

Key Talking Points: EPA Draft Regional Haze Plan

*The EPA has drafted a plan to clean up haze and visibility problems in some of Arkansas’s most treasured areas: the Upper Buffalo, Caney Creek, and the Ouachita Mountains. Haze is largely caused by pollution from our state’s dirtiest power plants. The draft plan requires these dirty power plants to clean up their emissions so that we can fully enjoy our state’s natural areas.*

*Ideally, the oldest and dirtiest of our state’s power plants should retire. Sierra Club supports a transition away from dirty coal-fired power and a strong move toward the use of renewable energy in our state. While we support the draft plan under consideration because it will clean up the haze problem in our parks, we do not believe that retrofitting the plants and allowing them to continue operating is a sound solution, especially if those costs are passed on to ratepayers. The best solution—for our parks, our health, and our state’s economic growth—is to retire the coal-fired power plants and increase our use of clean, renewable sources of energy.*

FACTS

* Regional Haze pollution affects visibility in some of our most scenic Arkansas areas.
* Many Arkansans, as well as out-of-state tourists, visit the areas that the draft Regional Haze plan would protect: the Buffalo National River, Ouachita National Forest and Caney Creek Wilderness Area. The plan would improve air quality and visibility in these places, generally having a positive impact on the experiences of their visitors.

Our parks and wilderness areas boost the economies of the communities in which they’re located, attracting tourists and elevating business. However, if air quality continues to decline, the influx of tourists to these areas could be compromised as well.

* The EPA’s draft Regional Haze plan would require some of Arkansas’s dirtiest power plants to install retrofit technology in order to reduce pollutants. The power plants affected include Arkansas’s two largest and dirtiest coal-fired power plants, Entergy's 1700MW White Bluff and Independence plants.
* Coal-fired power plants emit horrendous amounts of pollution that are hazardous to human health.

These pollutants include sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and particulate matter, which can lead to difficulty in breathing, and cause or worsen respiratory illnesses such as asthma and bronchitis. These health hazards are particularly dangerous to children, the elderly, and those who already have respiratory problems.

* The draft Regional Haze plan could help move Arkansas in the right direction when it comes to our energy future. In putting more restrictions on dirty energy sources and potentially moving up the date of retirement for coal plants, the rule could push the state toward more clean, renewable sources such as wind and solar.