

# Wyoming pressed to improve air plan

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CASPER — Wyoming's plan to reduce haze generated from coal-fired power plant and trona mine emissions is still lacking, despite specific requests made by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

In an October letter to the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, an EPA official said the state regulatory agency still must respond to concerns listed about modeling, inventory of emissions and the application of "best available retrofit technology" to reduce regional haze.

"We believe the EPA's most recent correspondence indicates that unless the DEQ makes substantive changes to its plan, it's possible the EPA will reject it," Bruce Pendery, program director for the Wyoming Outdoor Council, said in a prepared statement.

Air quality officials at Wyoming DEQ were not available for comment Monday.

Regional haze is the degradation of visibility. Even on a clear day, regional haze can make views 20 to 30 miles in the distance appear whitewashed. The EPA's regional haze program is aimed at protecting visibility in "Class 1" areas, which include wilderness areas and national parks.

A 1999 EPA rule attempts to reduce regional haze, requiring each state to set forth a plan to reduce industrial pollutants, such as sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and particulate matter.

Wyoming DEQ has determined that its regional haze program must be applied to five coal-fired power plants and three trona mine facilities in the state.

"There's no doubt they are contributing haze in these protected areas," Pendery said in phone interview.

To date, DEQ has not forced the power plants or trona mines to take any particular actions, Pendery said. "But that's coming down the pike. DEQ is poised to require (best-available retrofit technology) for these."

If the EPA were to reject Wyoming's plan, the federal government could impose its own haze control plan.

"If EPA ended up writing a plan it would probably be more stringent than what the state would come up with," Pendery said. "But that may be what happens anyway. EPA has to approve the state plan, so that's a lot of leverage."