



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

MAY 06 2016

OFFICE OF  
AIR AND RADIATION

The Honorable Lamar Smith  
Chairman  
Committee on Science, Space and Technology  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your April 6, 2016, letter to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy regarding oversight of the EPA's Regional Haze regulations. The Administrator asked that I respond on her behalf. This letter is an initial response.

Regional haze is an important air pollution issue that Congress established clear goals for in the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments, recognizing the tremendous significance of the nation's wilderness areas to our economy, our public welfare, and our national identity. In 2015, there were more than 307 million recreation visitors to our nation's most treasured parks and wilderness areas. Unfortunately, many visitors aren't able to see the spectacular vistas they expect. The Clean Air Act requires the EPA to work with states to reduce the regional haze that affects visibility in 156 national parks and wilderness areas, including the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, the Great Smoky Mountains, and Shenandoah National Parks. During much of the year in these areas, a veil of white or brown haze hangs in the air blurring the view. Most of this haze is not natural. It is air pollution, carried by the wind often many hundreds of miles from where it originated. Haze is caused when sunlight encounters tiny pollution particles in the air. Some light is absorbed by particles. Other light is scattered away before it reaches an observer. Air pollutants come from a variety of natural and manmade sources. Manmade sources can include motor vehicles, electric utility and industrial fuel burning, and manufacturing operations. Particle pollution is the major cause of reduced visibility (haze) in parts of the United States, including many of our national parks.

Under the regional haze provisions of the Clean Air Act, the states and tribes, in coordination with the EPA, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and others, develop and implement air quality protection plans to reduce the pollution that causes visibility impairment. State and local air quality agencies have put together a first set of plans to reduce regional haze in national parks and wilderness areas, most of which are now being implemented. A second set of plans will focus on improving visibility through the year 2028. There will be a new set of plans every ten years, each aimed at taking further steps towards meeting the national goal of eliminating the manmade pollution that impairs visibility. These plans require technically feasible controls at sources determined to be contributing to haze. Each

of these actions is made available for public comment, including on the underlying analysis of the cost of certain control technologies. As always, the EPA strives to use the best available science and information when taking these regulatory actions and others under the Clean Air Act, which are also subject to judicial review.

Your letter requested various categories of information, including documents and communications referring or relating to the EPA's use of Dr. Phyllis Fox as a consultant on certain regional haze issues. The EPA is working diligently to identify and collect responsive materials and will make further appropriate productions as expeditiously as possible. We are, however, able to enclose with this letter an initial set of documents.

Please note that portions of your request call for internal deliberations of an Executive Branch agency, the EPA, and, as such, raise a confidentiality interest. In order to identify specific documents in which the EPA has a confidentiality interest, we have added a watermark to these documents that reads "Internal Deliberative Document of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Disclosure Authorized Only to Congress for Oversight Purposes." Through this accommodation, the EPA does not waive any confidentiality interests in these documents or similar documents in other circumstances. The EPA respectfully requests that the Committee and staff protect the documents and the information contained in them from further dissemination. Should the Committee determine that its legislative mandate requires further distribution of this confidential information outside the Committee, we request that such need first be discussed with the agency to help ensure the Executive Branch's confidentiality interests are protected to the fullest extent possible.

You will notice that some of the documents contain redactions of confidential business information, non-responsive, or non-substantive material, such as personal privacy information. We redacted this information in a manner that does not obscure the identity of any EPA employees involved in the relevant communications.

The EPA recognizes the importance of the Committee's need to obtain information necessary to perform its legitimate oversight functions, and is committed to continuing to work with your staff on how best to accommodate the Committee's interests in the documents requested in your letter.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Tom Dickerson in the EPA's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations at [dickerson.tom@epa.gov](mailto:dickerson.tom@epa.gov) or (202) 564-3638.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Janet G. McCabe".

Janet G. McCabe  
Acting Assistant Administrator

Enclosures

cc: The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Ranking Member