



**For Immediate Release:**

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## **ADEM On Pace to Achieve Long-Term Clean Air Goal**

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management is on pace to achieve the national visibility goals for national parks and wilderness areas established by Congress in the Clean Air Act Amendments. Commonly referred to as the Regional Haze Rule, this effort provides a strategy and long-term goal of improving visibility, and providing cleaner air, in national parks and wilderness areas.

Regional haze refers to haze that impairs visibility in all directions over a large area. This haze is composed of small particles that absorb and scatter light, thus limiting how well a person can see distant objects. Sources of regional haze include motor vehicles, power plants, industrial/manufacturing processes, outdoor debris burning, and natural sources such as wildfire and windblown dust.

In 2007, Alabama and other state agencies worked with EPA to develop plans for improving visibility in 156 national parks and wilderness areas in the United States. These plans require emissions reductions from specified industries for the purpose of improving visibility and also rely on emissions reductions from other national programs, such as reductions from cars and utilities.

The only area in Alabama required to be addressed by the regional haze planning process is the Sipsey Wilderness area, located in north Alabama. The regional haze plan developed by ADEM predicted an improvement in visibility that is expected to be achieved in 2018. However, current measurements indicate that the improvement in visibility at the Sipsey Wilderness area through 2010 is better than the improvement predicted by the regional haze plan.

“We are very pleased to be ahead of schedule in our goal of improving air quality and visibility in the Sipsey Wilderness area,” said ADEM Director Lance LeFleur. “America’s national parks and wilderness areas are enjoyed by countless visitors each year and our staff will continue to work to ensure they have clean air and clear visibility to enjoy these natural treasures.”

By 2013 states are required to submit updates to the original regional haze plans which will evaluate the improvements in visibility that have already been achieved. In addition, all states are required to develop new regional haze plans every 10 years through 2064. The next regional haze plan is due in 2018.

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