



FY 2020-2021 Agency Priority Goal Action Plan

Improve Air Quality by Reducing the Number of Areas Not Meeting Air Quality Standards

Goal Leader:

Elizabeth Shaw, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Air and Radiation

Deputy Goal Leader:

Peter Tsirigotis, Director, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards

Overview

Goal Statement

- **Improve air quality by reducing the number of areas not meeting air quality standards.** By September 30, 2021, EPA, in close collaboration with states, will reduce the number of nonattainment areas to 121 from a baseline of 147.

Challenge

- EPA's authority to approve a state's request to redesignate nonattainment areas hinges on the state meeting the minimum requirements of the Clean Air Act (CAA), which include:
 - A demonstration that the area has air quality that is attaining the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS);
 - Establishing that pollution reductions are due to implementing permanent and enforceable measures;
 - A 10-year maintenance plan that includes contingency measures to be triggered in the event of a re-violation of the NAAQS; and,
 - Satisfying any other applicable and outstanding attainment planning and emissions control requirements.
- Under the CAA, states are responsible for initiating the redesignation process, a process that demands time and resources from states which may be limited for such purposes.
- The CAA does not require states to request redesignation, and in some cases states may determine that undertaking a redesignation is a lower priority.

Opportunity

- A number of nonattainment areas have attained a NAAQS or are close to attaining a NAAQS, which is a key step toward redesignation.
- Maintain regular communication between EPA regional offices and air agencies to discuss prioritizing redesignation requests and identify solutions to challenges/disincentives that may create barriers for states to request redesignation.

Leadership & Implementation Team

Goal Leader:

Elizabeth Shaw

Deputy Assistant Administrator,
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Deputy Goal Leader:

Peter Tsirigotis

Director, Office of Air Quality
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Goal Structure and Strategies

Strategy 1 – EPA will work with state, local and tribal air agencies to facilitate submittal of timely and approvable attainment plans (as a means of bringing areas into attainment) and redesignation requests, as appropriate.

- Develop and provide data, analysis, and technical tools and assistance to industries, states, communities, and tribes to meet CAA obligations and other statutory requirements.
- Continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the State Implementation Plan/Tribal Implementation Plan (SIP/TIP) process, including the Agency’s own review process, with a goal of maximizing timely processing of state/tribal-requested implementation plan actions.
- Explore opportunities for reducing air agency burden by considering options for streamlining the redesignation process.
- Continue tracking air quality improvements through the collection of monitoring data.

Strategy 2 – Through collaboration with state, local and tribal air agencies, EPA will take actions to improve air quality in nonattainment areas so these areas can expeditiously attain the NAAQS. EPA will:

- Operate effective nationwide and multi-state emissions control programs, including:
 - The Acid Rain Program and the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule, which address global, national, and regional air pollutants from the power sector and other large stationary sources;
 - National mobile source emissions standards, which address emissions from highway and off-road vehicles, small engines, locomotives, and marine vessels; and
 - New source performance standards and preconstruction permit review program, which ensure the best demonstrated emission control technologies are installed as industrial infrastructure is modernized.
- Fulfill the NAAQS implementation oversight role using tools available under the CAA to hold states accountable for fulfilling attainment planning responsibilities. Examples include:
 - Taking action on state implementation plans (SIPs); and
 - Determining whether an area has attained a NAAQS by the required attainment date.

Summary of Progress – FY 2020 Q1

EPA has reduced the number of nonattainment areas to 142, meeting the FY 2020 Q1 target of 142.

Indicator	Jumping Off Point		FY 2020 Q1	FY 2020 Q2	FY 2020 Q3	FY 2020 Q4	FY 2021 Q1	FY 2021 Q2	FY 2021 Q3	FY 2021 Q4	Pref Dir	Trend
Number of Nonattainment Areas	147	Target	142	141	133	132	129	129	129	121	↓	
		Actual	142									

Accomplishments:

- EPA was able to reduce the number of nonattainment areas to 142 as of FY 2020 Q1, meeting the target. Specific actions that occurred in FY 2020 Q1 (including the met target above) that advanced EPA toward achieving the APG include:
 - EPA acted on redesignation requests submitted by the states; and
 - EPA continues to encourage states with nonattainment areas that have attaining air quality to develop approvable maintenance plans and submit redesignation requests.

