

Homer City Generation LP
Homer City, Pennsylvania
Evaluation of Compliance with the 1-hour NAAQS for SO₂
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Conducted by:

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1. Introduction

Wingra Engineering, S.C. was hired by Sierra Club to conduct an air modeling impact analysis to help the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), state and local air agencies identify facilities that are likely causing exceedances of the 1-hour sulfur dioxide (SO₂) national ambient air quality standard (NAAQS). This document describes the results and procedures for an evaluation conducted for Homer City Generation LP located in Homer City, Pennsylvania.

The dispersion modeling analysis predicted ambient air concentrations for comparison with the 1-hour SO₂ NAAQS. The modeling was performed using the most recent version of AERMOD, AERMET, and AERMINUTE, with data provided to Sierra Club by regulatory air agencies or obtained through other publicly-available sources as documented below. The analysis was conducted in adherence to all available USEPA guidance for evaluating source impacts on attainment of the 1-hour SO₂ NAAQS via aerial dispersion modeling, including the AERMOD Implementation Guide; USEPA's Applicability of Appendix W Modeling Guidance for the 1-hour SO₂ National Ambient Air Quality Standard, August 23, 2010; modeling guidance promulgated by USEPA in Appendix W to 40 CFR Part 51; USEPA's March 2011 Modeling Guidance for SO₂ NAAQS Designations;¹ and, USEPA's December 2013 SO₂ NAAQS Designations Technical Assistance Document.²

2. Compliance with the 1-hour SO₂ NAAQS

2.1 1-hour SO₂ NAAQS

The 1-hour SO₂ NAAQS takes the form of a three-year average of the 99th percentile of the annual distribution of daily maximum 1-hour concentrations, which cannot exceed 75 parts per billion (ppb).³ Compliance with this standard was verified using USEPA's AERMOD air dispersion model, which produces air concentrations in units of µg/m³. The 1-hour SO₂ NAAQS of 75 ppb equals 196.2 µg/m³, and this is the value used for determining whether modeled impacts exceed the NAAQS.⁴ The 99th percentile of the annual distribution of daily maximum 1-hour concentrations corresponds to the fourth-highest value at each receptor for a given year.

¹ http://www.epa.gov/scram001/so2_modeling_guidance.htm

² <http://www.epa.gov/oaqps001/sulfurdioxide/pdfs/SO2ModelingTAD.pdf>

³ USEPA, Applicability of Appendix W Modeling Guidance for the 1-hour SO₂ National Ambient Air Quality Standard, August 23, 2010.

⁴ The ppb to µg/m³ conversion is found in the source code to AERMOD v. 15181, subroutine Modules. The conversion calculation is $75/0.3823 = 196.2$ µg/m³.

2.2 Modeling Results

Modeling results for Homer City Generation LP are summarized in Table 1. It was determined that based on measured actual emissions, Homer City Generation LP is estimated to create downwind SO₂ concentrations which exceed the 1-hour NAAQS. “Actual” are the measured emissions for each hour between January 1, 2012 and December 31, 2015 as taken from USEPA *Air Markets Program Data*.⁵ For this analysis, two 3-year periods were evaluated: 2012 to 2014 and 2013 to 2015.

Air quality impacts in Pennsylvania are based on a background concentration of 18.3 µg/m³. This is the 2012-14 design value for Montgomery County, Pennsylvania - the lowest measured background concentration in the state. This is the most recently available design value. See Section 5 for further discussion of the background concentrations used for this analysis.

Table 1 - SO₂ Modeling Results for Homer City Generation LP Modeling Analysis

Period Evaluated	Emission Rates	99 th Percentile 1-hour Daily Maximum (µg/m ³)				Complies with NAAQS?
		Impact	Background	Total	NAAQS	
2012-14	Actual	523.8	18.3	542.1	196.2	No
2013-15	Actual	545.9	18.3	564.2	196.2	No

Figure 1 shows the extent of NAAQS violations for the 2012-14 period. Figure 2 shows the extent of NAAQS violations for the 2013-15 period.

