

## Press Release

For immediate release:  
June 23, 2008

Contact:  
Lee Pitts (Alexander) (202) 224-8816  
Bette Phelan (Carper) (202) 224-2441  
Sue Walitsky (Cardin) (202) 224-4524  
Wes Climer (Dole) (202) 224-6342  
Bronwyn Lance Chester (Warner) (202) 224-6290  
Mark Wenzler (NPCA) (202) 454-3335

### **Bipartisan Group of Senators Warn EPA Not to Relax Clean Air Rules Around National Parks**

*Say Proposed Rule Change Would Increase Pollution and Reduce Visibility Around Many of the Nation's Most Pristine Landscapes*

WASHINGTON – A group of eight U.S. Senators today urged Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Stephen Johnson to withdraw a rule that would weaken air regulations near national parks, wilderness areas and other scenic lands.

A letter, signed by Senators Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), Tom Carper (D-Del.), Judd Gregg (R-N.H.), Benjamin Cardin (D-Md.), Elizabeth Dole (R-N.C.), Ken Salazar (D-Colo.), John Warner (R-Va.) and John Tester (D-Mont.), criticized a rule proposed by the EPA in June 2007 that would “result in a significant undercounting of actual pollution sources, such as coal-fired power plants, permitting them to emit more pollution into national parks and wilderness areas.”

“At a time when we are about to make some progress in reducing air pollution, this rule would take us backwards by weakening clean air rules and making it easier to build new coal-fired power plants near the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and other parks and wilderness areas,” Alexander said. “If the EPA insists on moving forward with this rule in its present form, I will introduce legislation to overturn it.”

“Unhealthy, dirty air is a significant threat facing our nation today, and we cannot tolerate any weakening of our pollution-control regulations,” said Sen. Carper. “It is especially important that we protect our precious National Parks from pollution that threatens plant and wildlife, and as well as the hundreds of thousands of visitors who are drawn each year to experience and enjoy these uniquely American treasures. I am disappointed that the Environmental Protection Agency would move to weaken pollution restrictions around our great national treasures.”

“We have an obligation to be good stewards of the environment and to safeguard our National Parks and wilderness area. That is why I am very disappointed that the EPA would propose weakening clean air protections for national parks and other wilderness areas,” said Senator

Cardin. "This rule change shows a lack of appreciation of our park system and the American people, and I will work to ensure it never takes effect."

"Our parks are national treasures and we must keep them healthy for future generations," Dole said. "The Administration's proposed rule would be harmful to North Carolina's parks and air quality, and I will work with my colleagues to put an end to it."

"To relax clean air rules at our national parks is to do a disservice to these majestic places owned by and visited by millions of Americans each year," Warner said.

The National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) is supporting this effort.

"We thank these Senators for championing the right of all Americans to have clean, clear and healthy air when visiting our national parks," said Mark Wenzler, clean air and climate director at National Parks Conservation Association.

A copy of the letter is attached.

###

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 23, 2008

The Honorable Stephen L. Johnson  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Mr. Johnson,

We are writing to express our concerns with a proposed Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rule that would weaken clean air protections for national parks, wilderness areas and other scenic lands afforded special protection under the Clean Air Act ( known as "Class I areas").

The rule proposed by EPA in June 2007 (EPA-HQ-OAR-2006-0888) purports merely to clarify the way in which pollution levels in Class I areas are measured. However, analyses by the National Park Service and EPA's regional air quality experts demonstrate that the proposed changes would result in a significant undercounting of actual pollution sources, such as coal-fired power plants, permitting them to emit more pollution into national parks and wilderness areas.

For these reasons, the National Park Service and every EPA regional office oppose the changes EPA has proposed. The National Park Service says the proposed rule "provides the lowest possible degree of protection" for air quality in Class I areas. EPA air quality experts have complained that the proposal is "grossly inadequate," based on "false assumptions" and "full of errors," and have said that it will "jeopardize protection" of Class I air quality.

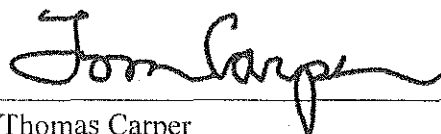
Congress made a firm commitment to protect air quality in America's national parks and wilderness areas so that visitors can enjoy clear skies and healthy air. If EPA puts Class I air quality at risk by adopting this flawed rulemaking, we will pursue legislative options to restore the full level of protection provided by the Clean Air Act.

We urge you to withdraw this rulemaking now to avoid a legacy of dirty air in our national parks and wilderness areas.

Sincerely,

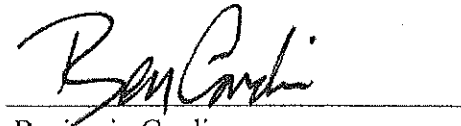


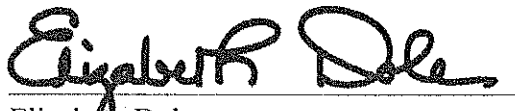
Lamar Alexander  
United States Senator




Thomas Carper  
United States Senator


  
Judd Gregg  
United States Senator

  
Benjamin Cardin  
United States Senator

  
Elizabeth Dole  
United States Senator

  
Ken Salazar  
United States Senator

  
John Warner  
United States Senator

  
Jon Tester  
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Dirk Kempthorne, Secretary of the Interior