Challenges:

- None identified during the Q1 performance review.

Summary of Progress – FY 2020 Q2

EPA has reduced the number of nonattainment areas to 139, exceeding the FY 2020 Q2 target of 141.

Indicator	Jumping Off Point		FY 2020 Q1	FY 2020 Q2	FY 2020 Q3	FY 2020 Q4	FY 2021 Q1	FY 2021 Q2	FY 2021 Q3	FY 2021 Q4	Pref Dir	Trend
Number of Nonattainment Areas	147	Target	142	141	133	132	129	129	129	121	↓	
		Actual	142	139								

Accomplishments:

- EPA reduced the number of nonattainment areas to 139 as of FY 2020 Q2, exceeding the target. Specific actions that occurred in FY 2020, Q2 (including the met target above), that advanced EPA toward achieving the APG include:
 - EPA acted on redesignation requests submitted by the states;
 - EPA’s Region 8 finalized redesignations to attainment for three Utah areas for the 1987 particulate matter (PM10) standards (Salt Lake County, Utah County and Ogden City); and
 - EPA continues to encourage states with nonattainment areas that have attaining air quality to develop approvable maintenance plans and submit redesignation requests.

Challenges:

- OAR/Regional Offices are working with air agencies to address any challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, including stay-at-home orders and other relevant information that could potentially affect this APG.

Key Milestones

Strategy 1 – EPA will work with state, local and tribal air agencies to facilitate submittal of timely and approvable attainment plans (as a means of bringing areas into attainment) and redesignation requests, as appropriate

