North Cascades

Washington projects that natural visibility will be achieved at this national park in...

2276

Haze is Damaging.

Haze pollution limits views of our most valued national parks and wilderness areas, affecting not just how far we can see, but also the color, sharpness, and quality of the view. It also makes the air unhealthy for people, wildlife and natural resources.

View With Pollution: 61 miles

View Without Pollution: 105 miles

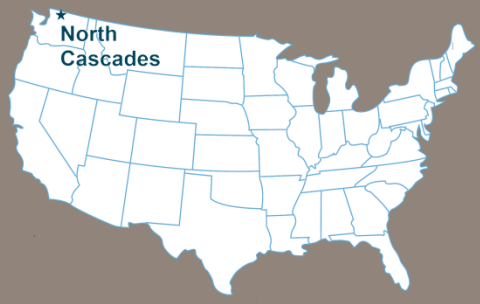
North Cascades Visibility

Washington estimates that it will take until 2276 to reach natural visibility at North Cascades at projected pollution cleanup rates.[1] When skies at the park are most polluted, visitors are unable to see 44 miles of landscape that would be visible under natural conditions. To restore the skies, the law requires industries to clean up if their pollution is harming the parks.

This Haze Isn't Natural.

Some haze is natural, but much of what's seen today is not. Organic carbon and other emissions from sources like natural fires, wind-blow dust, and vegetation can result in "natural" haze, and precipitation can also obscure the view naturally.

But much of today's haze is human-caused. Clean air laws only require reductions from controllable sources of pollution, like power plants and other industrial sources. Cost effective, efficient reductions in human-caused pollution are routinely accomplished with the use of modern technologies.



Want Cleaner Air?

A few immediate opportunities stand out for reducing human-made haze pollution at North Cascades. Polluting sources known to impact the park must reduce their emissions.

For instance, Tesoro, a refinery, and Intalco, an aluminum smelter, are two older industrial sources known to impact the park. EPA is evaluating these facilities for pollution controls. Feasible and effective controls exist for these sources. Now it is up to our regulators to require that they be installed.

Reducing emissions from these facilities and similar sources is imperative to restoring clean, clear skies to North Cascades, as well as to Olympic National Park, Mt. Rainier National Park, and other protected public lands.

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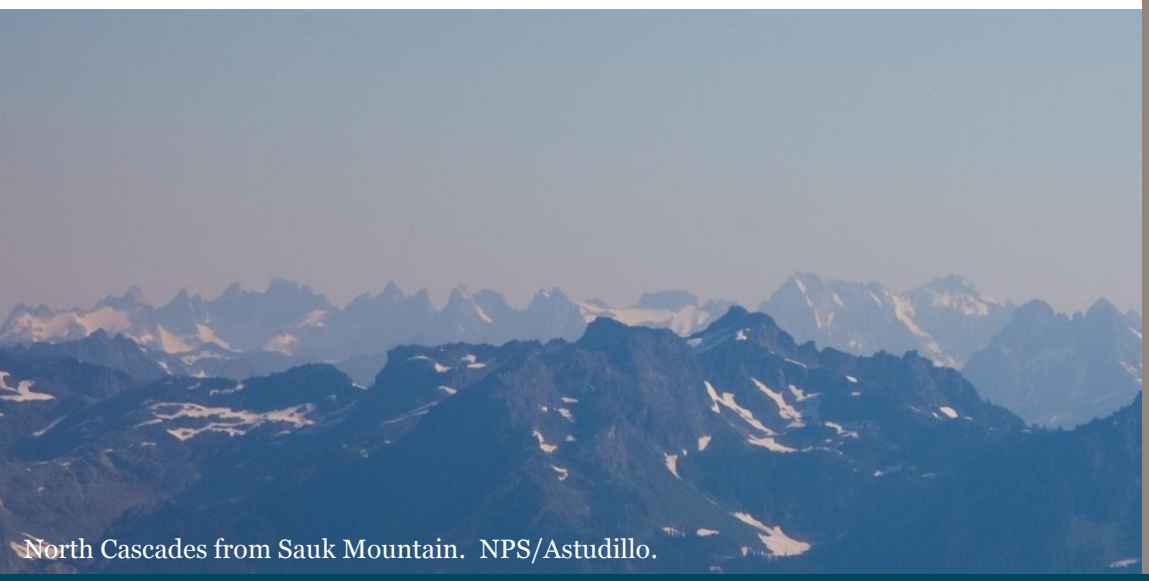
Controllable Sources of Haze at North Cascades

The primary human-made causes of haze are sulfates and nitrates, formed in the atmosphere from emissions of sulfur dioxide (SO_2) and nitrogen oxides (NO_x). These pollutants originate from a variety of places, with the highest state contribution from Washington.

SO_2 impacting North Cascades is primarily emitted from large sources like refineries, smelters, and pulp and paper mills. NO_x is predominately released from vehicles, with additional emissions from industrial combustion sources.

Getting to Clear Skies?

North Cascades' visibility appears to have improved somewhat in the last decade. While all progress is important to acknowledge, significant improvement is still needed to reach natural conditions. [2]



North Cascades from Sauk Mountain. NPS/Astudillo.

$24 million

Visitor spending at North Cascades National Park Complex, 2010[3]

810,000

Visitors per year to North Cascades National Park Complex[4]

1968

Congress established North Cascades National Park.

226,600

Direct Washington jobs generated by outdoor recreation.[5]

What is the Status of the Haze Cleanup Plan for North Cascades?

The Washington haze cleanup plan was split into two parts. The first, which has been finalized, requires pollution controls and a retirement plan for the TransAlta power plant in Centralia, and will have significant benefits for the parks.

The second part deals with all other sources, including the Tesoro refinery and the Intalco smelter, and must be finalized by December 2013. In December 2012, the Environmental Protection Agency proposed to approve most of it, but found several elements lacking. Unfortunately, the Agency's proposed revisions still do not adequately control emissions from Tesoro and Intalco. NPCA continues to advocate for modern, effective pollution controls at these facilities.

Sources: 1. Visibility and haze source information derived from Washington's December 2010 and other regional haze submissions to EPA (see http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/air/globalwarm_RegHaze/regional_haze.html), along with EPA's proposed action on Washington's plan (77 Fed. Reg. 76203). 2. IMPROVE Monitoring Network. 3. Headwaters Economics. 4. NPS, 2012. 5. Outdoor Industry Association, 2013.

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