

EPA approves Southern Ute Indian Tribe's air permitting program

Southwest Colorado Tribe is first in nation to operate Clean Air Act program for large sources of air emissions

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(Denver, Colo. - March 6, 2012) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency today approved the Southern Ute Indian Tribe's air permitting program, making the Tribe the first in the nation to operate an EPA-approved Clean Air Act program for large sources of air emissions. The Tribe's headquarters are located near Ignacio, Colorado.

The Clean Air Act operating permits program allows the Tribe to issue permits and perform inspections at large stationary sources of air emissions on the Reservation, the majority of which are associated with oil and gas production. EPA will continue to work with the Tribe in an oversight capacity, as it does for State permitting programs.

"The assumption of this program is a step forward for the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and the environment," said Jim Martin, EPA's Regional Administrator in Denver. "EPA's approval reflects the Tribe's exceptional effort to build the expertise and capacity to manage air quality on the Reservation."

The Tribe's effort to obtain authority to implement the program has been underway for nearly a decade and has involved extensive communication and outreach with industry, the State of Colorado and surrounding communities. Previously, EPA had served as the permitting authority on behalf of the Tribe.

In commenting on the approval, Tribal Chairman Jimmy R. Newton, Jr. stated that, "EPA approval of this program is an achievement that was envisioned by many past tribal leaders and is the culmination of extensive cooperation among the Tribe, EPA, State of Colorado, La Plata County, and oil and gas industry operators. The Tribe looks forward to administering the program in a manner that ensures protection of the Reservation air shed and contributes positively to regional air quality."

Clean Air Act operating permits are legally enforceable documents that authorities issue to air pollution sources after the source has begun to operate. This requirement comes from Title V of the Clean Air Act, as amended in 1990.

The Southern Ute Indian Tribe is located on the Southern Ute Indian Reservation in southwest Colorado. The Reservation land area includes more than a thousand square miles in La Plata, Archuleta and Montezuma counties.

More on the Clean Air Act operating permits program: <http://www.epa.gov/oaqps001/permits/>

Southern Ute Indian Tribe: <http://www.southern-ute.nsn.us/>