

The Regional Haze Rule

What is “regional haze”?

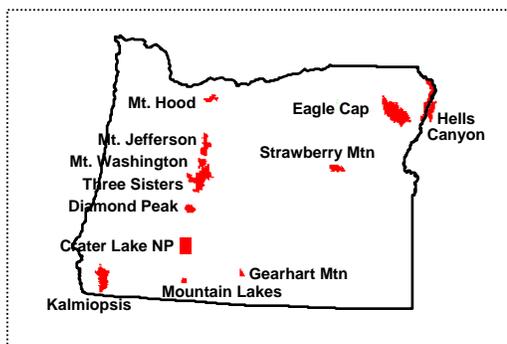
Regional haze is air pollution in the form of haze that travels long distances and reduces visibility in scenic areas such as Crater Lake National Park. This haze is composed of small particles that absorb and scatter light, affecting the clarity and color of what we see. Sources of haze are both urban and rural, such as motor vehicles, power plants, industrial and manufacturing processes, burning of vegetation and debris, as well as natural sources such as wildfire and windblown dust. On average, regional haze has decreased the scenic vistas in national parks and wilderness areas from 140 miles down to 35-90 miles in the West and from 90 miles to 15-25 miles in the East.

What is the Regional Haze Rule?

Good visibility is essential to the enjoyment of national parks and scenic areas. The Clean Air Act contains a national goal of improving visibility in these areas. To meet this goal, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) adopted the Regional Haze Rule in July 1999 to reduce human-caused air pollution from multiple sources over broad geographic areas. The aim is to improve visibility over the next 60 years in 156 national parks and wilderness areas (known as “Class I” areas). The rule requires states to develop new, long-term strategies and demonstrate these strategies will make reasonable progress in improving Class I visibility on the haziest days (the worst 20%), and ensure no degradation on the clearest days (the best 20%). These strategies must address the transport of haze across state boundaries as well.

Oregon has 12 Class I areas – one national park and eleven wilderness areas (see map).

Oregon’s Class I Areas



What is BART?

Best Available Retrofit Technology (BART) is one of the main provisions in the Regional Haze Rule. It is designed to achieve emission reductions at certain older industrial facilities that began operating before national rules were adopted in 1977 to prevent new facilities from causing visibility impairment. BART applies to facilities built between 1962 and 1977, have potential emissions greater than 250 tons per year, and which fall into one of 26 specific source categories. These facilities must be evaluated to see how much they contribute to regional haze and if retrofitting with controls is feasible and cost effective.

The 2008 Regional Haze Plan

On June 19, 2009, the Environmental Quality Commission adopted Oregon's Regional Haze Plan, which includes stringent pollution controls for Portland General Electric's coal-fired power plant near Boardman. The new requirements will result in significant visibility improvements and reduced pollution for Oregon's Class I wilderness areas and national parks as well as the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. For information on DEQ's 2008 Oregon Regional Haze Plan, go to www.deq.state.or.us/aq/haze/.



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