The Honorable Gregory Mendoza
Governor of Gila River Indian Community
P.O. Box 97
Sacaton, Arizona 85147

Dear Governor Mendoza:

I would like to summarize the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s recent action to address fine-particle pollution on your reservation. As required by the Clean Air Act, the EPA has determined which areas are meeting the national ambient-air-quality standards for fine-particle pollution and which areas must take steps to reduce emissions that contribute to violations of the standard.

The EPA on December 14, 2012, strengthened the annual, health-based fine-particle standard from 15.0 micrograms per cubic meter (μg/m³) to 12.0 μg/m³. Thousands of scientific studies have linked exposure to these tiny particles – approximately 1/30th the size of a human hair – with serious health problems including premature death in people with heart and lung disease, nonfatal heart attacks and increased hospital admissions and doctor and emergency-room visits for respiratory and cardiovascular disease.

I appreciate the information you and your staff have shared with the EPA throughout this process to assess fine-particle-pollution levels in communities across your reservation and the impact of emission sources that could be contributing to unhealthy air. After considering your recommendations, reviewing the most recent certified fine-particle air-quality data for your reservation and evaluating factors to assess contribution to nearby levels of fine-particle pollution, I have determined that no area within the Gila River Indian Community reservation violates the 2012 standard or contributes to a nearby violation of the standard. As a result, the EPA is designating all of the Gila River Indian Community reservation “unclassifiable/attainment.”

Because air-quality monitoring for 2014 is nearly complete, the EPA, at a tribe’s request, will evaluate the status of an area based on its annual fine-particle-monitoring data for 2012-14. If you would like the EPA to re-evaluate any areas within your reservation, please submit complete, quality-assured and certified air-quality data for 2014 to the EPA by February 27, 2015.

I recognize that the EPA shares responsibility with the states and tribes for managing particle-pollution levels. Efforts by states and tribes to attain the 1997 and 2006 fine-particle-pollution standards are already working to reduce unhealthy levels of fine-particle pollution. In addition, current and upcoming federal standards and safeguards, including pollution-reduction rules for power plants, vehicles and fuels will ensure steady reductions of fine-particle pollution and will protect public health in communities across the nation.
Together we have made considerable progress in reducing fine-particle pollution. Nationwide monitored levels of fine-particle pollution have fallen 34 percent since 2000 when we first began such monitoring for particles of this size. I am confident this progress will continue as we work toward our shared goal of clean air.

For additional information about these designations, please visit www.epa.gov/pmdesignations.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Gina McCarthy