

# MDEQ SUBMITS STATE PLAN THAT FAILS TO GO FAR ENOUGH TO CURB HARMFUL AIR POLLUTION IN WAYNE COUNTY

Proposed plan fails to require modern pollution controls at coal plants in an area that has been overburdened by pollution for far too long.

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## Contact:

Ricky Junquera, 617.599.7048, [ricky.junquera@sierraclub.org](mailto:ricky.junquera@sierraclub.org)

Detroit, MI -- Yesterday, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) submitted its plan to reduce sulfur dioxide emissions in southern Wayne County to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for final approval, yet the plan once again fails to require modern pollution controls on any existing coal powered generating units. This revised plan comes nearly 14 months late, and only after EPA informed MDEQ that their initial plan failed to protect public health and adequately lower sulfur dioxide emissions levels.

As was powerfully documented in a recent [Newsweek cover story](#), Wayne County residents have long suffered from sulfur dioxide pollution levels that are harmful to human health. Sulfur dioxide can cause serious respiratory problems, and is especially dangerous for those most vulnerable: children, seniors, and those with respiratory illnesses. According to a 2014 American Lung Association report, Wayne County has the highest number of pediatric asthma cases in Michigan, an asthma hospitalization rate that is three to six times higher than the state as a whole, and the highest state population living in poverty. Detroit's downriver communities, deemed the "Epicenter of Asthma Burden" by the Michigan Department of Community Health, have a long history of enduring the impacts of heavy industrial pollution. Another study of 29 zip codes showed that asthma hospitalization generally worsened in the city of Detroit from 2000 to 2010, according to the Michigan Department of Community Health.

In 2013, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designated a portion of Wayne County as failing to meet federal minimal air quality standards for sulfur dioxide, which are established to protect public health. MDEQ proposed a plan last summer that would have allowed increases in actual emissions from the area's largest sources of SO<sub>2</sub>: the DTE Trenton Channel and River Rouge coal plants, which produce 80% of the area's sulfur dioxide pollution. By MDEQ's own admission, that plan would have left broad areas of Wayne County exceeding the health-based standard.

## **In response Regina Strong, Director of the Michigan Beyond Coal Campaign for the Sierra Club, released the following statement:**

"This draft plan leaves coal plants online with no modern pollution controls in an area that has been overburdened by pollution for far too long. The citizens of Wayne county deserve a plan that reduces the emissions of each facility by way of modern pollution controls or by completely transitioning current coal fired units to clean energy. We will continue to work with

community leaders to achieve the goal of a plan that reduces pollution for all communities in Wayne County.”

**Said Shannon Fisk, Managing Attorney at Earthjustice:**

“It is unacceptable that dirty coal plants such as River Rouge Unit 3 and Trenton Channel Unit 9 continue to operate without modern pollution controls many decades after such controls became readily available. We are disappointed that MDEQ is still failing to protect Detroit and Downriver residents from these polluting dinosaurs, and hope that US EPA will address this fundamental shortcoming in MDEQ’s SO2 proposal.”

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