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## Action offers acid rain relief

Adirondacks, Catskills will benefit under new White House initiative

By MARY ESCH Associated Press

ALBANY -- A new air pollution rule approved by the Obama administration will help plants and wildlife in the Catskills, Adirondacks and other Northeastern mountains recover from decades of acid rain, an environmental group said Thursday.

"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 Houseal, executive director of the Adirondack Council. "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."

The new rule, given final approval by the Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday, requires 27 states -- including New York -- to reduce both smog and acid-rain causing pollutants, namely sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide. The regulation is one of several expected from the EPA that would target pollution from the nation's 594 coal-fired power plants.

Houseal said Congress must reinforce EPA's authority to impose the new rule. That would prevent lawsuits by power companies from blocking its implementation.

That's what happened the last time EPA tried to control power plant emissions with a different rule in 2008.

The industry had mixed reactions.

"Based on our initial review of the final rule released today, we believe the compliance dates and emission reductions are reasonable and achievable, while maintaining the reliability of the electric system," said Michael Bradley, executive director of the Clean Energy Group, a coalition of electric power companies.

A pro-coal industry association, however, called the regulations and other pending EPA rules "among the most expensive ever imposed by the agency."

"The EPA is ignoring the cumulative economic damage new regulations will cause," said Steve Miller, president and CEO of the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity.