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DEQ Director to Testify in Congress on How EPA's Plan for Stricter Ozone Standard Impacts the West

Salt Lake City, Utah – Amanda Smith, executive director of the Utah Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) plans to testify before Congress on Wednesday about how EPA's plan to enforce stricter standards for ozone under the "prescriptive" Clean Air Act will set up Utah and other neighboring states to fail.

"While DEQ recognizes that high levels of ozone can have a significant impact on people's health," Smith says "it makes more sense to proactively address Utah's unique air problem rather than a cookie-cutter approach mandated by the Clean Air Act."

"The 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments included specific strategies and deadlines to solve an urban ozone problem that was primarily caused by mobile sources," Smith says in testimony to be delivered before the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology's Environment Sub-Committee. "Only recently, as ozone standards have become more stringent, has attention begun to focus on background ozone in the Intermountain West."

Recent studies indicate that ozone from as far away as Asia, and wildfires closer to home contribute significantly to background ozone levels – something the EPA doesn't take into account when *either* "setting " *or* "determining compliance with" the new standard.

"If EPA moves forward with a more stringent standard before mechanisms to address western ozone issues are developed, it will guarantee failure for Utah and many other western states, leading to severe consequences for those states," Smith said.

The EPA is reviewing lowering the current limit of 75 parts per billion (ppb), which was set or established in 2008, to 70 ppb or lower. Utah counties that currently meet the standard will

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struggle if the standard is lowered, bringing many of them into a non-attainment status.

“We want to ensure that our efforts are focused on emission reduction strategies that are effective and appropriate in reducing ozone levels without requiring difficult, expensive measures that make no sense,” she said. “Transportation-focused measures in small rural communities will not be effective, nor will overly stringent controls applied to remote industrial sources. Setting an ozone standard that can’t be met won’t improve public health in Utah.”

The control strategies DEQ is currently developing for PM2.5 (a winter-time pollution problem in much of northern Utah) will have a significant impact on summertime ozone levels, as well.

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