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Council praising clean air proposal

ADIRONDACKS: Group says acid rain damage would be reduced if law is put in effect

By MARC HELLER, TIMES WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT

WASHINGTON — The Adirondack Council is praising a renewed proposal from the Obama administration to cut pollution that causes acid rain in the Northeast.

The proposed cuts in sulfur and nitrogen oxides are deep enough to stop most of the damage acid rain inflicts on the Adirondacks, the Council said in a news release.

Still, the group urged Congress to put the proposed cuts in law, rather than rely on regulations that could face coal industry lawsuits.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency proposed the Clean Air Interstate Rule last week, including a 71 percent cut in sulfur dioxide emissions and a 52 percent cut in nitrogen oxide emissions when combined with other agency actions.

The proposal is open for public comment for 60 days.

A prior Clean Air Interstate Rule proposed by the Bush administration was rescinded by a federal court that demanded better evidence of how the regulations would benefit public health, then reinstated while the EPA revised it.

The new rule, with more strict emissions limits, would cost business about \$2.8 billion in 2014, when limits fully take effect. But the EPA said savings in public health would far outweigh the cost to power plant operators.

"The Adirondack Council is pleased with this new rule and congratulates the Obama administration for advancing it," the group said. Any similar law passed by Congress should be "at least as protective" as the new EPA rule, the group said.

Efforts to pass legislation have been complicated by the debate on climate change and carbon dioxide. Democratic leaders have been pushing for legislation to reduce carbon emissions, possibly adding acid rain reduction. But that initiative has been held up in the Senate, largely because of Republican opposition and concerns about the cost to industry of ordering cuts in carbon emissions.

Aquatic life has been harmed by acid rain in more than 700 Adirondack lakes and ponds, the Adirondack Council reported.