

May 21, 2003

**REVISIONS TO THE REGIONAL HAZE RULE
INCORPORATING KEY PROVISIONS FOR
NINE WESTERN STATES AND ELIGIBLE INDIAN TRIBES**

FACT SHEET

TODAY'S ACTION

- ! The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is amending its regional haze rule to incorporate provisions to address visibility impairment in the 16 Class I areas on the Colorado Plateau. Class I areas are federally protected areas and include national parks and wilderness areas.

- ! In September 2000, the Western Regional Air Partnership (WRAP) submitted a plan to EPA containing recommendations for implementing the regional haze rule in the Western United States. Specifically, the plan contains a set of recommended regional emissions reduction milestones for sulfur dioxide, a key compound in the formation of fine particles and regional haze. The plan, also known as the Annex to the 1996 Report of the Grand Canyon Visibility Transport Commission (GCVTC), also included a description of an emissions trading program for nine Western States and eligible Indian Tribes within that geographic area. The trading program would act as a backstop to ensure that emission milestones would be met.

- ! In today's action, EPA is approving the provisions of the Annex.

- ! For the final rule, EPA considered and addressed public comments from a number of stakeholders, including the WRAP, representatives from the utility, coal, and copper smelting industries, as well as environmental groups.

- ! The proposed Clear Skies Act of 2003 is fully compatible with this rule. If enacted, Clear Skies would codify the reduction milestones and trading program finalized through this rulemaking.

BACKGROUND

- ! Haze is caused when sunlight encounters very small pollution particles in the air. Some light is absorbed by particles. Other light is scattered away before it reaches an observer. More pollutants mean more absorption and scattering of light, which reduces the clarity and color of what we see. Some types of particles such as sulfates scatter more light, particularly during humid conditions.

- ! The same pollution that causes haze also poses serious health risks, especially for people with chronic respiratory diseases.
- ! To reduce haze, and to meet requirements of the Clean Air Act, EPA in April 1999 issued a regional haze rule aimed at protecting visibility in 156 federal Class 1 areas. The rule seeks to reduce the visibility impairment caused by many sources over a wide area. EPA's previous visibility regulation, issued in 1980, addressed only local visibility impairment from local sources.
- ! Under the 1999 regional haze rule, states are required to set periodic goals for improving visibility in the 156 natural areas. As they work to reach these goals, states must develop "implementation plans" that contain enforceable measures and strategies for reducing visibility-impairing pollution.
- ! The 1990 Amendments to the Clean Air Act established the GCVTC. The purpose of this commission was to advise EPA on strategies for protecting visual air quality at national parks and wilderness areas on the Colorado Plateau. In 1996, the Commission issued a report which contained long-term recommendations for visibility improvements in 16 western scenic areas, including the Grand Canyon.
- ! The WRAP, a collaborative effort of tribal governments, Western state governments, and various federal agencies, was formed in 1997 as a follow-on to the Commission. The WRAP is divided into various technical and policy "forums" that develop the technical and policy tools needed by Western states and tribes to comply with EPA's visibility regulations.
- ! WRAP participants include:
 - < **Western states:** Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, California, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, and Alaska.
 - < **Western tribes:** Pueblo of Acoma, Campo Band of Kumeyaay Indians, Cortina Indian Rancheria, Hopi Tribe, Hualapai Nation of the Grand Canyon, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Salish and Kootenai Confederated Tribes, Pueblo of San Felipe, and Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of Fort Hall.
 - < **Federal participants:** U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA is non-voting member of WRAP board).

- ! At the request of several Western states (especially Utah and Arizona) and other WRAP stakeholders (industry and environmentalists), EPA's 1999 regional haze rule contains an optional program for Western states. This program, developed by working closely with the WRAP, is a program for preserving and improving Western visibility between 2003 and 2018. Western states choosing to follow the optional program must submit plans by the end of 2003.
- ! When EPA finalized the regional haze rule, two issues were not resolved— long term emission caps for stationary sources of sulfur dioxide, and details of a “backstop” emission trading program to ensure that the caps will be met. The WRAP needed more time to develop its approach. EPA gave the WRAP until October 2000 to develop that plan or “Annex” to the Grand Canyon Commission Report. The WRAP submitted the Annex to EPA in September of 2000.

WHAT THE RULE INCLUDES

- ! Today's rule approves the WRAP's sulfur dioxide emission milestones for each year between 2003 and 2018. In addition, it includes a description of an annual process to determine if voluntary measures meet the milestones.
- ! Currently, sources in the region covered by the WRAP emit approximately 650,000 tons per year of sulfur dioxide. By 2018, this rule will reduce emissions by more than one-fourth.
- ! States and tribes would collect annual emission reports and use them to generate a regional emissions total. If the regional total exceeds the annual milestone, a backstop market trading program would be triggered to ensure that emission reduction milestones and ultimately visibility goals are met.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- ! To download a copy of today's rule from EPA's Web site, go to “Recent Actions” at <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/oarpg>
- ! To read a copy of the Regional Haze Rule, go to: http://www.epa.gov/ttn/oarpg/t1/fr_notices/rhfedreg.pdf
- ! For more information, call Mr. Tim Smith, 919-541-4718 at EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning & Standards.