



# Environmental News

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## WHITMAN HELPS STATES IMPROVE SCENIC VISTAS IN NATIONAL PARKS

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To clear the skies in the nation's most treasured national parks and wilderness areas, such as the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone, EPA Administrator Christie Whitman will move forward with a proposed rule to help states take steps to control haze-causing emissions from older power plants and industrial facilities.

"Part of the President's commitment to protecting national parks includes protecting the views that draw us to these parks year after year," Whitman said. "But over the years, haze and pollution have eroded these vistas. In some parks, like the Great Smoky Mountains, visibility on the haziest days is cut by as much as 80 percent. We intend to clear that air. This rule will help ensure that people will be able to see and appreciate these national treasures for many years to come."

The proposal will affect facilities built between 1962 and 1977 and that emit more than 250 tons of visibility-damaging pollutants every year. Without air pollution, people could see about 140 miles in the western United States and 90 miles in the East; but in many parts of the country visibility has been reduced in these regions to 33-90 miles in the West and 14-24 miles in the East.

The 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments required EPA to establish a rule to improve visibility in 156 national parks and wilderness areas. The Amendments also call on states to require these older plants to install best air pollution controls available, technically known as "best available retrofit technology," or BART.

This proposal will amend EPA's 1999 regional haze rule to guide states to decide which facilities must install air pollution controls; the proposal will also guide states in selecting the most efficient control technology.

The proposed rule will also give states the flexibility to consider economic factors, energy impacts and the remaining useful life of the facility in determining a control program. The new requirements could also be met through an emissions trading approach similar to one currently being used successfully in EPA's acid rain program.

The proposal will affect facilities in 26 industrial categories listed in the Clean Air Act, including coal-fired utilities, industrial boilers, refineries and iron and steel plants that were built between 1962 and 1977. Pollutants that affect visibility include sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and particulate matter. For utility boilers, existing technology can reduce sulfur dioxide emissions by 90 to 95 percent.

Facilities would have to comply with today's proposal no later than 2013. States choosing an emissions trading alternative would have additional compliance time.

The proposed amendments will appear soon in the Federal Register (with a 60-day public comment period), but can be accessed immediately at: [www.epa.gov/ttn/oarpg.html](http://www.epa.gov/ttn/oarpg.html)