

## WHAT IS HAZE?

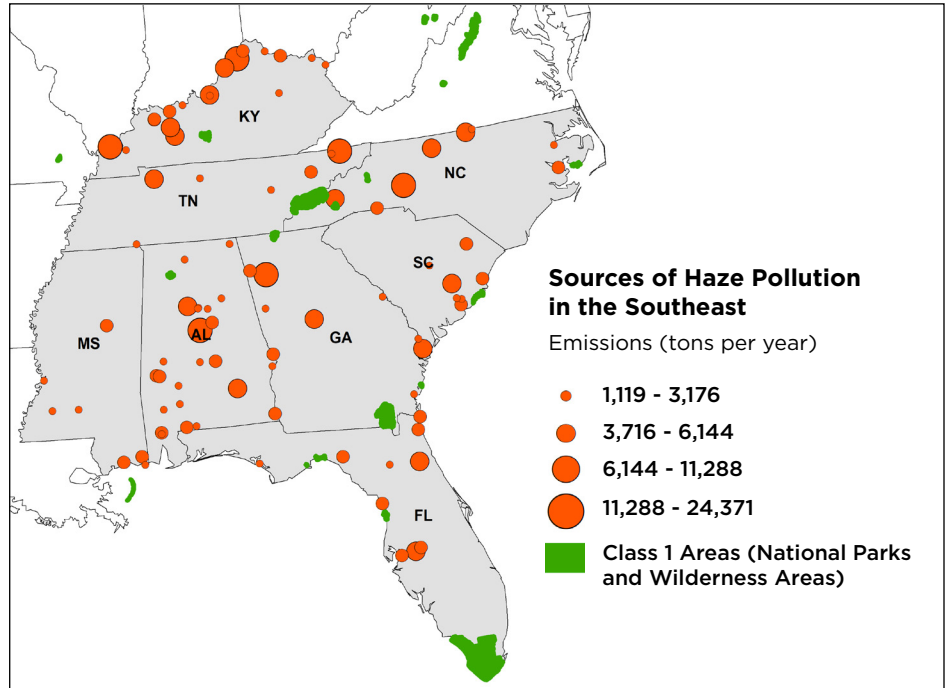
Haze is made of tiny airborne particles and gases that block and scatter light, reducing visibility across distances.

The pollutants causing haze are mainly particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, and sulfur dioxide – they muddy scenic views in national parks and wilderness areas around the country, from the Great Smoky Mountains to Everglades National Parks and Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge to the Sipsey Wilderness Area and many public lands in between.

Haze pollution also damages sensitive ecosystems and can degrade water quality. It can travel hundreds of miles from its original source, through neighborhoods and communities, causing a myriad of health complications for those who breathe it in.

## Haze Pollution in Southeast Parks

*EPA's Region 4, also known as the Southeast region, includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.*



156 national parks and wilderness areas are designated under the Clean Air Act as “Class 1 areas,” meaning they have some of the highest levels of air quality protection in the country. However, most national park sites are still experiencing poor air quality and diminished visibility.

In the Southeast, Mammoth Cave National Park was found to be the most haze polluted park in the country in a 2019 analysis done by NPCA. Great Smoky Mountains National Park ranked the second most haze polluted, and Everglades National Park came in sixth. The Regional Haze Rule is intended to cut pollution harming skies in these special places. Every ten years, each state must develop a plan to reduce haze-causing emissions from pollution sources within their state. The state agencies then send these plans to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for approval or disapproval.

In the first round of regional haze planning over ten years ago, significant emissions reductions were achieved thanks in large part to advocacy efforts for strong state plans. 1.4 million tons of haze pollution (nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and particulate matter) each year were eliminated, along with 79 million tons of climate pollution (carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide). 146 coal plants were required to either close or clean up. The second round of haze planning is currently in progress.



