



Yellowstone

It's projected that natural visibility will be achieved at this national park in...

2163

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: 75 miles

View Without Pollution: 128 miles

Yellowstone Visibility

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that it will take until 2163 to reach natural visibility at both Yellowstone and its neighbor Grand Teton at projected pollution cleanup rates.¹ When skies at the park are most polluted, visitors are unable to see 53 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.

What Can We Do?

A few immediate opportunities stand out for reducing human-made haze pollution at the park, particularly from one large source of emissions: coal-fired power plants. First, the Environmental Protection Agency should finalize proposed modern pollution controls for nitrogen oxides (NOx) at several older Wyoming power plants.

Second, older power plants in Wyoming, Utah, and New Mexico must also limit their emissions of sulfur dioxide (SO₂). Thus far, they have been exempted from appropriate, effective controls.

Third, the Agency has not required the most effective controls on Colstrip, a Montana power plant. Reducing emissions from these sources is critical to restoring clean air to the parks.

This Haze Isn't Natural.

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

Controllable Sources of Haze at Yellowstone

The primary human-made causes of haze are sulfates and nitrates, formed in the atmosphere from emissions of sulfur dioxide (SO₂) and nitrogen oxides (NO_x).

SO₂ impacting Yellowstone is primarily released from large industrial sources like power plants, with the highest state contributions from Wyoming and Idaho. NO_x is from a mix of sources including trucks, cars, and other vehicles; power plants and other industrial emitters; and more widespread sources like oil and gas development or agriculture.

Getting to Clear Skies?

Yellowstone's visibility has improved slightly in the last decade, but at the current rate, the park will not even meet the projected 2163 date.²



\$345 million

Visitor Spending, 2010³

3,447,000

Visitors per year⁴

5,572

Jobs Supported, 2010.³

1872

Established in 1872, Yellowstone is our country's – and the world's – first national park.

What is the Status of the Haze Cleanup Plan for Yellowstone?

Wyoming's haze cleanup plan has been split into two parts. The first part, which deals with sulfur dioxide (SO₂), has been finalized. NPCA has challenged the adequacy of this plan in court.

The second part deals with all other pollutants. The Environmental Protection Agency has proposed to approve much of it, but found its approach to several power plants lacking. The Agency proposed to improve Wyoming's plan by requiring modern, effective pollution controls at these facilities. NPCA supports the Agency's proposal.

Yellowstone extends into Montana and Idaho, and is impacted by the haze cleanup plans for those states. The plans for both states have been finalized. NPCA has challenged the portions of Montana's plan dealing with the Colstrip power plant.

Sources: 1. Visibility and haze source information derived from EPA's proposed and final actions on Montana's regional haze plan (77 Fed. Reg. 24090, 77 Fed. Reg. 57863), its proposed action on Wyoming's regional haze plan (77 Fed. Reg. 33022, 78 Fed. Reg. 34737), and Wyoming's submittals to EPA regarding regional haze. 2. IMPROVE Monitoring Network. 3. Headwaters Economics. 4. NPS.