

August 31, 1998

FACT SHEET

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RELATED TO PROPOSED REGIONAL HAZE REGULATIONS

TODAY'S ACTION

- ! The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is providing a 30-day period for the public to comment on aspects of the Agency's proposed regulations to reduce regional haze. Specifically the Agency is requesting public comments on
 - (1) a proposal from the Western Governor's Association on changes to EPA's proposed regional haze rule to address the recommendations of the Grand Canyon Visibility Transport Commission, and
 - (2) the way in which EPA should respond to recent transportation legislation modifying the dates by which States are to submit plans to comply with the regional haze rule.
- ! Both of these issues arose after EPA published its proposal on July 31, 1997. The EPA is not reopening the comment period for any other issues related to the proposed regional haze rule.

BACKGROUND

- ! On July 31, 1997, EPA published proposed revisions to State Implementation Plan requirements to address regional haze visibility impairment in the nation's most treasured national parks and wilderness areas. The public comment period on those regulations closed on December 5, 1997.
- ! The Grand Canyon Visibility Transport Commission was created under section 169B of the Clean Air Act in order to assess visibility impairment in the Grand Canyon National Park and make recommendations to EPA for appropriate regulations to address this impairment. The Commission provided its report to EPA in June 1996 and included a number of specific actions which the participating States agreed needed to be carried out by them and others. The preamble to EPA's proposed rule requested comments and suggestions on how the Commission's report should be addressed within the rule.
- ! On June 29, 1998, EPA received a letter from Governor Michael Leavitt of Utah, on behalf of the Western Governors' Association (WGA), that specifically addresses how we should treat the Commission recommendations within the national rule. The WGA developed the letter in conjunction with several stakeholders involved in the Commission.

EPA was not a part of this process. In the letter the WGA requested that EPA reopen the comment period for 30 days. Given the detailed nature of these new comments, and the fact that they were developed with broad input, EPA is fulfilling the Western Governors' request to reopen the comment period on this issue.

- ! In addition to the letter from the WGA, we are also providing for illustrative purposes draft regulatory text that attempts to reflect the WGA recommendations as regulatory language. By providing this translation of the WGA letter into draft regulatory text, EPA is providing the public with an example of how these recommendations could be implemented under the Clean Air Act's State Implementation Plan process.

- ! On June 9, 1998, President Clinton signed the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). Section 4102(c)(2) of the TEA-21 contained revisions to the deadlines for States to submit revisions to their State implementation plans. These revised deadlines generally support EPA's intent to harmonize the visibility program with programs to attain the revised national ambient air quality standard for fine particulate matter (PM-2.5). The TEA-21 provision requires States to submit their regional haze implementation plans within one year after EPA designates an area of the country as "attainment" or "unclassifiable" for PM2.5, or at the same time that PM-2.5 state implementation plans are due for areas that EPA designates as "nonattainment" for PM-2.5.

- ! Because both visibility impairment and violations of the PM2.5 standards can result from long-range transport of pollutant emissions, EPA believes that regional cooperation is important to successful planning and implementation of strategies to improve visibility. EPA intends to incorporate the deadlines of TEA-21 into the final rule in a way that promotes regional planning efforts across regions that include areas designated attainment and those designated nonattainment. EPA requests comments on how the TEA-21 should be interpreted in order to achieve this objective.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- ! Anyone with Internet access can download the information on these two issues directly through the World Wide Web at: (<http://www.epa.gov/ttn/oarpg/t1sn.html>). For further information about today's notice of availability, contact Bruce Polkowsky (919-541-5532), Rich Damberg (919-541-5592), or Tim Smith (919-541-4718) of EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards.

- ! The EPA Office of Air and Radiation homepage on the Internet contains a wide range of information on air pollution programs and issues, including visibility issues. The Office of Air and Radiation's home page address is: (<http://www.epa.gov/oar/>).