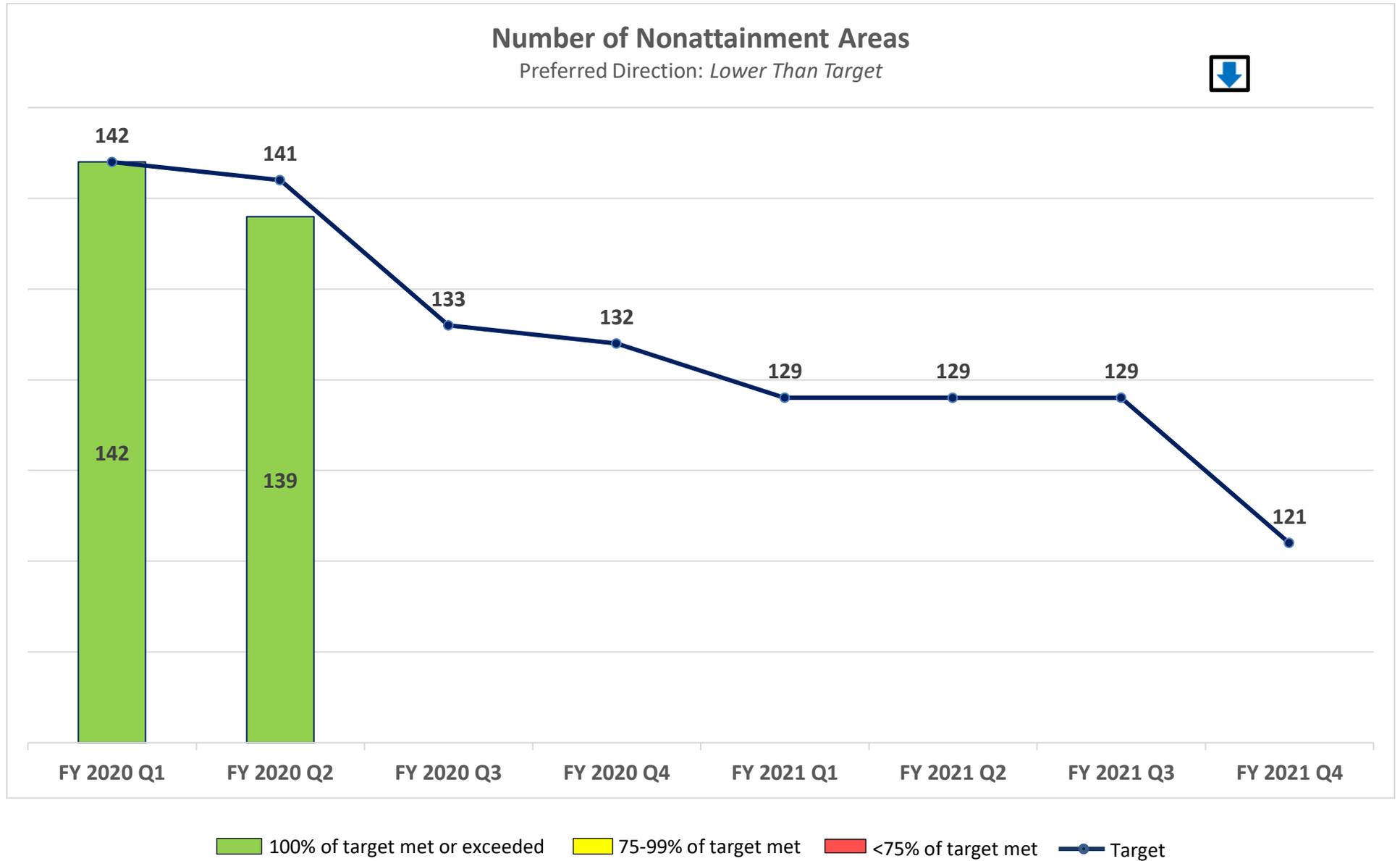
Key Milestones	Due Date	Status	Change from Last Quarter	Comments
Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the SIP/TIP process, including the Agency’s own review process with an emphasis on early engagement, and a goal of maximizing timely processing of state/tribal-requested implementation plan actions once submitted.	Quarterly	On Track	N/A	EPA continues to implement visual management systems and standard work products originally launched in FY 2018 as part of the EPA Lean Management System (ELMS). Where applicable, selected EPA air program executives began incorporating SIP-related ELMS project goals into their FY 2020 performance plans. The SIP Lean Toolkit was issued in December 2019 and is part of EPA’s SIP-related process improvements and focuses on early engagement between EPA and air agencies during SIP development.
Continue to track air quality improvements through collection, analysis, and reporting of monitoring data.	Annual	On Track	N/A	EPA released its annual report on air quality, <i>Our Nation’s Air: Status and Trends Through 2018</i> , which documents the improvements in air quality across the United States over more than 45 years. This reporting highlights that, between 1970 and 2018, the combined emissions of six key pollutants dropped by 74%, while the U.S. economy grew more than three times (https://www.epa.gov/air-trends). The next annual report, documenting trends through 2019, is due to be released by June 2020. Draft design values are out for review over a month earlier than the traditional timeline and are currently on track to be released in June 2020.

Key Milestones (continued)