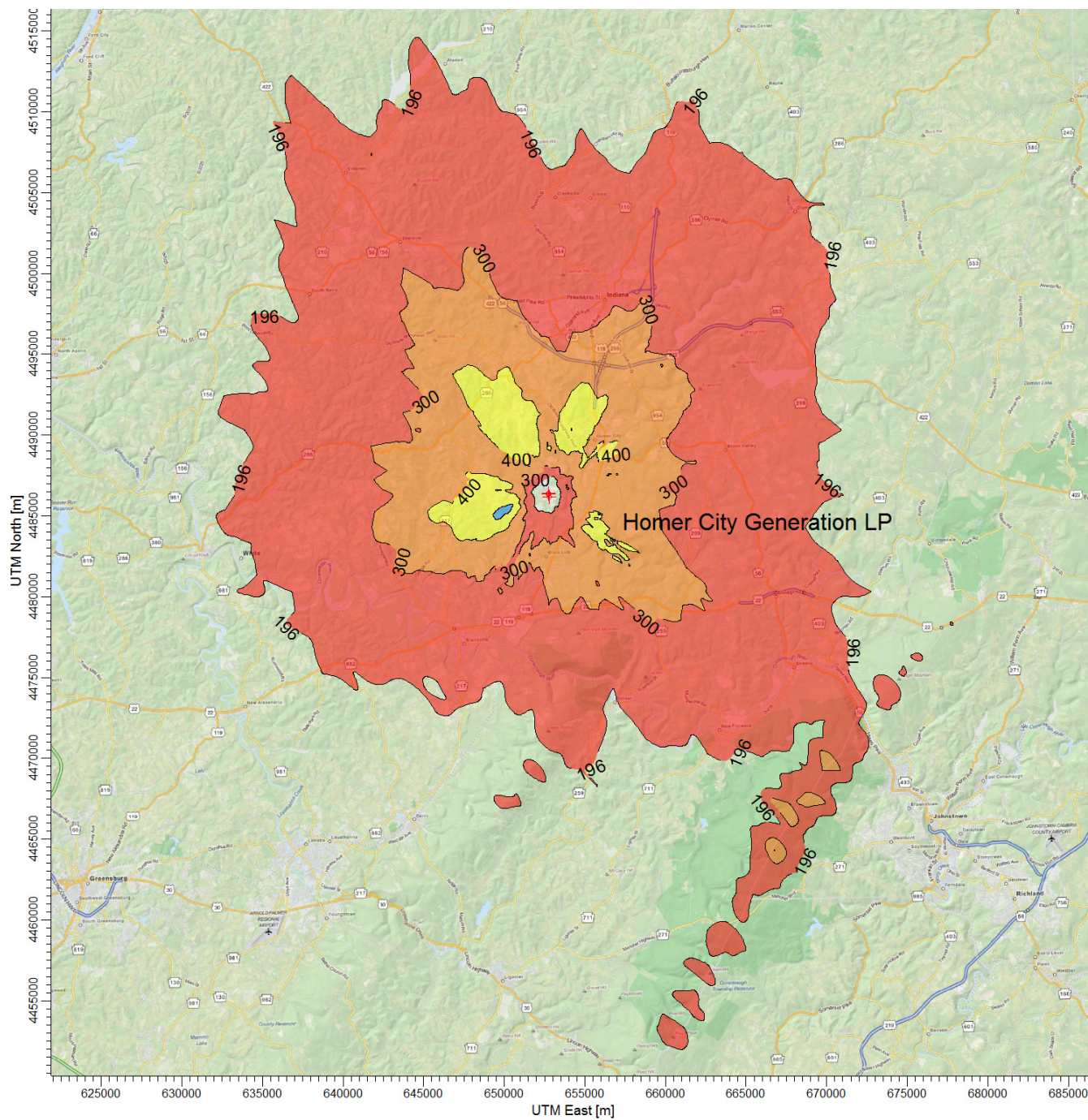
2.3 Conservative Modeling Assumptions

A dispersion modeling analysis requires the selection of numerous parameters which affect the predicted concentrations. For the enclosed analysis, several parameters were selected which under-predict facility impacts.

Assumptions used in this modeling analysis which likely under-estimate concentrations include the following:

- No consideration of facility operation at less than 100% load. Stack parameters such as exit flow rate and temperature are typically lower at less than full load, reducing pollutant dispersion and increasing predicted air quality impacts.
- No consideration of building or structure downwash. These downwash effects typically increase predicted concentrations near the facility.
- No consideration of off-site sources. These other sources of SO₂ will increase the predicted impacts.

