

CLEAN AIR 4 PARKS

2016 HAZE RULE REVISIONS FACT SHEET

“Our success as a company relies on the health of the natural world... because of the Regional Haze Rule... we have seen a marked improvement in the park’s air quality. But the job is not done...”

— Vesna Palankis

A Walk in the Woods
Great Smoky Mountains
Nature Guide Service

Top: Woman and child at Olmstead Point,
Yosemite National Park.
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Clearer Rules, Cleaner Parks

Visitors to national parks deserve clean, healthy air - and recent revisions to the rules protecting park air provide a better road map for how to get there.

The Clean Air Act’s Regional Haze Rule was created to protect national parks and wilderness areas from air pollution fouling their skies. Despite significant progress under the rule in the last decade, many parks are centuries away from naturally clean air.

Returning park and wilderness air to its natural state is a key goal of the Clean Air Act. To help achieve this goal, in 2016, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) revised the Regional Haze Rule to help states better plan to reduce the air pollution

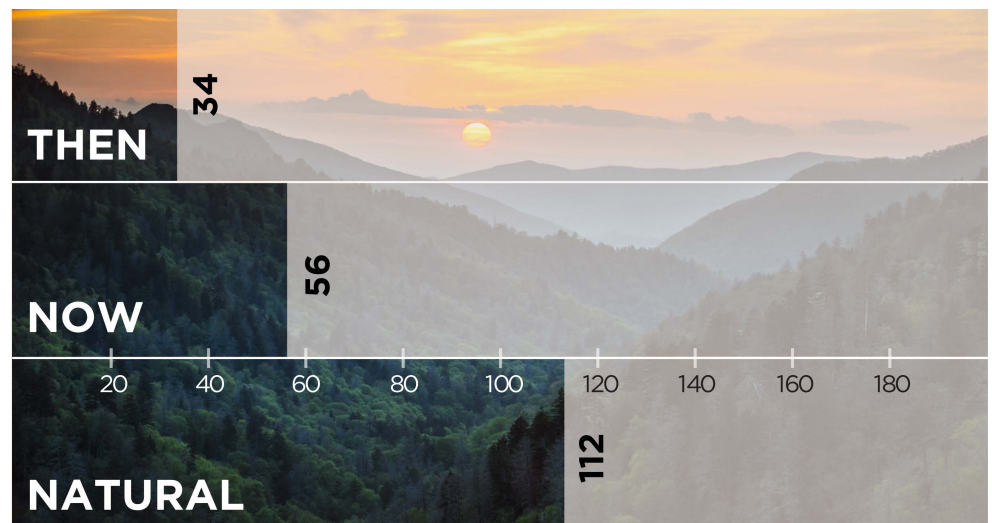
harming iconic public lands.

The updates apply lessons learned from states’ past efforts to clean up park air, creating a clearer path to restore natural air quality to America’s wild places.

To safeguard and continue building on tremendous improvements towards clear skies and healthy air in national parks and wilderness areas, these changes must stay in place.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Visibility in Miles

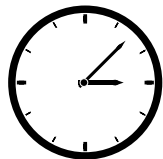


Data Source: IMPROVE © Daveallenphoto

A Better Road Map to Clean Air

Defined Responsibilities for All States

The revised rule makes clear that every state is responsible for improving park air, regardless of whether the state has parks within its borders. It also simplifies and clarifies how states work together.

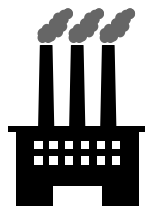


Coordinated Timing

EPA granted state requests to delay the next planning cycle by three years. States now have until 2021 to submit their next haze plans. This allows states to better coordinate haze planning with requirements under other air quality regulations.

Engagement of Park Managers

The expertise of park rangers is better integrated into the process. States will consult with them earlier, and rangers will talk with states before certifying any polluting source as problematic. This change does not remove authority from states; rather it enhances the role of those who know the parks best.

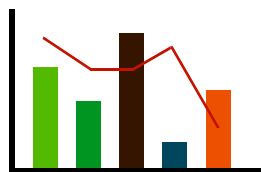


Sharper Focus on Human Pollution

Rule changes clarify that states do not need to control pollution from natural sources. States only need to evaluate human sources of pollution such as power plants, oil and gas operations, and vehicles to determine air pollution reductions.

Robust Analysis

It's now explicit that if a park is far from clean air, more sources that harm it need to be examined for ways to cut their pollution. This change gives states and industry more clarity about compliance, and provides EPA and the public a better opportunity to determine whether states have met their legal obligations.



Long Term Goals

The updated rule explains that states first develop long-term strategies for lowering haze pollution, and then translate those reductions into estimates of visibility improvement. Reductions should still be made even if they take longer to implement than one planning cycle.

Missed Opportunities

The revisions aren't perfect. Problems include:

- Responding to state requests, EPA eased administrative requirements for 5-year interim reports. This change weakens transparency and the ability of EPA and the public to take corrective action if states fall behind.
- The rule does not prevent backsliding, which means states could spoil improvements that have already been made.
- EPA failed to address concerns that new and modified sources could increase harm to parks. This sidesteps the Clean Air Act's charge to EPA to prevent future haze impairment.
- The revisions allow states to avoid analyzing what they could do to limit haze pollution from human-caused fires.



Above: USGS scientists return from climate change study site at Glacier National Park. ©Greg Pederson, USGS | Flickr Creative Commons

CONTACT INFO

Visit CleanAir4Parks.org to learn more about what you can do.

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