

STATE OF COLORADO

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Dedicated to protecting and improving the health and environment of the people of Colorado

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Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

COLORADO AIR QUALITY CONTROL COMMISSION POLICY RESOLUTION

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK NITROGEN DEPOSITION REDUCTION PLAN

BACKGROUND

1. Rocky Mountain National Park (“Park”) is a nationally and internationally recognized scenic, recreational and historic public treasure located within the State of Colorado.
2. Data collected over the past 20 years and findings published in over 80 peer reviewed research articles document changes to this fragile ecosystem resulting from nitrogen deposition on the east side of the Continental Divide. These include:
 - a) Changes in the type and abundance of aquatic plant species;
 - b) Elevated levels of nitrate in surface waters;
 - c) Elevated levels of nitrogen in spruce tree chemistry;
 - d) Long-term accumulation of nitrogen in forest soils; and
 - e) A shift in alpine tundra plant communities favoring sedges and grasses of the natural wildflower flora.
3. The Colorado Air Pollution Control Act declares that it is state policy to “...achieve the maximum practical degree of air purity in every portion of the state....” The Park’s enabling legislation and other federal statutes mandate that natural resources at the Park are to remain unimpaired for future generations.
4. In 2006, the Park’s Superintendent established a resource management goal for wet nitrogen deposition at the high alpine monitoring site of Loch Vale of 1.5kg N/ha/yr. The National Park Service indicates that this is the rate of nitrogen deposition below which ecosystem changes are unlikely to occur.

5. As part of the Plan's glidepath approach, the Initiative Agencies set a 2.7 kg N/ha/yr interim goal to be achieved by 2012, which will be the primary focus of the Initiative agencies for the next several years.
6. In 2004, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the National Park Service formed the Rocky Mountain National Park Initiative ("Initiative") to study and promote action to address nitrogen deposition issues facing the Park.
7. Through a Commission subcommittee, the Initiative agencies worked collaboratively to educate and inform interested stakeholder groups about the research to date, the scientific conclusions and ecosystem impacts and the suggested approach to address and resolve issues associated with nitrogen deposition in the Park while encouraging stakeholder participation.
8. The Rocky Mountain National Park Nitrogen Deposition Reduction Plan ("Plan") is the result of this collaborative effort. The Plan is voluntary and imposes no enforceable requirement on any entity to make emission reductions at this time, but does contemplate that the Commission may be presented with future proposals to adopt enforceable requirements to reduce nitrogen deposition in the Park.

COMMISSIONERS' POLICY STATEMENT

1. The Nitrogen Deposition Reduction Plan for Rocky Mountain National Park ("Plan") developed by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, the National Park Service and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is an important step toward reducing the rate of nitrogen deposition in the Park.
2. The Nitrogen Deposition Reduction Plan represents a valuable collaborative effort by the Initiative agencies for the immediate and long-term benefit of the Park. Proactive approaches to address environmental issues in a collaborative fashion often produce innovative, durable solutions that can be implemented with a broad range of support.
3. The Park's adoption of a resource management goal for (wet) nitrogen deposition and the Plan's glidepath approach, with interim milestones, are innovative, nontraditional approaches to address the ecosystem issues being observed in Rocky Mountain National Park.
4. It is appropriate to realize and encourage reliance on the nitrogen deposition reduction co-benefits of planned, yet to be implemented, and future programs and other voluntary efforts such as those contained in the Plan especially when such measures result from a collaborative process involving a broad range of stakeholders.
5. The completion of a contingency plan by December 2009, with a public hearing for Commission review and endorsement in 2010, is appropriate. The contingency plan is necessary to prepare for the possibility that regulatory emission reduction programs already adopted, and other voluntary programs relied upon in the Nitrogen Deposition Reduction

Plan, are not sufficient to achieve the Plan's milestones. The Commission and the public will have the opportunity to evaluate the provisions of the contingency plan and the Plan endorsed by this resolution.

6. It is appropriate for the Division to provide an assessment of the impacts on ozone formation and other pertinent atmospheric impacts that may occur as a result of the Plan.

COMMISSIONERS' RESOLUTION

1. The Commission endorses the Nitrogen Deposition Reduction Plan for Rocky Mountain National Park developed by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, the National Park Service and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as an important step toward reducing the rate of nitrogen deposition in the Park.
2. The Commission will hold public hearings, at least annually, to understand the status of the Plan execution, enhance Public participation, and determine whether additional efforts are needed to support the Initiative.
3. The Commission will hold a public hearing in 2010 as set forth in the Plan to endorse the contingency plan, which will be developed and completed by December 2009.



Cynthia Peterson, Chair
Colorado Air Quality Control Commission