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NEWS RELEASE

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NEW REPORT RANKS MOST POLLUTED NATIONAL PARKS

Eleven years of data reveal parks suffer air pollution worse than that of many cities

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- A new report released today by three conservation groups shows that air in national parks is more polluted than that of many urban areas. Code Red: America's Five Most Polluted National Parks, produced by Appalachian Voices, the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), and Our Children's Earth, ranks the most polluted parks as follows:

1. Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee and North Carolina
2. Shenandoah National Park in Virginia
3. Mammoth Cave National Park in Kentucky
4. Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks in California
5. Acadia National Park in Maine

"In the Great Smoky Mountains, our most polluted national park, ozone pollution exceeds that of Atlanta, Georgia, and even rivals Los Angeles, California," said Harvard Ayers, chairman of Appalachian Voices.

The study uses an air-pollution index, developed by Appalachian Voices for two earlier studies, to rank the five most-polluted national parks based on haze, ozone, and acid precipitation. The index compares data collected from 1991 through 2001 at ten national parks with the most extensive monitoring programs. It assesses progress made during the decade since passage of 1990 amendments to the Clean Air Act, the most recent changes to the law.

"National parks have seen little to no improvement despite the most recent amendments to the Clean Air Act," said Don Barger, NPCA's Southeast regional director. "For example, pollution from outdated power plants continues to harm parks and people, when there's no reason older power plants cannot meet modern pollution control requirements."

The impacts of air pollution are evident throughout the National Park System. For example, Yosemite in California ranked third in the analysis for ozone exposure, and Big Bend in Texas has some of the worst visibility in the West, and it is getting worse.

"New statistics from the World Health Organization show that in the United States, air pollution annually kills nearly twice as many people as do traffic accidents and that deaths from air pollution equal deaths from breast cancer and prostate cancer combined," said Tiffany Schauer, executive director of Our Children's Earth Foundation.

Most park air pollution from human sources comes from burning fossil fuels - coal, oil, and gas. Power plants and industrial facilities as well as cars, trucks, planes, trains, and construction equipment produce fossil-fuel pollution. Although pollution from power plants varies by region, this one sector emits excessive amounts, especially in the eastern half of the country.

Federal laws mandate that national parks should have the cleanest air in America, but this requirement remains unfulfilled. The Bush Administration's legislative and administrative proposals for changing air-protection laws and programs reduce progress toward this promise to parks, jeopardizing public health. Code Red offers recommendations critical to reversing park pollution, including:

- The Bush Administration must implement and enforce existing programs of the Clean Air Act, such as the Regional Haze Rule, including the Best Available Retrofit.
- Technology (BART) amendment and the New Source Review program.
- Federal legislation must be enacted to make timely, sizeable cuts in power-plant emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, mercury, and carbon dioxide.
- Emissions from mobile sources must be reduced, and vehicle efficiency must be increased.
- In the absence of strong federal action to reduce emissions, states must find ways to protect themselves, such as controlling in-state sources of pollution in order to ensure timely reductions.

"Air pollution in the national parks is a national crisis that requires national solutions," said Joy Oakes, director of NPCA's Clean Air for Parks and People campaign. "A key part of the solution is for the Bush Administration to enforce existing pollution laws. Unfortunately, the Administration is abandoning programs essential to cleaning up the air in our parks and communities."

To read the full report, please go to <http://www.eparks.org/codered>

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