⁵ <http://ampd.epa.gov/ampd/>



1-hour average SO₂ concentrations (ug per cubic meter) - All colored areas exceed the NAAQS.

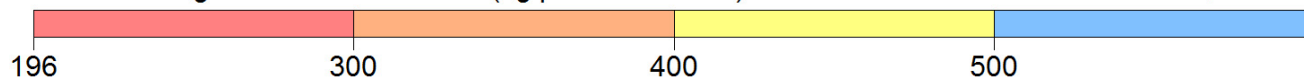
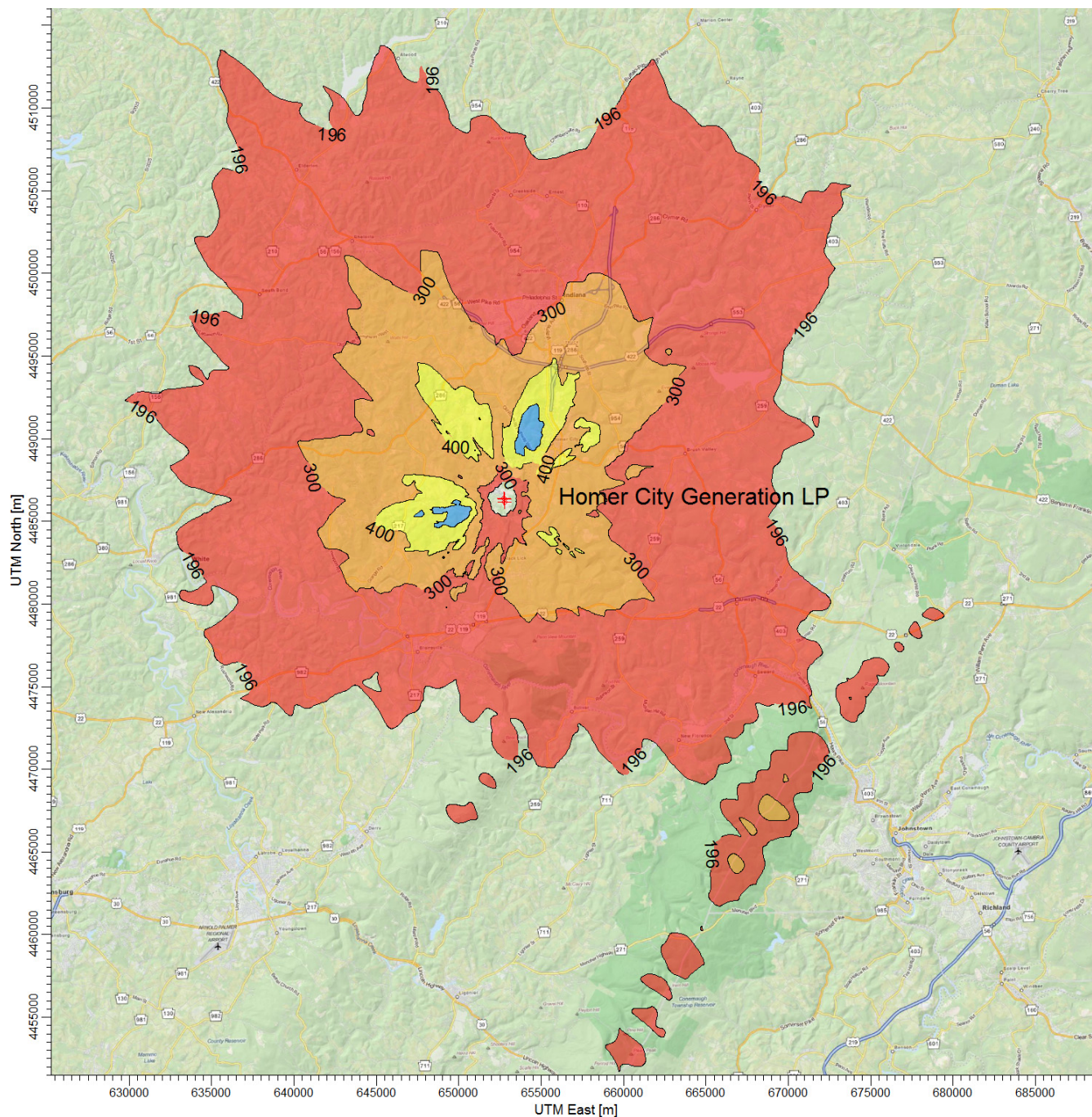


Figure 1 - Impacts for the 2012-14 Period Based on Actual Hourly Emissions



1-hour average SO₂ concentrations (ug per cubic meter) - All colored areas exceed the NAAQS.



