

**State of California
Air Resources Board
Board Item Summary**

Item # 22-9-3: Public Meeting to Consider California's Regional Haze State Implementation Plan

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends the California Air Resources Board (CARB or Board) approve California's Regional Haze State Implementation Plan (Regional Haze SIP) and direct staff to submit the Plan to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) for inclusion in the California SIP.

Discussion:

In 1977, Congress amended the federal Clean Air Act to include a national goal to remedy existing visibility impairment and prevent any future visibility degradation in large national parks and federal wilderness areas. These wilderness areas and national parks afforded visibility protection under the Clean Air Act are known as Class 1 areas. Twenty-nine of the 156 Class 1 areas in the country are located in California and include areas like Redwood National Park, Yosemite National Park and Joshua Tree National Monument.

To ensure progress towards meeting the national goal, U.S. EPA promulgated visibility protection rules that established state implementation plan requirements to address sources of visibility impairment and restore visibility to natural conditions by 2064. By federal rule, CARB is required to develop and submit a Regional Haze State Implementation Plan every ten years that details a long-term strategy and establishes interim goals to ensure progress is made towards restoring natural conditions at Class 1 areas by the end of 2064. California's first Regional Haze Plan was adopted by CARB in 2009 and approved by U.S. EPA in 2011.

Regional haze planning is focused on reducing anthropogenic emissions that contribute to visibility impairment or haze. Technical analyses developed by the Western Regional Air Partnership for this second planning period indicate that ammonium nitrate is a dominant component of haze attributable to anthropogenic emissions impacting California's Class 1 areas. In California, emissions of nitrogen oxides (NO_x) rather than ammonia generally drive the formation of ammonium nitrate. Controlling NO_x emissions has been effective in the past at reducing ammonium nitrate concentrations and will continue to be the most effective way to improve visibility and achieve interim visibility goals established for 2028. Given that mobile sources account for nearly 80 percent of statewide NO_x emissions, California's Regional Haze SIP presents a long-term strategy focused on mobile source NO_x emission reductions. Projections show that with the implementation of this long-term strategy, visibility in California's Class 1 areas will remain on track to reaching natural visibility conditions on or before the end of 2064.

Summary and Impacts:

The emission sources that drive visibility impairment in California's Class I areas are the same emission sources driving nonattainment with health-based air quality standards. Emission control strategies developed to address nonattainment of health-based air quality standards yield considerable visibility benefits. In most of the United States, regional haze planning is solely focused on controlling emissions from stationary sources and controlling emissions from mobile sources is deferred to federal programs. California's unique authority to establish stricter than federal controls for mobile sources provides the opportunity to focus our long-term strategy on the pollutants that matter most and emission reductions that will meaningfully improve visibility. The long-term strategy detailed in California's Regional Haze SIP is projected to result in NO_x emissions reductions amounting to more than 400 tons per day (tpd) through the implementation of already adopted measures and a commitment to adopt and implement four mobile source measures from the 2016 State SIP Strategy that provide 40 tpd of NO_x emissions reductions in 2028.

For the next regional haze planning period, staff will again take a fresh look at visibility conditions to evaluate whether progress made to improve visibility is on track to achieve natural visibility conditions by the end of 2064. As California continues to reduce emissions from mobile sources, and the resulting impact of ammonium nitrate on visibility impairment decreases, other haze pollutants may become more prominent. In alignment with the iterative planning process for the regional haze program, following future assessments, California will make any needed adjustments to the State's long-term strategy to ensure visibility continues to improve. Also, in January 2025, CARB staff will be providing a progress report to U.S. EPA on the Regional Haze SIP you are acting on today.

CARB, as the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), has reviewed the proposed Regional Haze SIP and concluded that it is exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the proposed action may result in significant adverse impact on the environment.