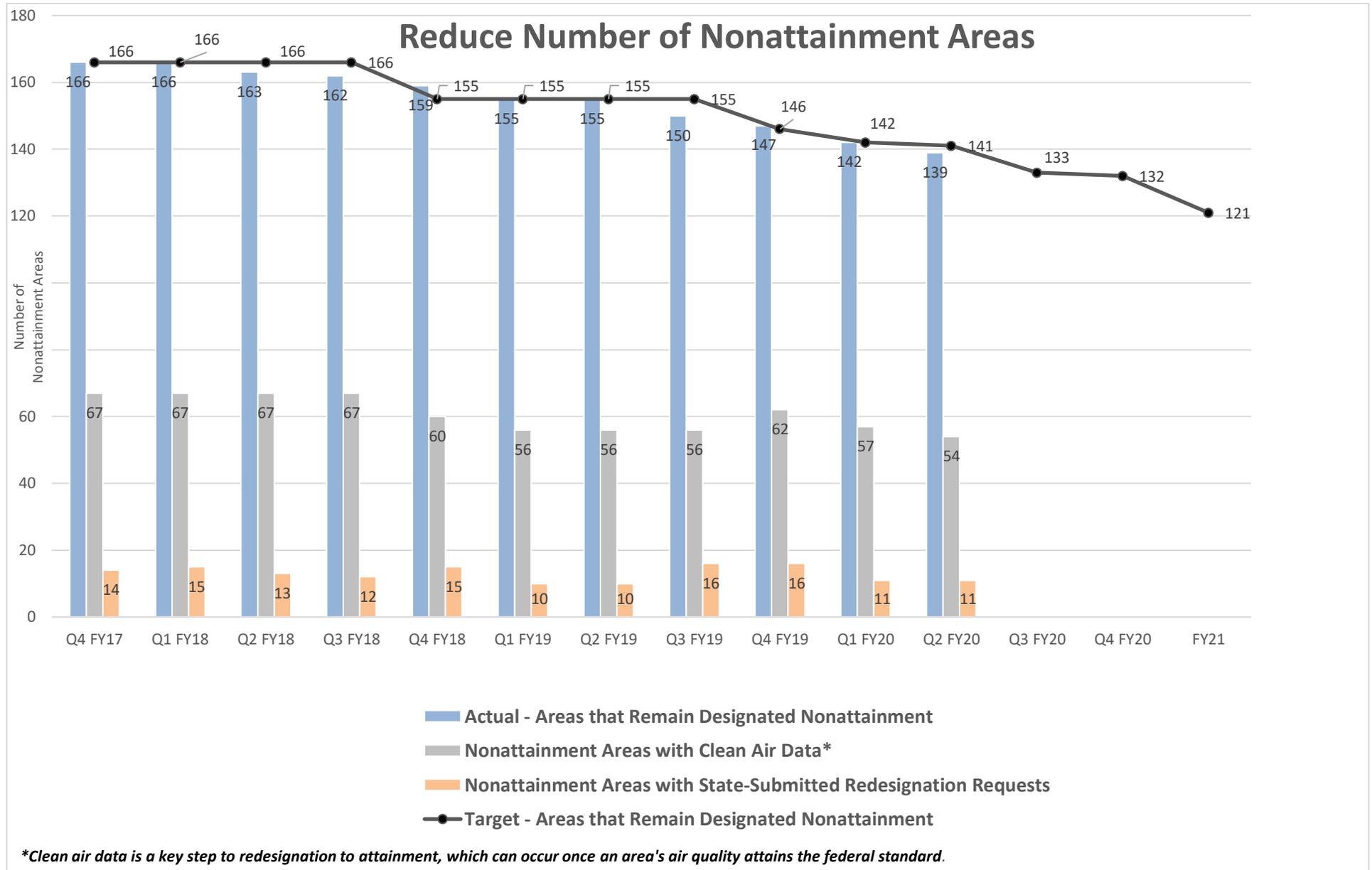
Strategy 2 – Through collaboration with state, local and tribal air agencies, EPA will take actions to improve air quality in nonattainment areas so these areas can expeditiously attain the NAAQS

Key Milestones	Due Date	Status	Change from Last Quarter	Comments
Provide tools and guidance documents (as necessary).	Quarterly	On Track	N/A	EPA continued to work on guidance and technical support documents to assist states as they develop plans to attain/maintain air quality. Two examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issued Draft Guidance on the Preparation of Clean Air Act Section 179B Demonstrations for Nonattainment Areas Affected by International Transport of Emissions (January 2020) https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-01/documents/draft_179b_guidance-final_draft_for_posting.pdf Released 2017 National Emissions Inventory (NEI) Data (April 2020). https://www.epa.gov/air-emissions-inventories/2017-national-emissions-inventory-nei-data
Operate nationwide and multi-state programs, the acid rain program and the cross-state air pollution rule; national mobile source emissions standards; new source performance standards; and preconstruction permit review program.	Quarterly	On Track	N/A	EPA continues nationwide and multi-state program operations for the Acid Rain Program and the cross-state air pollution rule; national mobile source emissions standards; new source performance standards; and preconstruction permit review program.
Take appropriate oversight actions required by the Clean Air Act (as necessary).	Quarterly	On Track	N/A	EPA continues to work with states in the development of NAAQS attainment plans and on the review and approval of such plans.

