



## Special Environmental Concerns

# Clean Air Act

## Regional Visibility Degradation

Clean Air Act  
Criteria Pollutants

Clean Air Act  
Regional Visibility  
Degradation

Clean Water Act

Coastal Zone  
Management  
Areas

Coral Reefs

Endangered  
and Threatened  
Species

Environmental  
Justice

Essential Fish  
Habitat

Floodplain  
Management

Invasive  
Species

Migratory Birds

Prime and  
Unique  
Farmlands

Riparian Areas

Wetlands

Wild and Scenic  
Rivers

### CLEAN AIR ACT - Regional Visibility Degradation

The Clean Air Act recognizes the issue of “regional visibility degradation” as excessive concentrations of particulate matter and other pollutants in the atmosphere that degrade visibility in national parks and other “Class I areas”.

#### What is it?

Regional visibility degradation occurs when concentrations of particulate matter, oxides of nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>), and sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) in the atmosphere hinder the ability to view distant objects or vistas. Of these, the primary visibility-degrading pollutants of concern for agriculture are particulate matter and NO<sub>x</sub>.

#### Why is it important?

Class I areas are areas of national or regional natural, scenic, recreational, or historic value that are given special protection under the Clean Air Act. One of these special protections is preservation of the visibility of scenic vistas within the Class I areas. EPA has developed the Regional Haze Rule that directs states to establish goals for improving visibility in national parks and wilderness areas. States are required to develop long-term strategies for reducing emissions of air pollutants that cause visibility impairment. The goals and requirements vary by state and by Class I area.

#### What can be done about it?

Reducing agricultural emissions that contribute to increased concentrations of particulate matter and NO<sub>x</sub> in the air, especially from sources near a Class I area, will help mitigate agriculture’s contribution to regional haze issues. These emissions include directly-emitted particulate matter, such as dust and smoke, and NO<sub>x</sub>. Additionally, emissions of ammonia and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), as well as NO<sub>x</sub>, can contribute to fine particulate matter formation in the atmosphere. Many common NRCS practices can be used address agriculture’s contribution to regional visibility degradation by reducing emissions of these pollutants.

### Clean Air Act - Regional Visibility Degradation at a Glance

Problems / Indicators - Regional haze and poor visibility of scenic areas	
Causes	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dust emissions</li> <li>• Poor smoke management</li> <li>• Wind erosion</li> <li>• NO<sub>x</sub> emissions</li> <li>• Ammonia emissions</li> <li>• VOC emissions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dust control, windbreaks</li> <li>• Proper smoke management</li> <li>• Maintain surface residue/cover</li> <li>• Proper maintenance and operation of combustion sources</li> <li>• Proper nutrient and manure management</li> <li>• Reductions in pesticide use</li> </ul>