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## Clean Air Groups Announce Court Settlement Requiring Haze Cleanup Action for 43 States

### PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### Agreement will force action toward cleaner air and clearer skies in National Parks

WASHINGTON, DC — Today, a coalition of clear air advocates and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) filed a consent decree in court that establishes firm, enforceable deadlines for action on plans to clean up haze pollution in 43 states. The decree, if approved by the court, will require states and the EPA to issue enforceable plans to curb haze-causing pollution from the nation's biggest and oldest coal-fired power plants. Adequate pollution reduction plans will result in healthier air for people to breathe and clearer skies for people to enjoy the nation's largest and most scenic national parks, wilderness areas, and wildlife refuges.

"If you cannot see through the air, it is not good to breathe. Visibility is a long recognized surrogate for healthy air and healthy air is what millions of visitors traveling annually to our national parks and wilderness areas expect. But, instead they experience asthma attacks and are unable to see the postcard views because they have been obscured by haze pollution," said NPCA Clean Air Counsel Stephanie Kodish. "More than 30 years ago Congress committed to restoring clean, clear air to America's most prized public lands. Under our decree, this delay will come to an end. At this time next year we should have enforceable plans to protect public health and public lands in 43 states."

"There should be no more delays in cleaning up the dirty air in these majestic places," said attorney David Baron of Earthjustice, an environmental law firm representing the groups in the case along with Wyoming attorney Reed Zars. "It's time to move forward so that people can enjoy unpolluted views in national parks and wilderness areas. People should not have to worry about breathing polluted, unhealthful air when they go to a national park."

The Clean Air Act requires states to reduce haze pollution in all protected national parks, wilderness areas and wildlife refuges by December 2007. EPA did not approve plans for a single state by that deadline, and though some plans have since been made in some areas, the vast majority of states still lack plans approved or adopted by EPA. Today's action helps to correct that failure; the consent decree is a legal instrument that, once signed by the court, will require final EPA action on each state plan by deadlines ranging from December 2011 to November 2012. NPCA, Powder River Basin Resource Council,

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Montana Environmental Information Center, Grand Canyon Trust, Sierra Club, Environmental Defense Fund, San Juan Citizens Alliance, Our Children's Earth, and Plains Justice collaborated to bring this action.

"We all deserve pristine views and crisp air when visiting our nation's treasured parks," said Pamela Campos, attorney with Environmental Defense Fund. "Today's actions will ensure that some of the nation's oldest and dirtiest power plans and industrial facilities are cleaned up."

"Most national park air pollution from human sources comes from burning fossil fuels - coal, oil, and gas," said Tiffany Schauer, executive director of Our Children's Earth Foundation. "Although pollution from power plants varies by region; this one sector emits excessive amounts. Reducing air pollution from power plants can help the United States reduce the burden of disease from respiratory infections, heart disease, and lung cancer."

This legal action, while far-reaching and important in impact, represents a first step and only a portion of the Clean Air Act's provisions that have yet to be fully implemented. Additional protections are still needed concerning stronger air quality standards for ozone and limits on mercury and other pollutants from coal- and oil-fired utility boilers. Actions on these standards would complement the consent agreement filed today and represent a great opportunity for putting the right policies in place to clean the air, restore our national parks and improve public health.

Class I areas that are covered by the Clean Air Act: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/air/maps/images/ClassIAreas.jpg>

Consent Decree as filed on November 9, 2011: [http://www.npca.org/assets/pdf/04\\_EPA\\_Notice\\_Lodging\\_Consent\\_11-09-2011.pdf](http://www.npca.org/assets/pdf/04_EPA_Notice_Lodging_Consent_11-09-2011.pdf)

Regional Haze deadline schedules by state: [http://www.npca.org/assets/pdf/11-2-11\\_regional\\_haze\\_deadline\\_schedules.pdf](http://www.npca.org/assets/pdf/11-2-11_regional_haze_deadline_schedules.pdf)

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