Figure 2 - Impacts for the 2013-15 Period Based on Actual Hourly Emissions

3. Modeling Methodology

3.1 Air Dispersion Model

The modeling analysis used USEPA's AERMOD program, v. 15181. AERMOD, as available from the Support Center for Regulatory Atmospheric Modeling (SCRAM) website, was used in conjunction with a third-party modeling software program, *AERMOD View*, sold by Lakes Environmental Software.

3.2 Control Options

The AERMOD model was run with the following control options:

- 1-hour average air concentrations
- Regulatory defaults
- Flagpole receptors

To reflect a representative inhalation level, a flagpole height of 1.5 meters was used for all modeled receptors. This parameter was added to the receptor file when running AERMAP, as described in Section 4.4.

An evaluation was conducted to determine if the modeled facility was located in a rural or urban setting using USEPA's methodology outlined in Section 7.2.3 of the Guideline on Air Quality Models.⁶ For urban sources, the URBANOPT option is used in conjunction with the urban population from an appropriate nearby city and a default surface roughness of 1.0 meter. Methods described in Section 4.1 were used to determine whether rural or urban dispersion coefficients were appropriate for the modeling analysis.

3.3 Output Options

The AERMOD analysis was based on three years of recent meteorological data. The modeling analyses used two runs with three years of sequential meteorological data from the 2012-2014 and 2013-15 periods. Consistent with USEPA's Modeling Guidance for SO₂ NAAQS Designations, AERMOD provided a table of fourth-high 1-hour SO₂ impacts concentrations consistent with the form of the 1-hour SO₂ NAAQS.⁷

Please refer to Table 1 for the modeling results.

⁶ USEPA, Revision to the Guideline on Air Quality Models: Adoption of a Preferred General Purpose (Flat and Complex Terrain) Dispersion Model and Other Revisions, Appendix W to 40 CFR Part 51, November 9, 2005.

⁷ USEPA, Area Designations for the 2010 Revised Primary Sulfur Dioxide National Ambient Air Quality Standards, Attachment 3, March 24, 2011, pp. 24-26.

4. Model Inputs

4.1 Geographical Inputs

The “ground floor” of all air dispersion modeling analyses is establishing a coordinate system for identifying the geographical location of emission sources and receptors. These geographical locations are used to determine local characteristics (such as land use and elevation), and also to ascertain source to receptor distances and relationships.

The Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) NAD83 coordinate system was used for identifying the easting (x) and northing (y) coordinates of the modeled sources and receptors. Stack locations were obtained from facility permits and prior modeling files provided by the state regulatory agency. The stack locations were then verified using aerial photographs.

The facility was evaluated to determine if it should be modeled using the rural or urban dispersion coefficient option in AERMOD. A Geographic Information System (GIS) was used to determine whether rural or urban dispersion coefficients apply to a site. Land use within a three-kilometer radius circle surrounding the facility was considered. USEPA guidance states that urban dispersion coefficients are to be used if more than 50% of the area within 3 kilometers has urban land uses. Otherwise, rural dispersion coefficients are appropriate.⁸

USEPA’s AERSURFACE v. 13016 was used to develop the meteorological data for the modeling analysis. This model was also used to evaluate surrounding land use within 3 kilometers. Based on the output from the AERSURFACE, approximately 2.4% of surrounding land use around the modeled facility was of urban land use types including Type 21 – Low Intensity Residential, Type 22 – High Intensity Residential and Type 23 – Commercial / Industrial / Transportation.

This is less than the 50% value considered appropriate for the use of urban dispersion coefficients. Based on the AERSURFACE analysis, it was concluded that the rural option would be used for the modeling summarized in this report. Please refer to Section 4.5.3 for a discussion of the AERSURFACE analysis.

