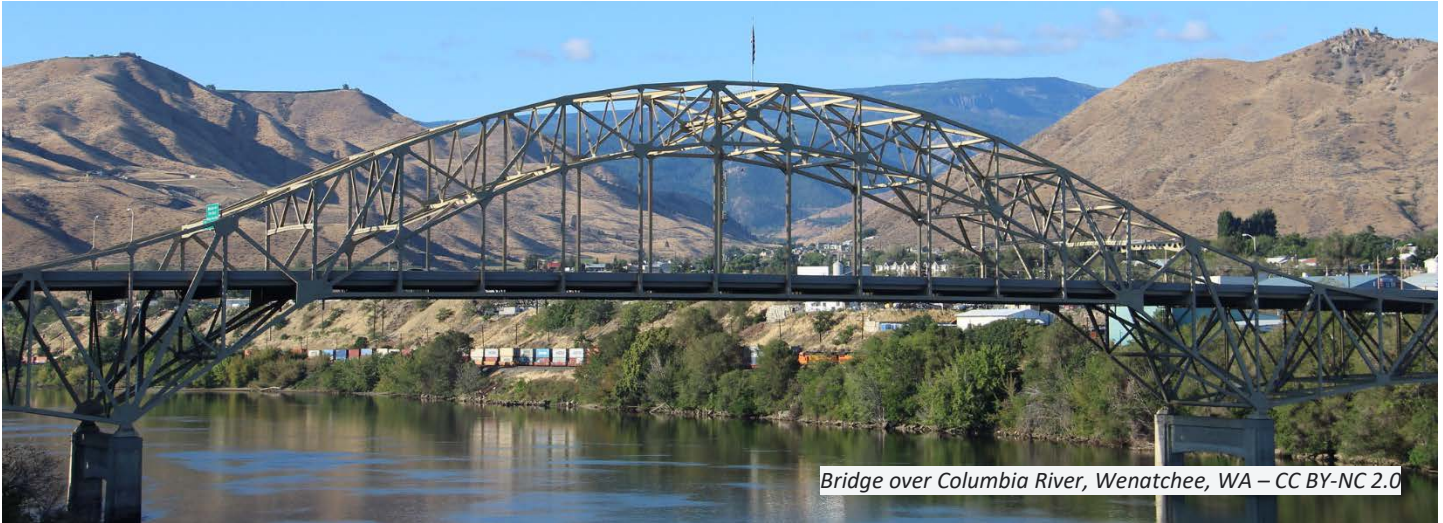


Focus on Air Quality: Douglas and Chelan Counties Meet Federal Standard for Sulfur Dioxide



More information

[Sulfur Dioxide Designations](#)

Contact information

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Public Comment Period

May 15 – June 24

[Submit comments online](#)

Or, mail your comment to:

Anya Caudill,
Washington State Department
of Ecology, Air Quality Program,
P.O. Box 47600,
Olympia, WA 98504-7600

To request a public hearing,
[email Anya Caudill](#) by **June 16**.

If we get a hearing request, we will hold it online at **6 p.m. June 22**. We will post the registration link to [Ecology's Public Issues and Events page](#).

Air quality recommendation: Douglas and Chelan counties attain federal standard for sulfur dioxide

The Washington State Department of Ecology has reviewed air quality data and determined that Douglas and Chelan counties meet the 2010 one-hour sulfur dioxide (SO₂) national ambient air quality standard (NAAQS).

Ecology seeks public review and comment on our recommendation to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to designate these two counties “in attainment / unclassifiable” of the SO₂ NAAQS. This means that they comply with the federal standard. “Unclassifiable” designation acknowledges that we do not have monitoring data for all areas in the two counties, however, there are no sources of SO₂ pollution to likely cause exceedances of the standard.

EPA established a new health-based NAAQS for SO₂ on June 22, 2010. Elevated levels of SO₂ pollution are irritating to the upper airway, can cause inflammation and tightening of the airway, and can trigger or exacerbate asthma symptoms.

Under the federal Clean Air Act, when EPA establishes a new standard states must evaluate their compliance with it. The Clean Air Act provides each state the opportunity to recommend areas of the state be designated as in attainment (meaning that they meet the NAAQS), nonattainment (meaning that they do not meet the NAAQS), or as being unclassifiable (meaning there is

insufficient data for the area). EPA often uses a designation of attainment/unclassifiable for areas that do not have significant SO₂ emitters and therefore do not require monitoring.

EPA will review the monitoring and emissions data and feedback from the state before making a final decision as to whether the area is in compliance with the standard. EPA is required to designate these areas by Dec. 31, 2020. EPA will hold a public review and comment period in the fall of 2020, prior to finalizing their decision. You may visit [EPA's web page for Sulfur Dioxide Designations](#).

Sulfur dioxide monitoring

As part of updating the SO₂ standard, EPA required states to conduct additional investigation of air pollution near facilities that emit 2,000 tons or more of SO₂ a year. The Alcoa Primary Metal Works Wenatchee (Alcoa), an aluminum smelter in Chelan County, on the border with Douglas County, met this criterion.

