

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Rob Burbank, AMC Public Affairs Director
(603) 466-2721, ext. 195
rburbank@outdoors.org

Ozone and Haze Threaten National Parks and Wilderness in Northeast;
AMC Calls for Strong "Clean Air in the Parks" Rule

BOSTON, Mass. — Acadia and Shenandoah National Parks are at times plagued by some of the dirtiest air in the nation, according to data released by the Environmental Protection Agency today. Both are in counties listed as being in violation of EPA ozone health standards.

The report underscores the urgent need to improve air quality in our most treasured parks and Wilderness areas, says the Appalachian Mountain Club, which called on EPA to implement a strong "Clean Air in the Parks," or Best Available Retrofit Technology (BART) rule, to help provide further reductions in ozone and to reduce regional haze that can severely diminish scenic views to unacceptable levels.

AMC's research shows that mountain hikers can be exposed to unhealthy ozone levels as high as those found in urban areas. AMC's research also shows that people visiting Wilderness areas consider visibility in mountain areas below 33 miles "unacceptable." With haze in our region often reducing 100-mile vistas to 15 miles or less, air pollution can also threaten the health of local economies in tourism-dependent regions.

EPA is legally required to issue a draft Best Available Retrofit Technology (BART) rule by April 15. Finalizing a strong BART rule is needed to fulfill a mandate laid out in the 1977 amendments to the Clean Air Act and the subsequent Regional Haze Rule of 1999, which requires a return to natural visibility in 156 national parks, refuges and Wilderness areas by 2064.

Areas impacted by the rule include Acadia National Park in Maine, New Hampshire's Great Gulf and Presidential-Dry River Wilderness areas in the White Mountain National Forest, the Lye Brook Wilderness in Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest, the Brigantine Wilderness in New Jersey and Shenandoah National Park in Virginia.

EPA has asked for public comment on whether the reduction in emissions provided by the Interstate Air Quality Rule (IAQR) would be sufficient to meet the initial haze reduction requirements under the 1999 Regional Haze Rule. Such action would basically

delay implementation of BART for a decade. AMC has called for immediate implementation of a strong BART rule, above and beyond IAQR, because BART deals specifically with air quality in parks and Wilderness areas. In addition, BART is one of the tools necessary to protect air quality in areas downwind of pollution sources.

“Ozone and haze both contribute to air pollution in the Northeast. Addressing ozone without dealing with regional haze would leave the job of cleaning up air pollution in our parks mostly undone, and would ignore the will of Congress in amending the Clean Air Act,” said Susan Arnold, Director of Conservation at the AMC.

Since 1986, the AMC has monitored ozone levels at the summit and base of Mount Washington in cooperation with the White Mountain National Forest, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Air Resources Division, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Mount Washington Observatory.

A scientific study of hiker health, conducted by AMC in conjunction with Brigham and Women’s Hospital and the Harvard School of Public Health demonstrated that the lung function of healthy adult hikers is impaired at ambient ozone levels 50 percent below EPA’s 8-hour ozone health standard. *See study data at:* <http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/docs/1998/106p93-99korrick/korrick-full.html>. Acadia National Park experienced four days above the federal 8-hour limit in the summer of 2003.

“Dirty air is a problem in places we wouldn’t expect to find it—on remote mountaintops and in natural areas that people rely on for outdoor recreation” said Arnold. “It has been 27 years since the 1977 amendments to the Clean Air Act, and the air in our national parks and wilderness areas still is not clean. We urge EPA and our elected leaders in Congress to work together to implement effective public policies to restore clean air to our national parks and Wilderness areas.”

More information on AMC’s air quality research on the effects of ozone and regional haze can be found on the Web at <http://www.outdoors.org/research/airwater/index.shtml>. A white paper documenting the problem of air pollution in our parks titled “Toward a Strong Clean Air in the Parks Rule: Restoring Clean Air to the Northeast’s National Parks and Wilderness Areas” is available on AMC’s website at <http://www.outdoors.org/pdfs/cleanair-parks.pdf>.

Founded in 1876, the Appalachian Mountain Club is the oldest conservation and recreation organization in the United States. With more than 91,000 members in the Northeast and beyond, the nonprofit AMC promotes the protection, enjoyment, and wise use of the mountains, rivers and trails of the Appalachian region.

The AMC supports natural resource conservation while encouraging responsible recreation, based on the philosophy that successful, long-term conservation depends upon first-hand enjoyment of the natural environment.