

Federal Interagency Guidance for Nitrogen and Sulfur Deposition Analyses

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This poster will describe recent guidance developed by the Federal Land Managers (FLMs) to assess potential impacts in national parks, forests, refuges, and wilderness areas from proposed powerplants, industry, and other sources of nitrogen (N) or sulfur (S) deposition. New or modified facilities are required by the Clean Air Act to undergo preconstruction New Source Review (NSR), including analyses for air quality and air quality-sensitive resources. Similarly, projects such as oil and gas development may be required to analyze their potential impacts on FLM lands under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The FLMs, including the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, previously developed guidance for evaluating the impact of additional N or S deposition on lands under their management in the Federal Land Managers' Air Quality Related Values Workgroup Report (FLAG 2010). FLAG describes deposition modeling tools as well as the Deposition Analysis Thresholds (DATs) used to assess a source's modeled contribution to deposition in an FLM area. Below the DAT, deposition from the source is considered insignificant. Above the DAT, the FLM is likely to require a refined analysis to determine if the affected area is, or is likely to be, harmed by the increase in deposition. Recently, the FLMs have issued additional guidance on the refined analysis, including the use of critical loads and target loads. The critical load is the amount of deposition below which a resource is unlikely to be harmed; the target load is based on the critical load, but may include other considerations such as time to recovery. The refined analysis considers whether air quality-sensitive resources in the affected area are sensitive to or currently impacted by deposition, whether critical or target loads have been developed for the area's resources, and whether the critical or target loads are exceeded by current or predicted deposition. The new guidance is part of a continuing effort by the FLM to ensure consistent, predictable review processes for NSR permits and Environmental Assessments and/or Environmental Impact Statements under NEPA.

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