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6560-50-P

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

40 CFR Part 52

[EPA-R09-OAR-2025-1938; FRL-13058-02-R9]

Air Plan Approval; California; San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

AGENCY: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is taking final action to approve a revision to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD or "District") portion of the California State Implementation Plan (SIP) concerning two rules submitted to address section 185 of the Clean Air Act (CAA or the "Act") with respect to the 2008 and 2015 8-hour ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS or "standards").

DATES: This rule is effective **[INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*]**.

ADDRESSES: The EPA has established a docket for this action under Docket ID No. EPA-R09-OAR-2025-1938. All documents in the docket are listed on the *https://www.regulations.gov* web site. Some information is not publicly available, e.g., Confidential Business Information (CBI) or other information whose disclosure is restricted by statute. Certain other material, such as copyrighted material, is not placed on the Internet and will be publicly available only in hard copy form. Publicly available docket materials are available through *https://www.regulations.gov*, or please contact the person identified in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section for additional availability information. If you need assistance in a language other than English or if you are a person with a disability who needs a reasonable accommodation at no cost to you, please contact the person identified in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tom Kelly, EPA Region IX, 75 Hawthorne

St., San Francisco, CA 94105; telephone number: (415) 972-3856; email address: *kelly.thomasp@epa.gov*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Throughout this document, "we," "us," and "our" refer to the EPA.

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I. Proposed Action

On December 11, 2025, the EPA proposed to approve the rules in Table 1 into the California SIP.[1] We proposed to approve these rules because we determined that the rules comply with the relevant CAA requirements. Our proposed action contains more information on the rules and our evaluation.

Table 1-Submitted Rules

Local agency	Rule Number	Rule title	Adopted	Submitted
SJVAPCD	3172	Federally Mandated Ozone Nonattainment Fee – 2008 8-Hour Standard	12/21/23	03/13/24
SJVAPCD	3173	Federally Mandated Ozone Nonattainment Fee – 2015 8-Hour Standard	12/21/23	03/13/24

II. Public Comments and EPA Responses

The EPA's proposed action provided a 30-day public comment period (90 FR 57414 (December 11, 2025). During this period, we received one comment letter from the Committee for a Better Arvin, Medical Advocates for Healthy Air, and the Sierra Club, which is included in the docket for this rulemaking. The following paragraphs summarize the substantive comments

[1] 90 FR 57414 (December 11, 2025).

objecting to our proposed action and provide our responses.

Comment 1: Commenters point to the CAA section 185(a) requirement that fees be paid "for each calendar year beginning after the attainment date, until the area is redesignated as an attainment area for ozone." They claim that the rule language providing that "[t]he fees established by this rule shall cease to be applicable" when the EPA redesignates the area to attainment means that the rules do not require payment of fees that have accrued and become due but have not yet been paid when the area is redesignated.

Response: The EPA does not agree with Commenters' reading of the rules. The EPA understands that the provision providing that "[t]he fees established by this rule shall cease to be applicable" upon redesignation simply prevents new fees from accruing – but does not excuse payment of monies already due.

There are multiple reasons why the EPA believes this is the best reading. First, as a textual matter, if, for example, a tax or fee "ceases to be applicable" in a specific year, a natural reading of such provision is that the tax is not incurred for years beginning with the specified year. It does not retroactively excuse non-payment of taxes already owed. If, for example, a vehicle registration fee ceases to be applicable in 2027, a common sense reading of that provision would not excuse past due fees from 2026; it would simply not impose new fees for 2027. The EPA believes that a similar reading is indicated here.

Second, when comparing the applicability provisions of the rules themselves, section 2.1 of the rules provides that "This rule shall become applicable" if and when the EPA makes a finding that the area has failed to attain the applicable NAAQS by the attainment date. By contrast, the provision cited by Commenters provides that "The fees established by this rule shall cease to be applicable" when the EPA redesignates the area. It does not state that "the rule" becomes inapplicable upon redesignation. The reading suggested by the Commenters does not give meaning to the distinction between "the rule" becoming applicable and "the fees established

by this rule" becoming inapplicable.[2] The EPA believes that the best reading of the rule – one that gives meaning to the distinction between "the rule" and "the fees" – is that the rule continues to require payment of past-due amounts following redesignation. It is simply new fees that do not accrue.

