



Black Canyon Of the Gunnison

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

2119

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: 90 miles

View Without Pollution: 131 miles

Black Canyon of the Gunnison Visibility

Colorado estimates that it will take until 2119 to reach natural visibility at Black Canyon of the Gunnison at projected pollution cleanup rates.¹ When skies at the park are most polluted, visitors are unable to see 41 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.

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.

Want Cleaner Air?

A few immediate opportunities stand out for reducing human-made haze pollution at Black Canyon of the Gunnison. Coal-fired power plants are a large source of haze pollution at the park, and they must be required to install modern pollution controls. In particular, a number of power plants owned by PacifiCorp are within the park's airshed. Many are not adequately controlled.

For example, Craig is an older PacifiCorp plant with a documented impact on the park. The most effective pollution controls are only planned for one of its three coal-fired power plant units. Reducing emissions from these large sources is imperative to restoring clean, clear skies to Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

Controllable Sources of Haze at Black Canyon of the Gunnison

The primary human-made cause of haze at Black Canyon of the Gunnison is sulfates, formed in the atmosphere from emissions of sulfur dioxide (SO₂). Most SO₂ emissions are from large industrial sources like coal-fired power plants, and originate from a variety of places, with the highest state contributions from Colorado and nearby western states. Nitrates, formed from emissions of nitrogen oxides (NO_x), also have an impact on air quality at Black Canyon of the Gunnison, and are mainly a result of vehicles and large stationary sources.

Getting to Clear Skies?

Black Canyon of the Gunnison'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.²



Haze at Black Canyon of the Gunnison. NPS/Lisa Lynch.

What is the Status of the Haze Cleanup Plan for Black Canyon of the Gunnison?

The Environmental Protection Agency approved Colorado's haze cleanup plan. NPCA has challenged the part of the plan dealing specifically with the Craig power plant.

\$8.6 million

Visitor Spending, 2010³

193,000

Visitors per year⁴

1999

Established as a national monument in 1933, Black Canyon of the Gunnison became a National Park in 1999.

124,600

Direct Colorado jobs generated by outdoor recreation.⁵

2,722

Deepest point of the canyon, in feet – nearly half as deep as the Grand Canyon.⁴

Sources: 1. Visibility and haze source information derived from Colorado's January 2011 and other regional haze submissions to EPA (see <http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/CDPHE-AP/CBON/1251594862597>), along with EPA's proposed and final actions on Colorado's plan (77 Fed. Reg. 18091, 77 Fed. Reg. 76871). 2. IMPROVE Monitoring Network. 3. Headwaters Economics. 4. NPS. 5. Outdoor Industry Association, 2013.