Key Indicators

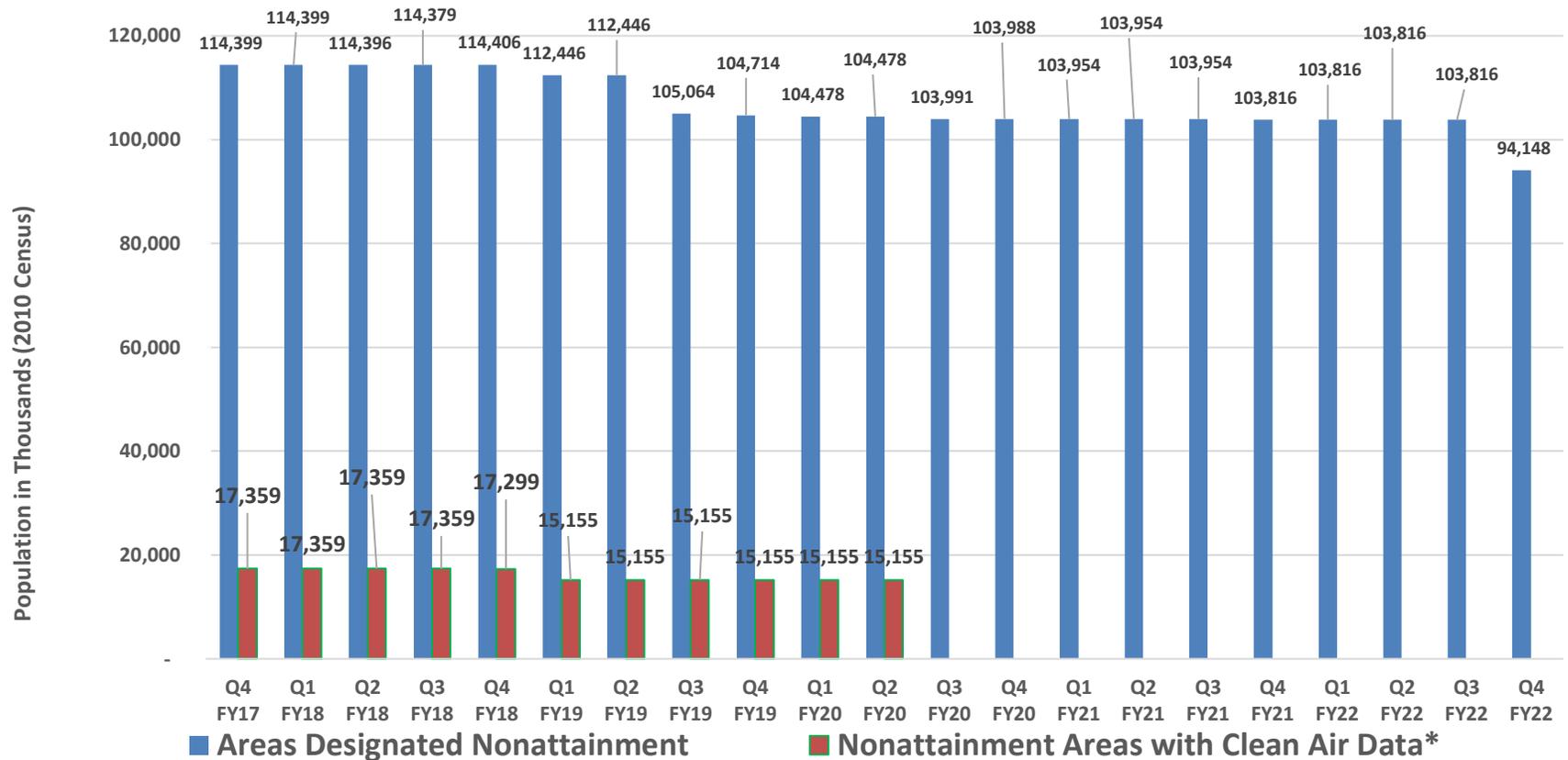


Key Indicators (continued)



Key Indicators (continued)

