



ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE

finding the ways that work

April 30, 2003

Members of the Environmental Management Commission,

We at Environmental Defense recognize the tremendous effort put forth by members of the Air Quality Committee in reviewing the issue of hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) pollution and we commend the AQC for moving ahead with the rulemaking process.

At the March meeting of the Air Quality Committee (AQC), that committee voted to send three versions of a draft rulemaking to the full Environmental Management Commission (EMC), expressing confidence that these three rules could then go to public comment. Although none of these versions included all of the measures necessary to fully protect public health, we recognize the significant step forward that the AQC has taken in creating these draft rules.

Studies have shown that low levels of H₂S in the ambient air can significantly increase the risk of asthma attacks among the asthmatic population as well as eye pain and irritation among members of the general population. Both the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) and the North Carolina Division of Public Health (NCPH) agree that standards of 56 ug/m³ 1-hr and 33 ug/m³ 24-hr are necessary to protect people near PCS Phosphate and pulp and paper mills from the negative effects of H₂S pollution.

The issue of hydrogen sulfide was first assigned to the (SAB) in February of 2001 and has been before the AQC at least twice this year. During this time, the AQC has heard several interested parties present on the issue, including members of the environmental community, the Department of Public Health, the Scientific Advisory Board, and the North Carolina Air Toxics Program as well as members of the business community. After months of discussion, members of the EMC should feel comfortable sending the proposed drafts to public comment.

During the next meeting of the EMC, you will have the opportunity to vote to send these draft rulemakings to the 30-day public comment period. There is no finality involved in the decision to send these drafts to public comment. After hearing the public remarks on these three draft rulemakings, members of the EMC will then be asked to make a final decision in June that will determine which of the three drafts should become a rule. We encourage you to move forward with this process by voting to send the draft rulemakings to the public comment period.

Environmental Defense remains readily available to provide any further information you may require on this issue. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

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