



# Big Bend

**Texas projects that natural visibility will be achieved at this national park in...**

# 2155

## Haze is Damaging.

Haze pollution limits views of our most valued national parks and wilderness areas, affecting not just how far we can see, but also the color, sharpness, and quality of the view. It also makes the air unhealthy for people, wildlife and natural resources.



**View With Pollution: 47 miles**

**View Without Pollution: 119 miles**

## Big Bend Visibility

Texas estimates that it will take until 2155 to reach natural visibility at Big Bend at projected pollution cleanup rates.<sup>1</sup> When skies at the park are most polluted, visitors are unable to see 72 miles of landscape that would be visible under natural conditions. To restore the skies, the law requires industries to clean up if their pollution is harming the parks.

## Want Cleaner Air?

One immediate opportunity stands out for reducing human-made haze pollution at Big Bend: Texas sources must reduce their haze-causing pollution. As basic as this sounds, it is not currently the state's approach. The haze cleanup plan Texas sent to the Environmental Protection Agency does not require any reductions from any of its hundreds of pollution sources. The Agency has an obligation to replace this do-nothing plan with one that includes appropriate emission reductions from the state's numerous polluters.

## This Haze Isn't Natural.

Some haze is natural, but much of what's seen today is not. Natural fires, wind-blow dust, and vegetation can result in "natural" haze, and precipitation can also obscure the view naturally. Clean air laws only require reductions from controllable sources of pollution, like power plants and other industrial sources. Cost effective, efficient reductions in human-caused pollution are routinely accomplished with the use of modern technologies.

Reducing emissions from Texas sources is critical to restoring clear skies to Big Bend, as well as to other protected public lands harmed by Texas pollution, such as Arkansas' Caney Creek and Oklahoma's Wichita Mountains.

## Controllable Sources of Haze at Big Bend

The primary human-made cause of haze at Big Bend is sulfates, formed in the atmosphere from emissions of sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>). SO<sub>2</sub> is primarily released from large industrial sources like coal-fired power plants and refineries. Pollutants impacting Big Bend originate from a variety of places, with the highest state contribution from Texas.

## Getting to Clear Skies?

Big Bend's visibility has improved somewhat in the last decade. While all improvements are important to acknowledge, at the current rate, significant improvement is still needed to reach natural conditions.<sup>2</sup>



Layered haze at Big Bend. IMPROVE Monitoring Network.

## What is the Status of the Haze Cleanup Plan for Big Bend?

Texas' haze cleanup plan has been submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency. The Agency has not yet taken action on Texas' plan. It must propose approval or disapproval of the Texas plan by May 2014, and finalize its action by December 2014. NPCA supports requiring appropriate, cost-effective, modern pollution controls on Texas sources.

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Polluters required to reduce haze-causing emissions under Texas' plan.

**290,000**

Visitors per year<sup>3</sup>

**\$17 million**

Visitor Spending, 2010<sup>4</sup>

**1944**

Authorized by Congress in 1935, Big Bend was established as a National Park in 1944.

**276,800**

Direct Texas jobs generated by outdoor recreation.<sup>5</sup>

Sources: 1. Visibility and haze source information derived from Texas' February 2009 and other regional haze submissions to EPA (see [http://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/sip/bart/haze\\_sip.html](http://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/sip/bart/haze_sip.html)). 2. IMPROVE Monitoring Network. 3. NPS. 4. Headwaters Economics. 5. Outdoor Industry Association, 2013.