

Illinois Failed To Submit Pollution Reduction Plans To The Environmental Protection Agency

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SPRINGFIELD - Yesterday, a coalition of organizations filed a notice of intent (NOI) to sue the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for its failure to enforce the Regional Haze Rule required by the Clean Air Act.

The Regional Haze Rule is designed to protect our national parks and wilderness areas from fossil fuels and other sources of pollution that cause haze clouds, which contain vast smog-like clouds of pollutants that degrade air quality over hundreds of miles. [Analysis done by the National Parks Conservation Association \(NPCA\)](#) shows that the Prairie State coal plant is one of Illinois' most significant contributors to regional haze pollution. While Illinois does not have any areas specifically protected under Regional Haze Rule, the state hosts several heavily polluting facilities that degrade air quality at dozens of our country's national parks in neighboring states. The EPA must enforce the existing application deadline and insist that the Illinois EPA submit a state implementation plan (SIP) as soon as possible.

"Yesterday's action reinforces how critical Illinois' efforts are to put our state on track to decarbonize our power and transportation sectors through the recent passage of the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act and Reimagining Electric Vehicles Act," said Sierra Club Illinois Director Jack Darin. "Since Illinois is home to the Prairie State coal plant, one of the largest polluting coal plants in the nation, we need strong emissions reduction requirements for facilities like this not only for our climate but for protecting our public lands under the Clean Air Act."

Illinois is among thirty-nine states that failed to submit their most recent Regional Haze plans to the EPA by the deadline of July 31, 2021. The EPA had until January 31, 2022 to issue a formal finding that these states have failed to submit the requisite Regional Haze state implementation plan (SIP), but the agency has not yet done so. The NOI filed by the coalition of organizations asks the EPA to fulfill its mandatory obligation established by Congress.

Haze impacts 90 percent of our country's national parks, with the same pollutants responsible for the widespread pollution that harms public health, particularly in communities targeted by generations of systemic racism. Air pollution worsens community health, drives up healthcare costs, and makes it harder for kids to learn and play and adults to work. The same sources of pollution that are harming our communities are also fueling the climate crisis. Strong regional haze plans will help us attain natural visibility in our national parks, improve public health, and reduce pollution that is changing our climate.

About the Sierra Club

The Sierra Club is America's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with millions of members and supporters. In addition to protecting every person's right to get outdoors and access the healing power of nature, the Sierra Club works to promote clean energy, safeguard the health of our communities, protect

wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. For more information, visit www.sierraclub.org.