



News Release

News for Release: Thursday, June 16, 2005

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

National Parks and Wilderness Areas Protected by Clean Air Visibility Rule

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(Washington, D.C. - June 16, 2005) The views at America's national parks and wilderness areas gained further protection with the Clean Air Visibility Rule signed June 15 by EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson. Under the rule, states are required to identify older industrial facilities and power plants that affect visibility in specially protected areas. To help achieve the Clean Air Act's long-term goal to restore visibility in those areas, states would then determine the types of emission controls that those facilities must use to control their emissions, resulting in improved visibility, air quality, and public health.

"America's national parks and wilderness areas are getting a new level of protection," said Jeff Holmstead, assistant administrator for the Office of Air and Radiation. "The Clean Air Visibility Rule -- combined with stringent standards for a dramatically cleaner new generation of vehicles and deep cuts in power plant emissions -- mean that our views will be clearer and the air healthier."

EPA's benefits analysis shows that this rule will provide approximately \$240 million annually in visibility improvements in southeastern and southwestern parks. The rule will also provide substantial health benefits in the range of \$8.4 - \$9.8 billion each year -- preventing an estimated 1,600 premature deaths, 2,200 non-fatal heart attacks, 960 hospital admissions, and more than 1 million lost school and work days. The total annual costs of this rule range from \$1.4 to \$1.5 billion.

The rule requires states to identify and determine appropriate emissions controls for facilities built between 1962 and 1977 that have the potential to emit more than 250 tons a year of visibility-impairing pollution. Those facilities fall into 26 categories, including utility and industrial boilers, and large industrial plants such as pulp mills, refineries and smelters.

The rule complements the significant emissions reductions that will be achieved by the Clean Air Interstate Rule and the suite of regulations reducing motor vehicle emissions. As these clean air rules take effect over the next decade, EPA projects that the pollution reductions will improve air quality across the country, help communities achieve new, more protective standards for ozone and fine particles (PM 2.5), and further protect America's national parks and wilderness areas.

The Clean Air Act established a long-term goal of achieving natural background visibility conditions at specially protected, or Class I, areas. Before 2008, states must identify the facilities required to install Best Available Retrofit Technology (BART) controls and submit plans to implement the regional haze rule for EPA review and approval. Upon approval of state plans, there is a five-year period for the implementation of pollution controls. Depending on the approach taken by the states, the reductions associated with the BART program would begin to take effect in 2014, with full implementation before 2018. Congress required that deadlines for BART state implementation plans match those for PM 2.5 implementation plans.

Regional haze is a national problem caused by multiple sources over a wide area. Visibility is affected by different sources at different times of the year and under different weather conditions. In addition to industrial facilities and power plants, other significant contributors to visibility impairment include car and truck emissions, area sources (broadly distributed and numerous small sources), wildfires, agricultural fires, and wind blown dust. The same pollution that causes haze also poses serious health risks for people with chronic respiratory diseases. These pollutants include fine particle pollution, and compounds which contribute to its formation, such as oxides of nitrogen, sulfur dioxides, and certain volatile organic compounds.

For more information on this final rule and EPA's visibility program, visit: <http://www.epa.gov/visibility>.