

The Mission of the Air Program is to provide sound counsel on air quality issues to Forest Service decision makers. The Air Program envisions a healthy environment for current and future generations where natural processes can occur. We believe that: the health of humans and ecosystems are inseparable; clean air is essential; and science is a foundation for taking action. The Forest Service works to protect air quality by working with industry and regulators, monitoring air and the resources affected by air pollution and by providing the public with information about air quality. Poor air quality decreases visibility, acidifies or disrupts the natural balance in lakes and streams, injures plant and animal communities and harms human health. Progress has been made toward improving air quality across the United States since the enactment of the Clean Air Act in 1977. But air quality on Forest lands and even wilderness areas is far from pristine. As the human population with its resulting urbanization and industrialization continue to grow, the Forest Service Air Program must understand how air quality affects resources in order to work cooperatively with industry, state and federal groups to prevent and reduce air pollution and its effects to natural resources and human health. The Forest Service monitors the effects of pollution that may impair visibility, harm human health, injure trees and other plants, acidify or cause unnatural fertilization of streams and lakes, leach nutrients from soils, and degrade cultural resources, like archeological sites and historical buildings. Forest activities that can affect air quality such as prescribed burning, ski areas, and mining are also monitored to ensure compliance with air regulations for human health and to monitor possible impacts to natural resources.