

4/25/02

**PROPOSED 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 proposing to amend its regional haze rule to incorporate additional provisions to address visibility impairment in the 16 Class I areas on the Colorado Plateau. These provisions have been worked out by several western states that are part of the Western Regional Air Partnership (WRAP) and EPA is proposing to approve the provisions of the WRAP Annex Plan. Class I areas are federally protected areas valued for their scenic vistas and include national parks and wilderness areas.
- In September 2000, the WRAP submitted to EPA a plan 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 (SO₂), 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, includes a description of an emissions trading program for nine Western states and eligible Indian tribes within that geographic area. The trading program would be a backstop to ensure that emission milestones would be met.
- EPA worked with major stakeholders, including affected states and tribes, representatives from the utility, coal, and copper smelting industries, as well as environmental groups in developing the proposal.
- EPA will accept comment on the proposal for 60 days after publication of the proposed rule in the *Federal Register*. In addition to accepting written comments, the EPA plans to hold a public hearing in Phoenix, Arizona to accept oral testimony from interested members of the public.

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.

- 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 improve the visibility over a wide area. This would require reducing emissions from many particulate sources. The 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 same pollution that causes haze also poses serious health risks, especially for people with chronic respiratory diseases.
- The 1990 Amendments to the Clean Air Act established the Grand Canyon Visibility Transport Commission. 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 put out 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 technical and policy tools needed by Western states and tribes to comply with the EPA's visibility regulations.
- WRAP participants include:
 - ▶ **Western states:** Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, California, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico.
 - ▶ **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 the WRAP board).

- At the request of several Western states (especially Utah and Arizona) and other State Regional Air Partnership stakeholders (industry and environmentalists), EPA's 1999 regional haze rule contained 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 to meet program goals by the end of 2003.
- When EPA finalized the regional haze rule, one issue was 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 Visibility Transport Commission Report. The WRAP submitted the Annex to EPA in September of 2000.

WHAT THE PROPOSED RULE INCLUDES

- Today's rule proposes to approve the WRAP's SO₂ emission reduction 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 SO₂. By 2018, this proposal would reduce emissions by nearly one third.
- States and tribes would collect annual emission reports and process them to collect 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 proposed rule from EPA's Web site, go to “Recent Actions” at <http://www.epa.gov/oar/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.