⁸ USEPA, Revision to the Guideline on Air Quality Models: Adoption of a Preferred General Purpose (Flat and Complex Terrain) Dispersion Model and Other Revisions, Appendix W to 40 CFR Part 51, November 9, 2005, Section 7.2.3.

4.2 Emission Rates and Source Parameters

The modeling analysis considered SO₂ emissions from the Homer City Generation LP. Other off-site sources were not considered. Stack parameters and emissions used for the modeling analysis are summarized in Table 2. Actual hourly emissions are those measured each hour between January 1, 2012 and December 31, 2015 as taken from USEPA *Air Markets Program Data*.⁹

Table 4 – Facility Stack Parameters and Emissions¹⁰

Stack	S01	S02	S03
Description	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3
X Coord. [m]	652746	652763	652788
Y Coord. [m]	4486389	4486341	4486175
Base Elevation [m]	364.97	365.32	363.66
Release Height [m]	240.79	240.79	262.43
Gas Exit Temperature [°K]	412.039	412.039	322.039
Gas Exit Velocity [m/s]	23.02	23.02	16.858
Inside Diameter [m]	7.315	7.315	8.23
Actual Emission Rate [g/s]	-	-	-

The above stack parameters and emissions were obtained from regulatory agency documents and databases identified in Section 2.2. The analysis was conducted based on 100% operating load using maximum exhaust flow rates and temperatures. Operation at less than full capacity loads was not considered. This assumption tends to under-predict impacts since stack parameters such as exit flow rate and temperature are typically lower at less than full load, reducing pollutant dispersion and increasing predicted air quality impacts. Stack location, height and diameter were verified using aerial photographs, and flue gas flow rate and temperature were verified using combustion calculations.

4.3 Building Dimensions

No building dimensions or prior downwash evaluations were available. Therefore this modeling analysis did not address the effects of downwash and this may under-predict impacts.

⁹ <http://ampd.epa.gov/ampd/>

¹⁰ Stack parameters taken from U.S. Energy Information Administration, Form EIA-860 detailed data, 2014 Form EIA-860 Data - Schedule 6, 'Stack & Flue Data', <https://www.eia.gov/electricity/data/eia860/>.

4.4 Receptors

For Homer City Generation LP, three receptor grids were employed:

1. A 100-meter Cartesian receptor grid centered on Homer City Generation LP and extending out 5 kilometers.
2. A 500-meter Cartesian receptor grid centered on Homer City Generation LP and extending out 10 kilometers.
3. A 1,000-meter Cartesian receptor grid centered on Homer City Generation LP and extending out 50 kilometers. 50 kilometers is the maximum distance accepted by USEPA for the use of the AERMOD dispersion model.¹¹

A flagpole height of 1.5 meters was used for all these receptors.

Elevations from stacks and receptors were obtained from National Elevation Dataset (NED) GeoTiff data. GeoTiff is a binary file that includes data descriptors and geo-referencing information necessary for extracting terrain elevations. These elevations were extracted from 1 arc-second (30 meter) resolution NED files. The USEPA software program AERMAP v. 11103 is used for these tasks.

4.5 Meteorological Data

To improve the accuracy of the modeling analysis, recent meteorological data for the 2012-2015 period were prepared using the USEPA's program AERMET which creates the model-ready surface and profile data files required by AERMOD. Required data inputs to AERMET included surface meteorological measurements, twice-daily soundings of upper air measurements, and the micrometeorological parameters surface roughness, albedo, and Bowen ratio. One-minute ASOS data were available so USEPA methods were used to reduce calm and missing hours.¹² The USEPA software program AERMINUTE v. 15272 is used for these tasks.

This section discusses how the meteorological data was prepared for use in the 1-hour SO₂ NAAQS modeling analyses. The USEPA software program AERMET v. 15181 is used for these tasks.

4.5.1 Surface Meteorology

Surface meteorology was obtained for Jamestown-Cambria County Airport (WBAN 04726) located

¹¹ USEPA, Revision to the Guideline on Air Quality Models: Adoption of a Preferred General Purpose (Flat and Complex Terrain) Dispersion Model and Other Revisions, Appendix W to 40 CFR Part 51, Section A.1.(1), November 9, 2005.