Based on emissions in previous years and prevailing winds, Ecology identified where models predicted the highest SO₂ levels to place the monitoring site. Ecology outlined the siting of the new monitor (Malaga site) in the [2016 Annual Ambient Air Monitoring Network Plan](#) and solicited public comments in May-June 2016, before submitting the plan to EPA.

Even though the facility announced curtailment of its operations in 2016, EPA required Ecology to begin monitoring the SO₂ levels near Alcoa starting in January 2017. Curtailment is different than shut down, and the facility continues to maintain its permit and must demonstrate compliance with the standards.

2017-2019 SO₂ monitoring results

An area is in attainment when a 3-year average of the fourth-highest annual, 1-hour daily maximum levels of SO₂ at a monitoring site is equal or less than 75 parts per billion (ppb). This 3-year, averaged metric is called a "design value." The lower the site's design value, the cleaner the air.

For 2017-2019, Ecology calculated the design value at a monitoring site in Chelan County, near the border with Douglas County, at 1 ppb. Because Alcoa curtailed the facility, the monitoring found very low levels of SO₂. Specifically, the yearly 99th percentiles were: 2017 – 1.1 ppb; 2018 – 1.2 ppb; and 2019 – 1.0 ppb. The design value of 1 ppb is substantially below the standard's 75 ppb. The design value indicates that the area is attaining the standard.

EPA will review the monitoring data and publish an EPA-approved design value for each monitoring site sometime in July 2020, after which the public can review them.

Other SO₂ sources in the counties

There are no other industrial sources of SO₂ in Chelan County. In Douglas County, Ecology permits SO₂ emissions from the Greater Wenatchee Regional Landfill & Recycling Center. Its annual SO₂ emissions between 2011 and 2017 averaged 4.8 tons, with a maximum of 6.2 tons in 2016. This is well-below EPA's threshold of 2,000 tons of SO₂ emissions a year for SO₂ evaluation, and is unlikely to cause SO₂ levels above the standard.

Between the low design value at the Malaga monitoring site and only one other SO₂ source in the two counties that emits small amounts of SO₂ a year, Ecology has no evidence to suspect any area in the two counties to be in violation of the SO₂ standard.

Background

In 2011, Washington recommended that EPA designate all areas in the state as unclassifiable due to insufficient SO₂ data to determine attainment status. EPA did not proceed with designating the areas at that time. Instead, on Aug. 21, 2015, EPA issued a Data Requirements Rule (DRR), directing states to collect additional SO₂ data to assist EPA in determining how each area meets the standard.

Under the DRR, EPA established several ways and schedules for the states to carry out SO₂ evaluations through a process of four rounds of designations. Washington areas met criteria for review in the third and fourth round of designations.

In December 2017, EPA completed the third round of designations, in which it designated 36 out of 39 Washington counties as either in attainment / unclassifiable or unclassifiable. You may review the EPA's decision in this [Technical Support Document](#).

The three remaining counties, Chelan, Douglas and Whatcom, are a part of the fourth round of designations, in which EPA will evaluate the SO₂ monitoring data collected over the three-year period of 2017-2019. The monitoring sites are located downwind of the two largest SO₂ sources in the state: Alcoa Primary Metals Wenatchee Works in Chelan County near the border with Douglas County, and Intalco Aluminum LLC in Whatcom County.

Chelan and Douglas counties are in the eastern part of the state, and Whatcom County is in the western part of the state. Due to geographic and jurisdictional differences between the remaining two areas, this recommendation only applies to Chelan and Douglas Counties.

Questions

Media inquiries: Andrew Wineke by email at Andrew.Wineke@ecy.wa.gov or call 360-791-1939.

To request ADA accommodation, contact Ecology's ADA Coordinator by email at ecyadacoordinator@ecy.wa.gov, or call 360-407-6831, 711 (relay service), or 877-833-6341 (TTY). More about our [accessibility services](#).

En Español

El Departamento de Ecología del estado de Washington revisó los datos de calidad del aire y determinó que los condados de Douglas y Chelan cumplen con la norma nacional de calidad del aire ambiente del 2010 para el dióxido de sulfuro (SO₂) en una hora. Ecología recomienda que los dos condados sean designados en logro/sin clasificación para esta norma, es decir, que están en conformidad. Invitamos al público a revisar y a comentar sobre la recomendación propuesta a la EPA (por sus siglas en inglés). Para más información, visite [la página web para las designaciones de dióxido de sulfuro](#).

Periodo de Comentario Público: 15 de mayo al 24 de junio

- [Someta sus comentarios en línea](#)
- O envíe sus comentarios por correo a: Anya Caudill, Washington State Department of Ecology, Air Quality Program, P.O. Box 47600, Olympia, WA 98504-7600

Para solicitar una audiencia pública sobre esta recomendación, [envíe un correo electrónico a Anya Caudill](#) a más tardar el **16 de junio**. Si se solicita una audiencia, la conllevarémos en-línea a las 6 p.m. el 22 de junio. El enlace para registrarse se publicará a [la página de Ecología de Asuntos Públicos y Eventos](#).