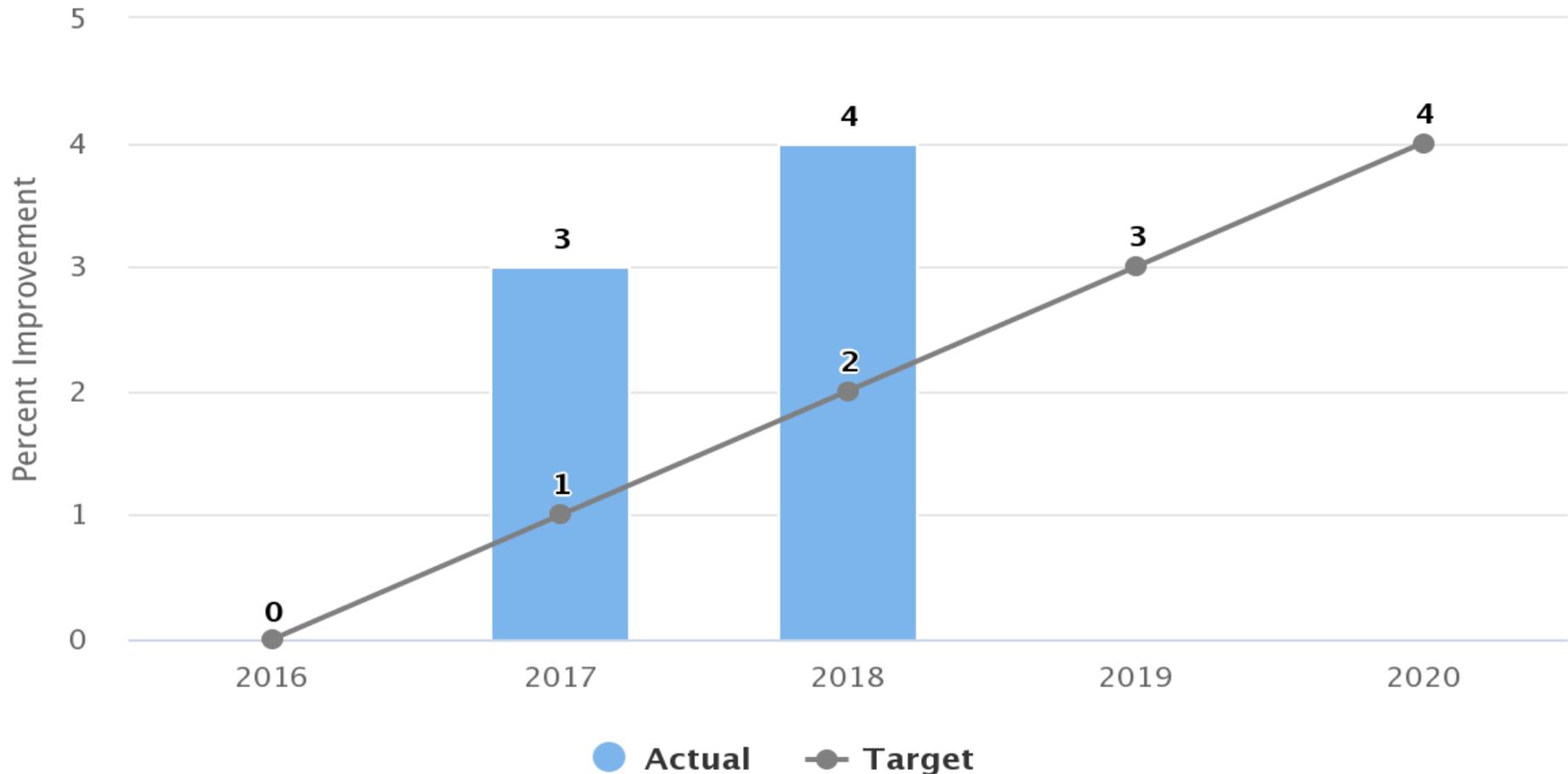
Population Living in Areas Designated Nonattainment – Projections start at Q3 FY20