¹² USEPA, Area Designations for the 2010 Revised Primary Sulfur Dioxide National Ambient Air Quality Standards, Attachment 3, March 24, 2011, p. 19.

near the Homer City Generation LP. Integrated Surface Hourly (ISH) data for the 2012-2015 period were obtained from the National Climatic Data Center (NCDC). The ISH surface data was processed through AERMET Stage 1, which performs data extraction and quality control checks.

4.5.2 Upper Air Data

Upper-air data are collected by a “weather balloon” that is released twice per day at selected locations. As the balloon is released, it rises through the atmosphere, and radios the data back to the surface. The measuring and transmitting device is known as either a radiosonde, or rawinsonde. Data collected and radioed back include: air pressure, height, temperature, dew point, wind speed, and wind direction. The upper air data were processed through AERMET Stage 1, which performs data extraction and quality control checks.

For Homer City Generation LP, the concurrent 2012-2015 upper air data from twice-daily radiosonde measurements obtained at the most representative location were used. This location was the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania measurement station. These data are in Forecast Systems Laboratory (FSL) format and were downloaded in ASCII text format from NOAA’s FSL website.¹³ All reporting levels were downloaded and processed with AERMET.

4.5.3 AERSURFACE

AERSURFACE is a program that extracts surface roughness, albedo, and daytime Bowen ratio for an area surrounding a given location. AERSURFACE uses land use and land cover (LULC) data in the U.S. Geological Survey’s 1992 National Land Cover Dataset to extract the necessary micrometeorological data. LULC data was used for processing meteorological data sets used as input to AERMOD.

AERSURFACE v. 13016 was used to develop surface roughness, albedo, and daytime Bowen ratio values in a region surrounding the meteorological data collection site. AERSURFACE was used to develop surface roughness in a one kilometer radius surrounding the data collection site. Bowen ratio and albedo was developed for a 10 kilometer by 10 kilometer area centered on the meteorological data collection site. These micrometeorological data were processed for seasonal periods using 30-degree sectors. Seasonal moisture conditions were considered average with winter months having continuous snow cover.

4.5.4 Data Review

Missing meteorological data were not filled as the data file met USEPA’s 90% data completeness

¹³ Available at: <http://esrl.noaa.gov/raobs/>

requirement.¹⁴ The AERMOD output file shows there were less than 1% missing data.

To confirm the representativeness of the airport meteorological data, the surface characteristics of the airport data collection site and the modeled source location were compared. Since the Jamestown-Cambria County Airport (WBAN 04726) is located close to Homer City Generation LP, this meteorological data set was considered appropriate for this modeling analysis.¹⁵ Additionally, this weather station provided high quality surface measurements for the most recent 4-year time period, and had similar land use, surface characteristics, terrain features and climate.

5. Background SO₂ Concentrations

Background concentrations were determined consistent with USEPA's Modeling Guidance for SO₂ NAAQS Designations.^{16, 17} To preserve the form of the 1-hour SO₂ standard, based on the 99th percentile of the annual distribution of daily maximum 1-hour concentrations averaged across the number of years modeled, the background fourth-highest daily maximum 1-hour SO₂ concentration was added to the modeled fourth-highest daily maximum 1-hour SO₂ concentration.¹⁸ Background concentrations were based on the 2012-14 design value measured by the ambient monitors located in Pennsylvania.¹⁹

6. Reporting

All files from the programs used for this modeling analysis are available to regulatory agencies. These include analyses prepared with AERSURFACE, AERMET, AERMAP, and AERMOD.

¹⁴ USEPA, Meteorological Monitoring Guidance for Regulatory Modeling Applications, EPA-454/R-99-05, February 2000, Section 5.3.2, pp. 5-4 to 5-5.

¹⁵ USEPA, AERMOD Implementation Guide, March 19, 2009, pp. 3-4.

¹⁶ USEPA, Area Designations for the 2010 Revised Primary Sulfur Dioxide National Ambient Air Quality Standards, Attachment 3, March 24, 2011, pp. 20-23.

¹⁷ USEPA, SO₂ NAAQS Designations Modeling Technical Assistance Document, Dec. 2013, section 8.1, pp 27-28.

¹⁸ USEPA, Applicability of Appendix W Modeling Guidance for the 1-hour SO₂ National Ambient Air Quality Standard, August 23, 2010, p. 3.

¹⁹ <http://www.epa.gov/airtrends/values.html>