



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Colorado's air quality plan receives initial approval from U.S. Environment Protection Agency

**DENVER — Friday, March 9, 2012** — Gov. John Hickenlooper announced today that Colorado's State Implementation Plan for Regional Haze, a comprehensive package of pollutant emissions reduction strategies designed to provide sweeping public health and environmental protections, has received preliminary approval from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"The EPA's proposal to approve the Regional Haze Plan is a ringing endorsement of a comprehensive and collaborative effort to address this issue," Hickenlooper said. "This plan is a major step in the state's efforts to comply with the federal Regional Haze rule, a congressionally-established air quality goal that seeks to improve visibility in national parks and wilderness areas across the country, while also providing public health benefits."

A key component of the overall plan is the 2010 Clean Air-Clean Jobs Act passed by the Colorado General Assembly that will reduce harmful pollution through emissions controls; retire old, inefficient coal-fired power plants; and convert certain electric generating units from coal to cleaner-burning natural gas.

By 2018, the plan will result in more than 70,000 tons of pollutant reductions annually, including 35,000 tons of nitrogen oxides, which leads to ground-level ozone formation. In total, the plan covers 30 units at 16 facilities throughout Colorado, including coal-fired power plants and cement kilns.

"Our plan will lead to less haze and improved visibility in some of Colorado's most treasured and scenic areas, including Rocky Mountain National Park, Mesa Verde, Maroon Bells and the Great Sand Dunes," said Dr. Christopher E. Urbina, Executive Director and Chief Medical Officer of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. "Colorado has long recognized the importance of protecting air quality in national parks and wilderness areas, and has taken a leadership role in developing a plan that reduces emissions of pollutants that adversely impact visibility. The tremendous pollution reductions will also have significant public health benefits."

"EPA's proposal to approve Colorado's plan works for both the environment and our customers," said David Eves, president and CEO of Public Service Co. of Colorado, an Xcel Energy company. "EPA has now joined the Public Utilities Commission, the Department of Public Health and Environment, the Colorado legislature and other stakeholders in endorsing our plan under the Clean Air-Clean Jobs Act. EPA's action helps assure we can significantly reduce emissions while keeping electricity affordable."

"This approval is an important endorsement of Colorado's state-led collaboration," said Tisha Conoly Schuller, President & CEO of the Colorado Oil & Gas Association. "The Clean Air-Clean Jobs Act will support job creation in Colorado's natural gas sector while measurably reducing air pollutant emissions,"

“Colorado’s bipartisan clean air plan will provide healthier air for our children and help clear the brown cloud over Denver while strengthening our economy,” said Pamela Campos, an attorney in the Environmental Defense Fund’s Colorado office. “EPA has shown strong leadership by proposing approval, clearing the way for historic pollution reductions from the single largest emitters in Colorado so that we can all breathe easier.”

“In the eyes of the American Lung Association, policies such as this that clean up our air will help prevent disease, save lives, reduce hospitalizations and improve our overall health, which also has measurable benefits in terms of health-care costs,” said Curt Huber, Executive Director for the American Lung Association in Colorado. “Each year, the total benefits of EPA’s air pollution regulations outweigh the costs by as much as 40 to 1,”

EPA will take public comment on its proposed approval and intends to finalize its decision no later than Sept. 10, 2012. The plan, as approved by the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission and submitted to the EPA, can be viewed at <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/ap/regionalhaze.html>.

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