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**Friday, Aug. 17, 2018**

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**Air pollution throughout the South Central U.S. would continue under new  
proposed rule**

*Proposed EPA Haze Plan fails to require modern pollution controls on Texas Coal plants*

**AUSTIN** – Instead of protecting public health and the environment, EPA has proposed a plan that will continue to allow air pollution to darken skies and threaten communities and national parks, community members and advocates say.

Sulfur dioxide and other pollutants from Texas coal plants spread across state borders and throughout the South Central U.S. -- but on paper, the proposed rule issued by EPA today allows more pollution from these plants than they produced in 2016. This puts the interests of polluters over public health in Texas, Oklahoma and across the central United States.

Many Texas coal plants still do not have modern controls to reduce dangerous sulfur pollution, and emit some of the highest amounts of sulfur dioxide pollution in the nation. These plants send dangerous streams of pollution throughout Texas and across state lines that contribute to hazy skies, missed work, high rates of hospital admissions, and increased risk of heart disease, breathing difficulties and premature death. The damage that Texas coal plants do to Texas alone is astronomical. According to an expert analysis based on EPA's own data, coal pollution costs Texas alone more than \$3.8 billion annually in preventable public-health related expenses, which includes more than 17,000 asthma attacks, 389 deaths, and more than 70,000 missed work days every year.

“A real pollution control plan that protects the air in national parks would also benefit everyone who lives in Texas,” said Joshua Smith, Senior Staff Attorney, Sierra Club Environmental Law Program. “Continued pollution means we live shorter lives, pay more in health care costs, and suffer from preventable illnesses. We need EPA to finally step up and commit to doing what the

law requires, and implementing actual pollution reductions to improve air across Texas and beyond.”

Reducing the hazy skies in Texas would also benefit national parks. Currently, Texas coal pollution negatively impacts air quality at Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma, Big Bend and Guadalupe Mountains National Parks in Texas, and other public lands across the region. A strong regional haze rule -- such as the one proposed during the Obama administration -- would reduce haze in 19 national parks and wilderness areas across the south central United States.

“Simply put, Americans expect their national parks have clean air. The Texas Haze plan should protect the health of Southwest communities and some of our nation’s revered national parks like Big Bend and Guadalupe Mountains,” said Stephanie Kodish, Senior Director & Counsel of National Parks Conservation Association’s Clean Air Program. “The proposed plan does not provide this protection. That’s unacceptable. We will continue to fight to make sure the EPA does its job protecting the air we breathe, our national parks, and the millions of people that visit and live near them.”

Under a Clean Air Act protection called the Regional Haze Rule, states are required to develop plans to clean up pollution and improve air quality at national parks and wilderness areas. But for more than a decade, Texas put forth weak plans that would do nothing to clean up the air in the state, which forced EPA -- under a court order issued during the Obama Administration -- to take control of the planning for pollution control in Texas.

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### **About the Sierra Club**

The Sierra Club is America’s largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with more than 3 million members and supporters. In addition to helping people from all backgrounds explore nature and our outdoor heritage, the Sierra Club works to promote clean energy, safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. For more information, visit [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org).

### **About National Parks Conservation Association**

Since 1919, the nonpartisan National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice in safeguarding our national parks. NPCA and its 1.3 million members and supporters work together to protect and preserve our nation's most iconic and inspirational places for future generations. For more information, visit [www.npca.org](http://www.npca.org).



