



# United States Department of the Interior

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Air Resources Division

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IN REPLY REFER TO:

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### Memorandum

To: Superintendents, Class I Areas

From: Christine L. Shaver   
Chief, Air Resources Division

Subject: Regional Haze Workshop

We have a unique opportunity to address air pollution problems in national parks because of a new regulation issued by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on April 22, 1999. The Regional Haze Rule calls for state and federal agencies to work together to improve visibility in 156 national parks and wilderness areas designated as Class I areas under the Clean Air Act. The rule requires the states, in coordination with the EPA, the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, Tribal nations, and other interested parties, to develop and implement air quality protection plans to reduce the pollution that causes visibility impairment. The first state plans for regional haze are due in the 2003-2008 timeframe. Five multi-state regional planning organizations will be working together to develop the technical basis for these plans. One of these organizations, the Western Regional Air Partnership, has been operating for some time, with active participation from my staff and some park resource managers; the other organizations have just recently been funded by EPA to develop work plans.

In an effort to develop a shared understanding of our objectives and the information and skills that will be needed to be effective advocates in these arenas, the NPS Air Resources Division and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Air Quality Branch will be hosting a regional haze workshop at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, WV on February 21-22, 2001. We will be inviting the Regional Air Quality Coordinators and selected park resource managers to attend the workshop. I wanted you to be aware of this upcoming event and solicit your support of staff participation. In addition, I would like to identify a "lead" superintendent for each of the five geographic areas (see attached map) so that we can maintain a direct link to and among park managers. Please let me know if you would be interested in volunteering for such a role – either in the regional

planning organization that encompasses your park or one upwind -- and if so, whether you are interested in attending the workshop. Otherwise we will send additional information on the workshop to selected invitees in the near future.

The attached briefing document describes the regional haze issue and the importance of these regional planning efforts in more detail. Please contact me at (303) 969-2074 or Kirsten King at (303) 969-2153 if you have any questions.

Thanks for your support!

Attachments

cc:  
Regional Air Quality Coordinators  
Park Air Contacts

## **FACT SHEET ON REGIONAL HAZE**

### **What Is Regional Haze?**

Haze obscures the clarity, color, texture, and form of what we see. Some haze-causing pollutants (mostly fine particles) are directly emitted to the atmosphere by a number of activities (such as electric power generation, various industrial and manufacturing processes, truck and auto emissions, burning related to forestry and agriculture, construction activities, etc.). Others are formed when gases emitted to the air form particles as they are carried downwind. Examples include sulfate, formed from sulfur dioxide, and nitrates, formed from nitrogen oxides. Emissions from these activities generally span broad geographic areas and can be transported great distances, sometimes hundreds or thousands of miles. Consequently, haze occurs regionally throughout the nation. Every year there are over 280 million visitors to our nation's most treasured parks and wilderness areas. Unfortunately, many visitors aren't able to see the spectacular vistas they expect.

