the actual number varying throughout the state (on the lower end of the range in North Idaho, on the higher end in South Idaho). This is welcome news.

Particulate Matter

Along with changing the ozone standard, the Crop Residue Burning Advisory Committee also recommended the standard for particulate matter be tightened. IGPA supports a particulate matter (PM) standard that falls between 65 and 70 percent of the NAAQS. There is broad agreement that significant health benefits have been realized at the 75 percent PM standard currently in the burn criteria. That said, we appreciate that in order to have the ozone standard raised, the PM standard will

need to be lowered. DEQ staff estimated that changing Idaho's standard to 65 percent of the NAAQS would result in four fewer burn days per year – this seems like a reasonable trade off.

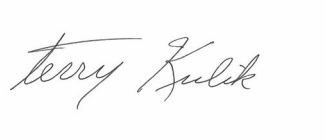
IGPA urges DEQ not to tighten the particulate matter standard further than proposed. Right now, grain farmers can work with a PM burn approval criteria standard somewhere between 65 and 70 percent of the national standard – but we need a standard that will work into the future, and it is impossible to predict how or when the EPA will change the national standard. As was pointed out by DEQ staff at the negotiated rule meeting, there need not be a point-for-point change in the PM and ozone standards to achieve similar levels of health outcomes. We can support reducing the PM standard somewhere between 65 and 70 percent of the NAAQS to further protect air quality for the health of vulnerable populations, but we cannot support it being tightened further than that.

Timing

The current timeline proposed by DEQ puts a statute change, a rule change, and an update to our State Implementation Plan in place by 2018. That leaves the 2017 burning season with significantly fewer allowable burn days (estimated at half to two-third fewer days for burning). IGPA urges DEQ to do what it can to expedite this process so that the opportunity for crop residue burning is not significantly hindered in 2017.

In closing, IGPA would like to thank DEQ for putting together this thoughtful compromise. We support changes that will result in more high-quality burn days for farmers while increasing the public health outcomes of the program – truly a win-win.

Sincerely,



Terry Kulik
President
Idaho Grain Producers Association