

NEWS RELEASE



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ADIRONDACK COUNCIL LAUDS EPA'S NEW 'CROSS-STATE AIR POLLUTION RULE' & CALLS ON CONGRESS TO SAFEGUARD PROGRESS WITH LAWSUIT-RESISTANT LAW
Adirondack Park and East Coast will see Dramatic Decreases in the Effects of Acid Rain
Tens of Thousands of Lives will be Saved by Reductions in Smog & Fine Particles

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The much-anticipated Cross-State Air Pollution Rule (formerly the Clean Air Transport Rule) was granted final approval by the Obama Administration today, clearing the way for the nation's most sensitive natural areas –including New York's Adirondack and Catskill parks – to recover from decades of chemical poisoning that stunted and killed plants and wildlife from the highest mountain peaks to the lowest wetlands.

"This is a historic day for the Adirondack Park, the Catskill Park and the neighboring Appalachian Mountain Range, from Maine to the Great Smoky Mountain National Park," said Brian L. Houseal, Executive Director of the Adirondack Council, a national leader in the fight against acid rain. "We will look back a decade from now and mark today as the beginning of the final chapter in the sad saga of chronic acid rain and smog on the East Coast of America.

"The worst-hit places in the nation now have a real chance for a healthy future, free of contaminated soils, dying forests and fish poisoned by mercury," Houseal said. "It was a long time coming, but the big day is finally here.

"This organization has struggled since 1975 to put a stop to acid rain, he said. "We will celebrate this milestone. President Obama and EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson will become permanent Adirondack heroes if this program is carried out as planned. We offer them our everlasting gratitude."

However, Houseal noted that there is still a chance that a lawsuit from affected power plants will delay or prevent the enforcement of the new rule. That is exactly what happened to the EPA's most recent attempt to control power plant emissions via regulation with the Clean Air Interstate Rule in 2008.

"That's why we want Congress to reinforce EPA's authority to impose these rules by passing a law that instructs EPA to make deep cuts in sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides from power plants, the two main causes of acid rain and smog," Houseal said. "That will curb any lawsuits from power companies challenging EPA's interpretation of Congressional intent. These new rules are an extension of EPA's authority under the existing Clean Air Act. Greedy power plant owners and coal companies have used armies of lawyers nit-pick every rule EPA has attempted to issue."

Houseal noted that the rules issued by EPA following the enactment of Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (which created the nation's first acid rain control program), were the EPA's last successful attempt to curb power plant emissions.

"The Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 called for a specific level of cuts, which EPA carried out between 1995 and 2010," Houseal said. "Those emissions cuts were extremely effective in reducing

the continuing, day-to-day damage in the Adirondack Park, and beyond. But they only did half of the job. We need these new cuts if we hope to finish the job.”

The new rule will require a 73-percent cut in sulfur dioxide and a 54 percent cut in nitrogen oxides from all electric power plants in 31 states and the District of Columbia, ranging from Texas to the Atlantic Coast, by 2014. More than half of those power plants’ emissions cause acid rain and smog in New York, as those pollutants are carried northeast by prevailing winds.

The Cross-State Rule is intended to replace the Clean Air Interstate Rule, which was finalized by the Bush Administration in 2005 and then remanded to the U.S. EPA for revisions in 2008 by a U.S. District Court decision. Rather than revise and reissue the rejected rule, EPA decided to start from scratch.

EPA estimates that the new rule would yield between \$120 and \$290 billion in annual benefits, starting in 2014. This far outweighs the estimated annual costs of \$2.8 billion.

The emission reductions from the new rule would lead to significant annual health benefits. EPA says the rule would protect public health by avoiding:

- 13,000 to 34,000 premature deaths;
- 15,000 nonfatal heart attacks;
- 19,000 cases of acute bronchitis;
- 19,000 hospital and emergency room visits;
- 1.8 million days when people miss work or school;
- 400,000 cases of aggravated asthma; and,
- 420,000 upper and lower respiratory symptoms.

Air quality improvements would lead to increased visibility in national and state parks, and increased protection for sensitive ecosystems including, Adirondack and Appalachian lakes and streams, coastal waters and estuaries, and sugar maple and spruce/fir forests.

“I want to thank the members who submitted heart-felt, hand-written comments to the EPA last year,” noted Houseal. “These comments were important encouragement to the EPA and each one is given as much weight as a whole stack of computer-generated mass emailed messages.”

In the Adirondack Park, acid rain has wiped out native aquatic life in hundreds of lakes and ponds; it has killed high-elevation spruce/fir forests and devastated sugar maple forests at lower elevations. It harms birds and mammals that feed on insects by changing soil chemistry; and, it has poisoned potable water supplies by causing lead and copper to break free from pipes and fixtures in people’ homes.

High-elevation smog is currently dense enough to harm hikers and climbers on Adirondack mountain peaks on hot summer days.

Founded in 1975, the Adirondack Council is dedicated to ensuring the ecological integrity and wild character of the Adirondack Park, through research, education, advocacy and legal action. Adirondack Council members live in all 50 United States.

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