

National Park Service
Briefing Paper

Prepared for: Director

Submitted: July 10, 1997

States: All

Title: Projected increases in wildland fire, smoke, and air quality impacts

Issue: Establish policies and procedures for managing wildland fire impacts on air quality and visibility

Background:

- o Under the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Policy, federal land managing agencies intend to substantially increase the use of fire as a management tool. The increases in management fires will also increase smoke emissions that will have some effect on air quality.
- o The Clean Air Act (CAA) requires federal agencies engaged in activities or that have jurisdiction over holdings resulting in emissions of air pollutants to be subject to, and to comply with, all air pollution control and abatement requirements of all levels of governmental authorities.
- o Special provisions of the CAA apply to large national parks and wilderness areas (designated as Class I areas by the CAA) for the protection of natural visibility conditions in those areas. The visibility protection needs of these Class I areas are administered by Federal, State, or local air regulatory authorities in close consultation and coordination with the Federal land managers having jurisdiction over these areas. The National Park Service (NPS) manages 48 Class I areas nationally.
- o In June 1996 the Grand Canyon Visibility Transport Commission (GCVTC) provided the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with recommendations on potential regional haze visibility protection measures for 16 Class I areas on the Colorado Plateau. Several of these recommendations pertain to sources of air pollution in or near Class I areas, including wildland fire management activities. Secretary Babbitt has charged land managing DOI bureaus, including the NPS, to address wildland fire - air quality issues on a national basis and the specific recommendations of the GCVTC.

Status:

- o The NPS, other DOI bureaus and the U.S. Forest Service are jointly developing an action plan in 1997 to address the recommendations of the GCVTC as they pertain to wildland fire and visibility protection.
- o The NPS is an active participant on EPA's fire policy steering committee. The committee, which includes all stakeholders, will develop a policy by early 1998. The policy will establish procedures for managing wildland fire impacts on air quality and visibility and define requirements and responsibilities of land managers and air quality regulators.

Position of Interested Parties:

- o Air regulators, environmental groups, and industry have varying interests, including concern for protection of public health and welfare and the

equitable treatment of all polluting activities.

Department/Bureau Perspective:

- o The NPS and Department are fully engaged in this issue and will not compromise protection of public health by our wildland fire management activities. Emissions and impacts will be minimized to the extent necessary and feasible.

Contact:

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