

# **Georgia Department of Natural Resources**

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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Georgia EPD Recommends 27 Counties For Air Quality Improvements**

The Director of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) has announced that all or part of 27 Georgia counties do not meet health standards for ozone and is recommending the federal government designate those areas for air quality improvements.

In a letter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), EPD Director Carol Couch asked that the counties be designated nonattainment for ozone. The nonattainment area would include all of metropolitan Atlanta and counties that include the cities of Athens, Augusta, Columbus and Macon.

“EPD evaluated the recommended nonattainment areas using nine factors, including air quality data, population density, traffic and commuting patterns, and weather,” said EPD Director Couch. “The results of our analysis show that we need to address air quality problems in these areas.”

The EPD recommended ozone non-attainment designations are as follows:

### **Atlanta Ozone Nonattainment Area (21 counties):**

Barrow, Bartow, Carroll, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Hall, Henry, Newton, Paulding, Rockdale, Spalding, and Walton Counties, and a section of Heard County.

### **Athens Nonattainment Area (1 county):**

Clarke County

### **Augusta Nonattainment Area (1 county):**

Richmond County

### **Columbus Nonattainment Area (1 county):**

Muscogee County

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Page Two

### **Macon Nonattainment Area (2 counties):**

Bibb County and a section of Monroe County

### **Murray County Nonattainment Area (1 county):**

A section of Murray County

EPA adopted a more stringent health standard for ozone last year, which made it more difficult for some communities to be in compliance. Ozone is created when exhaust from vehicles, power plants, industry and other sources react in the presence of sunlight and high temperatures.

EPA will consider the Georgia recommendations and could make a formal designation of nonattainment areas as early as March 12, 2010. The state would then have three years to submit plans to EPA for meeting the ozone health standard.

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