# SOURCES OF HAZE POLLUTION IN THE SOUTHEAST

*Electricity generation, pulp and paper mills, chemical plants, and other industrial polluters are contributing to hazy skies from Great Smoky Mountains National Park to Okefenokee Wilderness Area.*



Localized air pollution from sugarcane burning impacts Everglades National Park and nearby communities. (Photo courtesy of Robert Mitchell)

## Southeast States are Ignoring Emissions and Industrial Polluters in Haze Plans

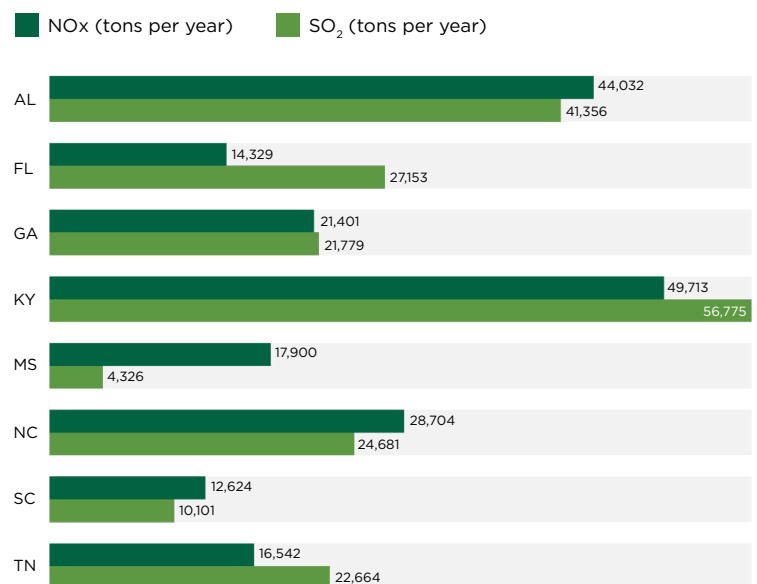
Unfortunately, during this current round of planning, states in the Southeast are failing to meet the haze program requirements under the Clean Air Act. All Southeast states are relying on a shared, flawed modeling system, through VISTAS, in developing their haze plans. The VISTAS approach uses decade-old data, and does not accurately represent nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions contribution to haze pollution, nor the number of power plants whose emissions are exacerbating haze pollution.

NPCA has identified 89 sources of haze pollution in the Southeast. Collectively, these polluters emit almost 405,000 tons of haze-causing pollution each year, which equates to 1,800 football stadiums full of pollution. In relying on the VISTAS approach, states in the Southeast are completely ignoring NOx emissions and huge polluters across the region.

## TOP 10 POLLUTERS

- Shawnee Fossil Plant - TVA**  
Fossil fuel power plant in McCracken County, KY
- Eastman Chemical Company**  
Chemical plant in Sullivan, TN
- Plant Bowen - GA Power Company**  
Fossil fuel power plant in Bartow, GA
- Ghent Station - KY Utilities Company**  
Fossil fuel power plant in Carroll, KY
- Marshall Steam Station - Duke Energy Carolinas**  
Fossil fuel power plant in Catawba, NC
- Lhoist North America of Alabama**  
Mineral processing plant in Shelby, AL
- Plant Scherer - GA Power Company**  
Fossil fuel power plant in Monroe, GA
- Cumberland Fossil Plant - TVA**  
Fossil fuel power plant in Stewart, TN
- Mill Creek Station - Louisville Gas & Electric Co.**  
Fossil fuel power plant in Jefferson, KY
- Belews Creek Steam Station - Duke Energy Carolinas**  
Fossil fuel power plant in Stokes, NC

## Haze-Causing Emissions by State



## TAKE ACTION

As of May 2023, five states in the Southeast have submitted haze plans to EPA. EPA must now decide whether to approve, partially approve, or disapprove the state plans. We urge EPA to act swiftly to hold all states in the Southeast accountable to reduce their haze-causing emissions. Join us in acting now!

Visit [npca.org/reports/regional-haze](https://npca.org/reports/regional-haze) to learn more about what you can do.