*Clean air data is a key step to redesignation to attainment, which can occur once an area's air quality attains the federal standard.

Key Indicators (continued)

Percent of Measured Air Quality Improvement in Counties Not Meeting the NAAQS from a 2016 Baseline

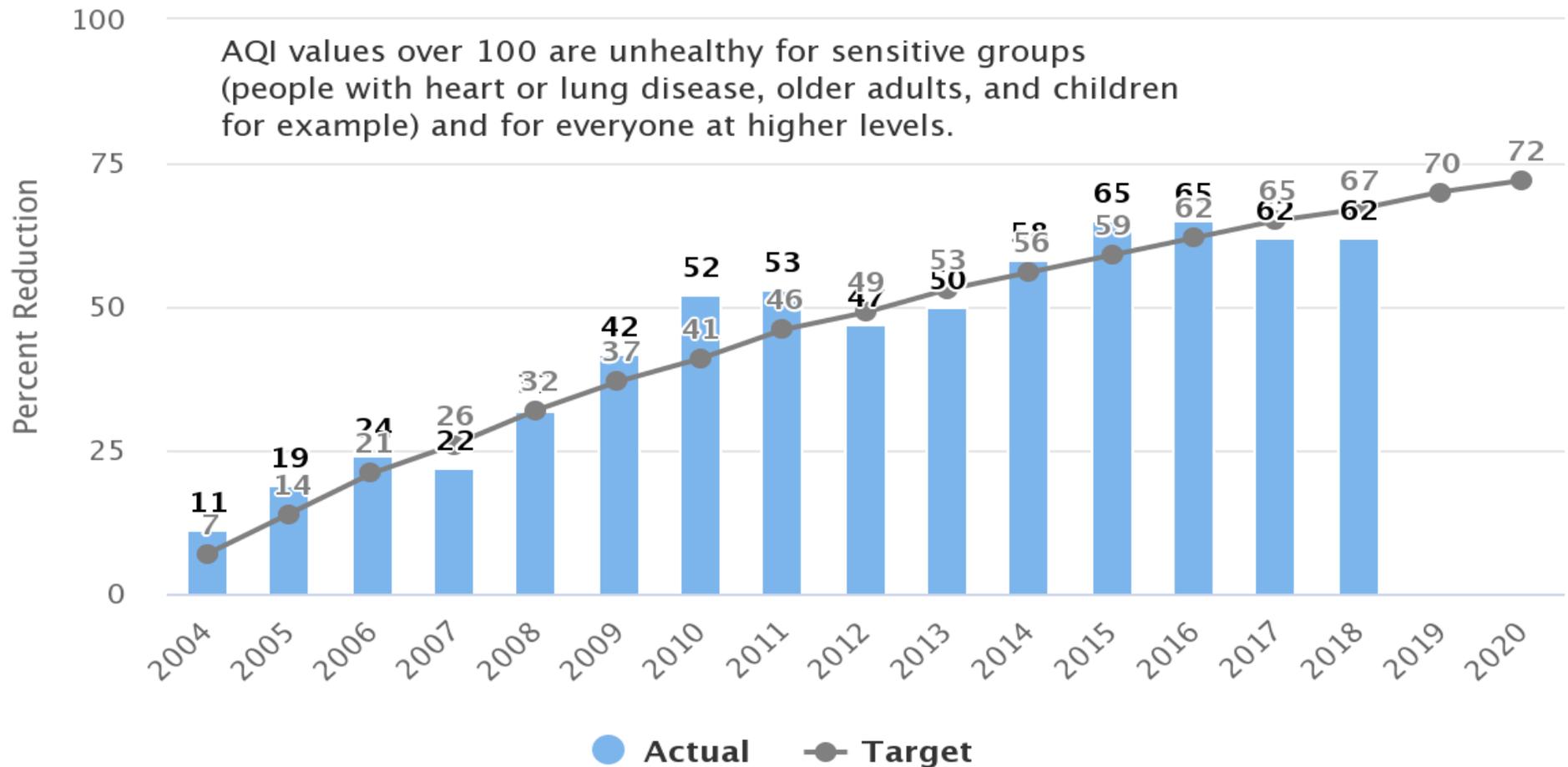


Note: "Improvement" refers to progress in reducing pollutant concentrations in counties not meeting one or more NAAQS relative to the 2016 calculated baseline.

*Data for the "actual" update are available August of the following year.

Key Indicators (continued)

Cumulative percent reduction in the number of days with Air Quality Index (AQI) values over 100



*Data for the “actual” update are available August of the following year. Cumulative percent reduction is calculated from the baseline year 2003. This includes both nonattainment and attainment areas and may include days with AQI values over 100 due to wildfires or other exceptional events.

Data Accuracy and Reliability

Measurement and Baseline

- The nonattainment area metric tracks the status of 166 areas designated nonattainment for non-revoked National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) at the end of FY 2017 (9/30/2017).
- New areas designated nonattainment after 10/1/2017 will not be added to the baseline. Information about any redesignations of additional nonattainment areas identified after the baseline date will be reported in the APG quarterly updates, as appropriate.
- Limiting the measure to redesignations of areas that were in nonattainment as of the start of the *FY 2018-2022 EPA Strategic Plan* reflects the progress made during the performance period (FY 2018–2022).
- The other air quality indicators rely on data from EPA's Air Quality System and other information.

Data Sources

- The EPA Green Book, a public accessible website - <https://www.epa.gov/green-book>
- Federal Register notices documenting EPA final action on state redesignation requests.

