



A Breadth of Fresh Air Quality Information

New Resources Available to National Parks About Air Quality Status & Trends

Background

A couple of recently published reports are available on both the Air Resources Division website and NETN's Air Quality webpage. One report is designed to provide an overview of approaches to assess impacts to air quality and resources affected by air pollution. The other report includes air quality information for 163 NPS units, covering air quality indicators such as ozone, visibility and atmospheric deposition for the years 1999-2008. Details of both reports are provided below.

Results and Findings

Technical Guidance on Assessing Impacts to Air Quality in NEPA and Planning Documents

www.nature.nps.gov/air/Pubs/pdf/AQGuidance_2011-01-14.pdf

It is within the power of park managers to approve or deny projects that generate air pollution within national park boundaries, however it is also recognized that many of the pollution sources affecting parks are located outside the confines of the park. For these projects NPS staff can work with other agencies, industries, or groups to communicate air pollution impacts. The policies and recommendations contained within the *Technical Guidance* report are intended to facilitate the decision making process for evaluating the severity of air quality impacts from internal and external activities, and improve the internal air resources management of the National Park Service.

The report specifically applies to projects assessed under the National Environmental Policy Act

(NEPA) and other planning initiatives affecting the National Park Service. It is technical air quality guidance for park staff and specialists and its intended uses include developing initial air pollution emissions estimates, determining the appropriate level of air quality analysis, assessing whether air pollution impacts are likely, and describing the degree and severity of those impacts to resources in national parks. The report also intends to provide NPS managers with air quality information for consideration when assessing compliance with the no-impairment mandate of the Organic Act. While this document provides guidance on determining impairment, it does not establish a "bright line" for the amount of air pollution or air quality impacts which are acceptable or unacceptable.

Air Quality in National Parks

2009 Annual Performance & Progress Report

www.nature.nps.gov/air/who/npsPerfMeasures.cfm

The National Park Service works to preserve, protect, enhance, and understand air quality and resources sensitive to air quality in the National Park System.

The NPS: "[S]hall promote and regulate the use of . . . national parks, monuments, and reservations . . . which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

NPS Organic Act

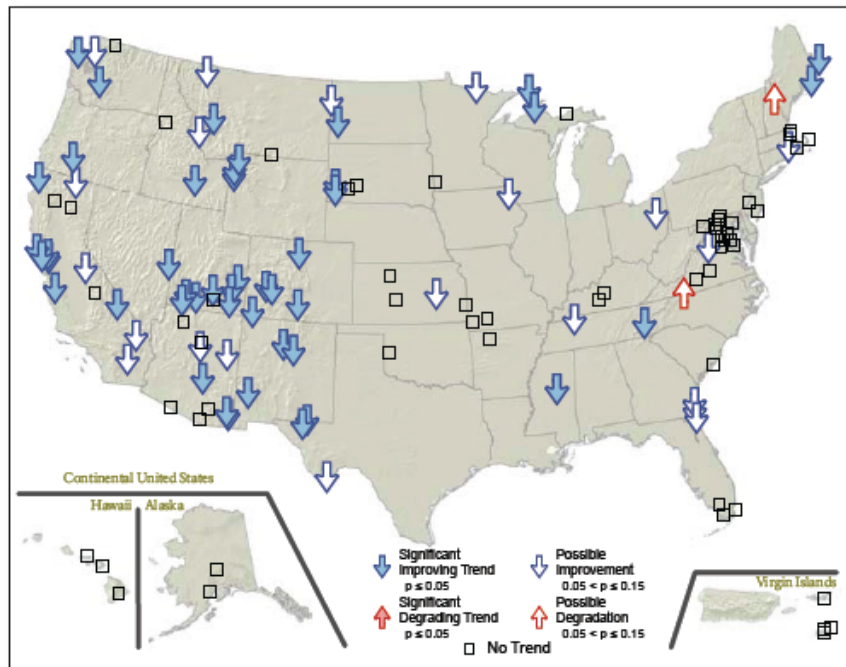


Sunset at Bass Harbor. Acadia National Park is one of 49 parks showing significant improvement in visibility on the clearest days. Justin Russell photo.

