

CLEAN AIR 4 PARKS

HEALTH FACT SHEET



“The San Joaquin Valley has some of the poorest air quality in the nation. This dirty air not only affects the health of area residents, but also the ecosystems within the Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks, causing damage to the native plants, animals, and natural vistas.”

— **Destiny Rodriguez**
Director of Outreach and Communications at Central California Asthma Collaborative



npca.org

Top: Grand Canyon Overlook ©Andrushko Galyna | Bigstockphoto.com Above: Hiking in the National Parks ©Pamela Moore | Dreamstime.com



Health & Haze

In the fight for healthy air, laws limiting haze pollution are powerful tools – but we need to act now to defend them. To win the fight for clean and healthy air, deploying all means to lower pollution like ozone and particulate matter is a necessity.

The Regional Haze Rule is a critical tool to tackle health harming pollutants. Its mission? To eliminate dirty haze over national parks and wilderness areas. Because the pollution causing haze in America’s national parks is also harming health in our communities, cleaning up park haze will result in better health nationwide.

We have made great strides in reducing air pollution thanks to the Regional Haze Rule. But in order to deliver significant benefits to public health and national parks, we need a sustained commitment to protect and enforce the rule and stop any efforts to undermine its implementation.

Improving Public Health

According to the [EPA](http://www.epa.gov), “During much of the year, a veil of white or brown haze hangs over many of the country’s most visited natural areas. The same pollution that causes haze also poses serious health risks, especially for people with chronic respiratory diseases.”

The Regional Haze Rule has already improved air quality—meaning fewer of the asthma attacks, lung cancers, neurological problems, and deaths associated with haze pollution. These health benefits are tremendous but by no means guaranteed in the future unless we protect and diligently implement the Regional Haze Rule now and in the future.

Health Benefits of the Regional Haze Rule*



AMONG ADULTS

AMONG CHILDREN

* Projected annual health benefits in 2015, [according to the EPA](http://www.epa.gov).

Less Haze



Haze is made of particulate matter and gases that block light, reducing visibility while jeopardizing public health. The air pollution that causes haze comes from a variety of sources, including coal-fired power plants, oil and gas operations, and vehicles. Emissions from these sources are regulated under the current Regional Haze Rule and with sustained implementation, we anticipate pollution reductions in:

- **Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x) & Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂):** Both are direct and indirect sources of particulate matter.
- **Ozone:** NO_x is a component of ozone, so reducing NO_x means less pollution.
- **Carbon Dioxide, Mercury and Other Toxic Emissions:** When haze pollution is reduced or eliminated, these pollutants also often decrease.

The Regional Haze Rule has already helped clean up the air, but sadly many of our parks and nearby communities still suffer from dirty air. When we reduce key pollutants that make park skies hazy, we also clean up those that harm people's health. Protection and enforcement of the Regional Haze Rule will mean clearer skies and better views in national parks and less unhealthy pollution throughout the country.

Preventing Health Impacts

Strong and certain reductions in haze pollution can save lives: Exposure to even low levels of particulate matter and ozone is associated with higher mortality due to heart attacks, strokes, cancer, infection, and other ailments.



Death

Hospital admissions + emergency room visits

Doctor and pharmacy visits + missed school and work days

Noticeable symptoms: asthma attacks, restricted activity, medication use, coughing, difficult or painful breathing

Unnoticed symptoms: poor lung performance, heart rate and blood pressure changes, inflammation, risk of infection

Number of people affected

Healthier Air

Protecting Vulnerable Populations

In or out of national parks, less haze equals better health for kids. Their still-developing bodies are particularly vulnerable to the effects of haze-related pollution. It's linked to illness throughout childhood—from low birth weight and infant mortality to ear infections and asthma.

And it's not just kids who are affected. Older people and those with heart and lung conditions are also at higher risk. Haze harms even otherwise healthy adults. In fact, anyone who is active outdoors and in parks is at risk because when we exercise, we breathe up to ten times more air than normal, bringing it more deeply into our lungs.



Top: The Navajo Generating Station, the nation's eighth largest coal-fired plant, is just outside Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and only 12 miles from Grand Canyon National Park. ©Frontpage | Shutterstock **Above:** Enjoying the day ©Monkey Business Images | Dreamstime.com • Canoeing in Gateway National Recreation Area ©Michael Falco

YOUR VOICE MATTERS.

Please join our efforts to protect national parks and safeguard public health by cleaning up the air! Visit the CleanAir4Parks.org website or contact:

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