Methodology

- EPA's monthly Green Book publication includes a summary of nonattainment areas, taking into account all final redesignation actions published in the Federal Register.
- Prior to publishing a new monthly Green Book report, an EPA contractor runs a quality assurance check.
- A Data Quality Record has been developed for the long-term performance goal associated with this APG: <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-05/documents/dqr-1-1-nonattainment-areas.pdf>.

Additional Information – Contributing Programs

Organizations

- Office of Air and Radiation (OAR)
 - Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards (OAQPS)
 - Office of Transportation and Air Quality (OTAQ)
 - Office of Atmospheric Programs (OAP)
- Regional offices
- State, local, and tribal air agencies (S/L/T)

Program Activities

- S/L/T develop State/Tribal Implementation Plans
- EPA develops regulations and guidance, as necessary, to facilitate S/L/T implementation
- EPA provides technical assistance and tools, as necessary, to facilitate S/L/T implementation

Regulations

- EPA regulations addressing NAAQS and NAAQS implementation include 40 CFR Parts 49 thru 99
- Air quality management and emissions limiting regulations established by other federal and state agencies, as applicable

Policies

- EPA and S/L/T policies related to NAAQS implementation (e.g., Procedures for Processing Requests to Redesignate Areas to Attainment, etc.)

Other Federal Activities

- Transportation conformity – Department of Transportation (Federal Highway Administration)
- Fire management – Department of Agriculture (U.S. Forest Service), Department of Interior (Park Service)
- International pollution management treaties – Department of State

Stakeholder / Congressional Consultations

- The nonattainment redesignation process is a federal and state partnership; EPA works with states and tribes to establish priorities including redesignations