Finally, EPA communications with the District confirm that the District understands the requirements of the rule in this manner as well. Specifically, the District has clarified, "when read in context of the entirety of the rules, the District interprets section 2.4 to end the rules' prospective applicability once EPA redesignates the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin as attainment for the 2008 8-hour ozone standard or 2015 8-hour ozone standard, respectively. It does not forgive, vacate, or otherwise eliminate fees already assessed or owed for prior years."[3]

Comment 2: Commenters state that Rules 3172 and 3173 do not compel payment of all fees and give the District enforcement discretion to take no further action against a noncompliant major stationary source. Commenters support this assertion with a hypothetical scenario in which multiple years of fees are not collected and then excused upon redesignation.

Response: The EPA disagrees that Rules 3172 and 3173 do not require payment of all fees. Paragraph 5.1.2 states that each agency or person "shall remit" the assessed fees to the District. Payment of the fees is thus required under the rule, and failure to do so would constitute a violation of the rule. The fact that the rule specifies that late payment will result in an additional fee increase and could result in suspension of a facility's permit to operate does not make the initial obligation to pay the fee any less of an obligation.

The fact that States possess a degree of enforcement discretion with respect to their rules is not a basis for rule disapproval. The District has implemented a CAA section 185 fee rule for the 1-hour ozone NAAQS since 2011, and the EPA has no basis to conclude that the District

[2] The EPA need not opine here on whether "the rule" becoming inapplicable at a particular time would necessarily forgive amounts already due.
[3] Email from Nick Pierce, Permit Services Manager, SJVAPCD, to Tom Kelly, EPA, dated April 13, 2026.

lacks the personnel, funding, and legal authority to implement the rule.[4] Moreover, the Act provides recourse in the event that a state does not sufficiently implement its section 185 fee program. Section 185(d) of the CAA provides authority to the EPA to collect unpaid fees in the event that the Administrator makes a finding that the State is not administering and enforcing the required fee.

In addition, Sections 113 and 304 of the Act provide that once the rules are approved into the SIP, they become enforceable not just by the District, but also by the Federal government and private citizens. Because section 5.1.2 of the rule provides an enforceable requirement for the payment of fees, this requirement may also be enforced by the EPA and via citizen suits once the rule is approved into the SIP.

Accordingly, the EPA disagrees that the rules do not compel payment of all fees and disagrees that the rules are not enforceable. Under CAA section 110(k)(3), the EPA shall approve a SIP submittal if it meets the applicable requirements of the Act. The Act provides a set of tools for addressing potential future enforcement shortcomings if they were to occur. Commenter's concerns about potential future enforcement shortcomings do not provide a basis for rule disapproval.

III. EPA Action

The EPA did not receive comments that changed its assessment of the approvability of the rules as described in our proposal. Accordingly, under CAA section 110(k)(3) and for the reasons explained in our proposed rule and responses to comments, we are finalizing approval of SJVAPCD Rules 3172 and 3173.

IV. Incorporation by Reference

In this document, the EPA is finalizing regulatory text that includes incorporation by reference. In accordance with requirements of 1 CFR 51.5, the EPA is finalizing the incorporation by reference of SJVAPCD Rule 3172, Federally Mandated Ozone Nonattainment

[4] See CAA section 110(a)(2)(E).

Fee—2008 8-Hour Standard and SJVAPCD Rule 3173, Federally Mandated Ozone Nonattainment Fee—2015 8-Hour Standard. Both rules were adopted on December 21, 2023, and fulfill, respectively, the CAA section 185 requirements for the 2008 and 2015 ozone NAAQS. The EPA has made, and will continue to make, these documents available through *https://www.regulations.gov* and at the EPA Region IX Office (please contact the person identified in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section of this preamble for more information).

