



NEWS RELEASE **For Immediate Release**

The Environment Department's mission is to protect and restore the environment and to foster a healthy and prosperous New Mexico for present and future generations.

December 10, 2025

Contact: Drew Goretzka, Director of Communications
New Mexico Environment Department
505.670.8911 | drew.goretzka@env.nm.gov

New Mexico assures clearer skies in state's parks and wilderness Measures improve air quality in New Mexico's outdoor recreational areas

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Environmental Improvement Board this week adopted a state plan and air quality regulations to reduce pollution in New Mexico's national parks and wilderness areas under the Clean Air Act's Regional Haze Program.

"People from all over the world visit New Mexico to experience the unique natural and cultural landscapes at our national parks and wilderness areas," said **Environment Secretary James Kenney**. "Today's decision represents the culmination of years of cooperation to help protect these places and the recreational opportunities, cultural importance, and natural beauty they provide."

The Regional Haze Program sets targets over time to assure states like New Mexico reduce haze that make skies appear brown or hazy, even on otherwise clear days. The haze is caused when air pollutants such as nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide react with sunlight in the atmosphere to create fine particulate matter.

In addition to improving visibility at New Mexico's national parks and wilderness areas, the Regional Haze Program improves the air quality for New Mexico residents and visitors. The fine particles that cause haze can also irritate the lungs and make it harder for some people to breathe — especially children, older adults, and people with asthma.

Under the program, New Mexico will improve visibility in nine of the most popular areas in the state, including:

- Bandelier Wilderness Area
- Bosque del Apache Wilderness Area
- Carlsbad Caverns National Park
- Gila Wilderness Area
- Pecos Wilderness Area
- Salt Creek Wilderness Area

- San Pedro Parks Wilderness Area
- Wheeler Peak Wilderness Area
- White Mountain Wilderness Area

Measures under the Regional Haze Program include requiring new, cost-effective emission controls on certain active emission units and ensuring that certain previously retired emissions units remain out of service.

Collectively, these measures are projected to reduce approximately 18,000 tons per year of nitrogen oxide emissions and 5,300 tons per year of sulfur dioxide emissions — totaling more than 23,000 tons of haze-forming pollution removed from New Mexico’s air annually.

This week’s measure taken by the Environmental Improvement Board is the result of seven years of collaborative work led by the New Mexico Environment Department in coordination with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, state and local agencies, Tribal governments, federal land managers, industry stakeholders, and other interested parties.

The state’s Regional Haze Plan, companion rule, and all supporting information can be viewed at the NMED Air Quality Bureau’s dedicated [Regional Haze Planning Website](#).

###

NMED does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age or sex in the administration of its programs or activities, as required by applicable laws and regulations. NMED is responsible for coordination of compliance efforts and receipt of inquiries concerning non-discrimination requirements implemented by 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 13 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972. If you have any questions about this notice or any of NMED’s non-discrimination programs, policies or procedures, you may contact: Kate Cardenas, Non-Discrimination Coordinator | NMED | 1190 St. Francis Dr., Suite N4050 | P.O. Box 5469 | Santa Fe, NM 87502 or (505) 827-2855 or nd.coordinator@env.nm.gov. If you believe that you have been discriminated against with respect to a NMED program or activity, you may contact the Non-Discrimination Coordinator.

###