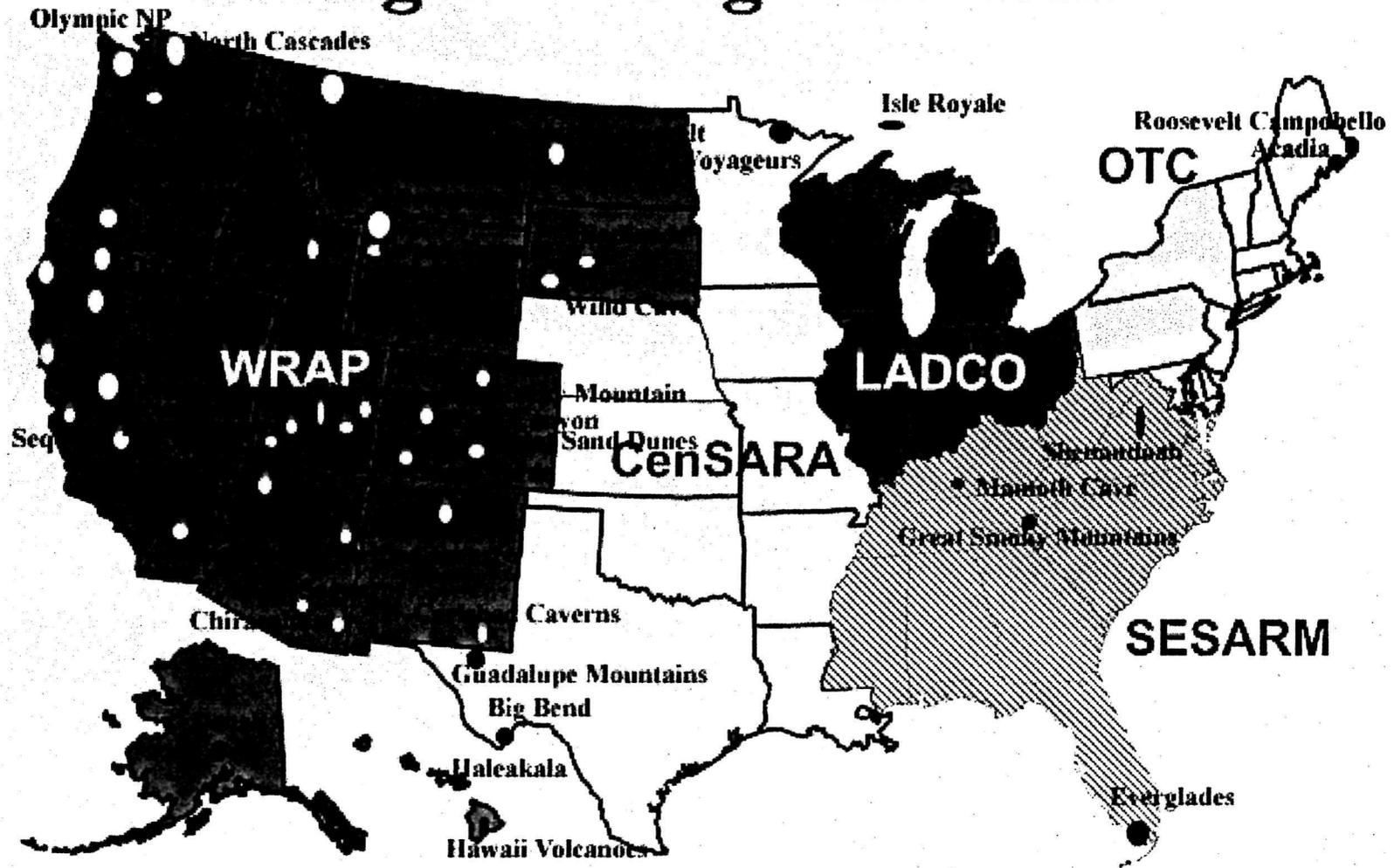
### **What Can Be Done About Regional Haze?**

The regional haze rule issued by EPA in April 1999 allows federal land managers to directly influence future visibility and other air quality related values at our parks. EPA's regulations give States some flexibility in determining "reasonable progress goals" for Class I areas – that is, the amount of pollution reduction and visibility improvement they wish to see over time. States must conduct certain analyses to ensure that they consider the possibility of reaching natural background conditions in 60 years, and the rate of improvement during each 10-15 year planning period is expected to be consistent with that glidepath (unless the State can justify a deviation). States must develop enforceable strategies to (1) improve visibility on the haziest days and (2) ensure no degradation occurs on the clearest days over the period of each implementation plan. The States, Federal Land Managers and EPA will use data from the Interagency Monitoring of Protected Visual Environments (IMPROVE) network to measure progress and set the goals for the long-term strategies. The majority of our class I areas have IMPROVE monitors located in or near them, and these data will be vital to the regional haze process. The first plans will be due between 2003-2008 and will cover 10 to 15 years, with reassessment and revision of those goals and strategies in 2018 and every 10 years thereafter. States strategies should address their contribution to visibility problems in Class I areas both within and outside the State. Regional Planning Organizations have been established and funded by EPA to facilitate interstate cooperation in the development of visibility protection plans. See attached map.

### **Will Reducing Regional Haze Benefit Other Resources?**

Efforts to improve visibility also provide other health and environmental benefits. Some of the same particles that contribute to regional haze are also linked to serious health and environmental effects. Exposure to very small particles has been linked to increased respiratory illness, damage to lung tissue, and premature death. Sulfates and nitrates contribute to the formation of acid rain, which damages forests, erodes building materials and monuments, and causes lakes and streams to become acidic, making them unsuitable for many fish. The pollutants that contribute to haze also help form ground-level ozone (smog) which can trigger serious respiratory problems, and cause significant damage to forests and ecosystems. Nitrogen oxide gases from electric utilities and cars are a major contributor to increased nitrogen loading in water bodies, particularly estuaries, which upsets the chemical balance of nutrients used by aquatic plants and animals.

# Regional Organizations



# Regional Organizations