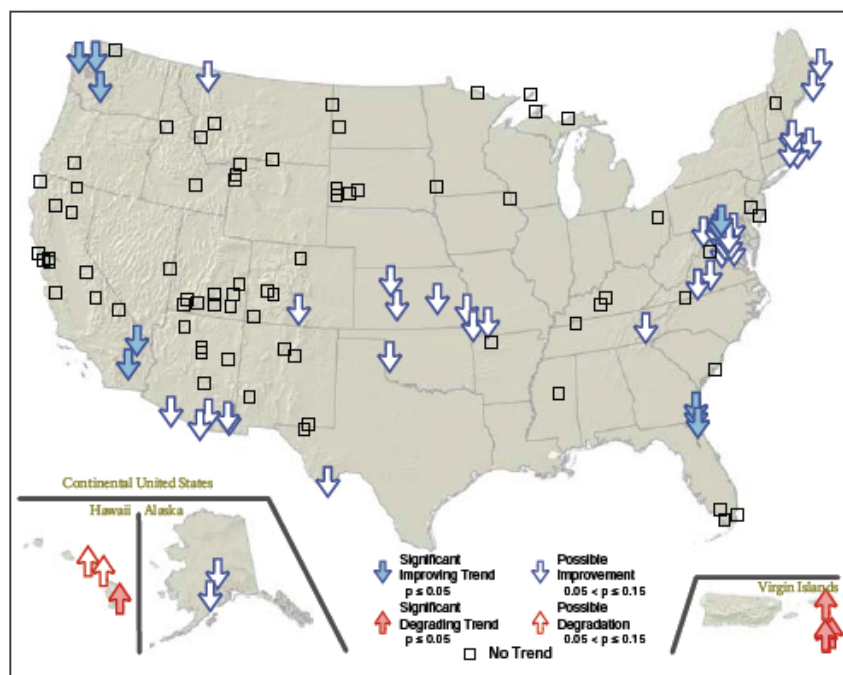
This is crucial to parks because air pollution affects ecological health, scenic views, human health, and visitor enjoyment even at relatively low levels. The NPS directly monitors at least one of the indicators of visibility, ozone, and atmospheric deposition in 57 park units creating sufficient data to assess conditions and trends for these parks. In addition, many state and local air quality monitoring stations are located near enough to parks that the data they collect are considered reasonably representative of park air quality. As a result, air quality conditions and trends have been calculated for 195 monitoring locations representing 241 park units.

The recently published annual performance report examines data collected between 1999 and 2008 and includes ozone, visibility, and deposition. The report offers information on air quality trends and whether parks are above or below air quality thresholds but does not provide current air quality metric values.

Results of the study indicate that the NPS exceeded air quality performance goals for 2009, with 97 percent of the reporting parks showing no trends or improving trends in visibility, 100 percent showing no trends or improving trends in ozone concentrations, and 93 percent showing no trends or improving trends in atmospheric deposition. The report, along with the Air Quality Estimates 2004-2008 report - which provides 5-year interpolated data for the same air quality indicators for 271 parks - can be great assets in determining the air quality conditions of national parks.



Trends in haze index (deciview) on the clearest days. 1999 - 2008. From P.2 of Annual Performance & Report.



Trends in haze index (deciview) on the haziest days. 1999 - 2008. From P.2 of Annual Performance & Report.

More Information

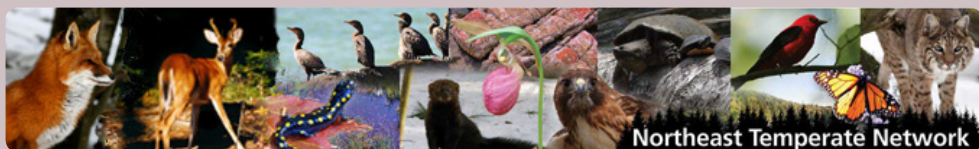
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