V. Statutory and Executive Order Reviews

Under the CAA, the Administrator is required to approve a SIP submission that complies with the provisions of the Act and applicable Federal regulations. 42 U.S.C. 7410(k); 40 CFR 52.02(a). Thus, in reviewing SIP submissions, the EPA's role is to approve State choices, provided that they meet the criteria of the Clean Air Act. Accordingly, this action merely approves State law as meeting Federal requirements and does not impose additional requirements beyond those imposed by State law. For that reason, this action:

- Is not a significant regulatory action subject to review by the Office of Management and Budget under Executive Order 12866 (58 FR 51735, October 4, 1993);
- Is not an Executive Order 14192 (90 FR 9065, February 6, 2025) regulatory action because this action is not significant under Executive Order 12866;
- Does not impose an information collection burden under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq*.);
- Is certified as not having a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities under the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq*.);
- Does not contain any unfunded mandate or significantly or uniquely affect small governments, as described in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-4);

- Does not have federalism implications as specified in Executive Order 13132 (64 FR 43255, August 10, 1999);
- Is not subject to Executive Order 13045 (62 FR 19885, April 23, 1997) because it approves a State program;
- Is not a significant regulatory action subject to Executive Order 13211 (66 FR 28355, May 22, 2001); and
- Is not subject to requirements of section 12(d) of the National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act of 1995 (15 U.S.C. 272 note) because application of those requirements would be inconsistent with the CAA.

In addition, the SIP is not approved to apply on any Indian reservation land or in any other area where the EPA or an Indian Tribe has demonstrated that a Tribe has jurisdiction. In those areas of Indian country, the rule does not have Tribal implications and will not impose substantial direct costs on Tribal governments or preempt Tribal law as specified by Executive Order 13175 (65 FR 67249, November 9, 2000).

This action is subject to the Congressional Review Act, and the EPA will submit a rule report to each House of the Congress and to the Comptroller General of the United States. This action is not a "major rule" as defined by 5 U.S.C. 804(2).

Under section 307(b)(1) of the Clean Air Act, petitions for judicial review of this action must be filed in the United States Court of Appeals for the appropriate circuit by **[INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*]**. Filing a petition for reconsideration by the Administrator of this final rule does not affect the finality of this action for the purposes of judicial review, nor does it extend the time within which a petition for judicial review may be filed and shall not postpone the effectiveness of such rule or action. This action may not be challenged later in proceedings to enforce its requirements (See CAA section 307(b)(2)).

List of Subjects in 40 CFR Part 52

Environmental protection, Air pollution control, Incorporation by reference, Intergovernmental relations, Nitrogen oxides, Ozone, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Volatile organic compounds.

Dated: July 23, 2026.

Michael Martucci,
Acting Regional Administrator,
Region IX.

For the reasons stated in the preamble, the Environmental Protection Agency amends part 52, chapter I, title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations as follows:

PART 52 - APPROVAL AND PROMULGATION OF IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

1. The authority citation for part 52 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 42 U.S.C. 7401 *et seq.*

Subpart F—California

2. Section 52.220 is amended by adding paragraph (c)(632) to read as follows:

§ 52.220 Identification of plan—in part.

* * * * *

(c) * * *

(632) The following regulations were submitted electronically on March 13, 2024, by the Governor's designee as an attachment to a letter dated March 7, 2024.

(i) *Incorporation by reference*. (A) San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District.

(*1*) Rule 3172, "Federally Mandated Ozone Nonattainment Fee – 2008 8-Hour Standard," adopted on December 21, 2023.

(*2*) Rule 3173, "Federally Mandated Ozone Nonattainment Fee – 2015 8-Hour Standard," adopted on December 21, 2023.

(B) [Reserved]

(ii) [Reserved]

[FR Doc. 2026-15377 Filed: 7/29/2026 8:45 am; Publication Date: 7/30/2026]