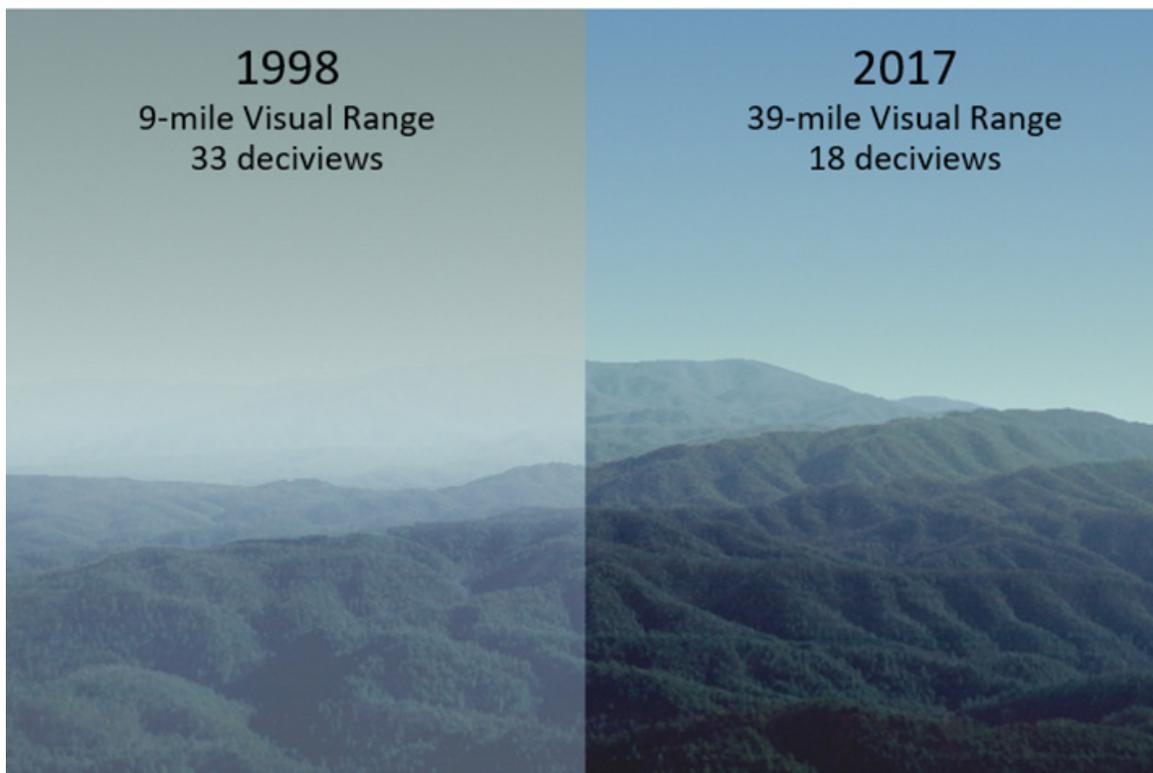


# Visible Improvements for our National Parks and Wilderness Areas

The Federal Regional Haze Program was created to improve visibility in national parks and wilderness areas classified as mandatory Federal Class I areas. Regional haze pollution is caused by both anthropogenic (man-made) and natural sources of fine particles, often transported over long distances, that decrease visibility by scattering light. Reducing fine particles in the atmosphere can be an effective way to reduce regional haze and improve visibility.

## Improvement in Visibility

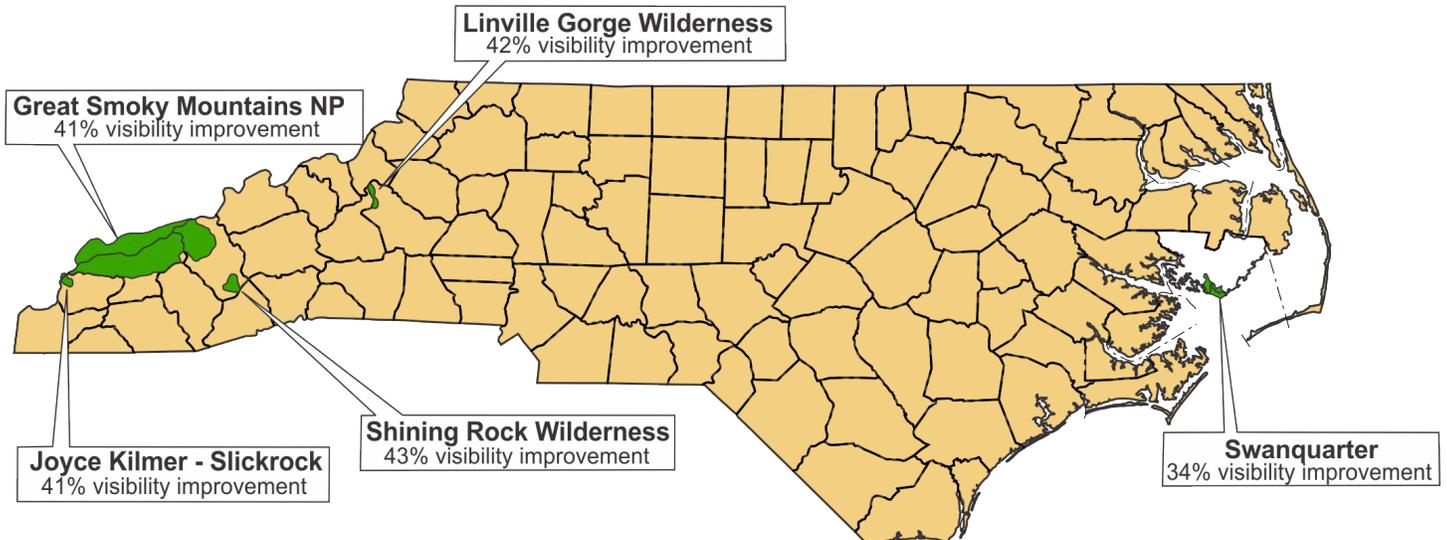
*Look Rock Overlook, Great Smoky Mountains National Park*



**North Carolina's accomplishments in improving visibility in the state's Class 1 areas are dramatic.** During the first regional haze planning period (2008 – 2018), visual range on the most impaired days has improved from about 28 to 39 miles for the state's Class I areas due to the significant reductions in sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) and nitrogen oxide (NO<sub>x</sub>) emissions achieved by North Carolina and neighboring states. This significant progress also indicates the state's Class I areas can expect visibility improvements between 5 and 13 miles through 2028.

**These improvements place the state 20 to 30 years ahead of the established Regional Haze targets for each Class I area.** This is visible proof that our Federal / State / Local / Private partnerships are working, and regulatory and non-regulatory approaches along with well-timed market influences are producing results.

## North Carolina's Class 1 Areas



North Carolina has the following five Class I areas within its borders:

- Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP)\*
- Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness Area (JOYC)\*
- Linville Gorge Wilderness Area (LIGO)
- Shining Rock Wilderness Area, (SHRO)
- Swanquarter Wilderness Area (SWAN)

\*North Carolina and Tennessee coordinate planning for the GSMNP and JOYC, which are in both states.

### State Implementation Plan Open for Public Comment

Each state is required to prepare a state implementation plans (SIP) every 10 years, and prepare progress reports every 5 years, to document progress and future plans for controlling fine particles from anthropogenic sources towards the goal of attaining natural visibility conditions in all in-state Class I areas and Class I areas in other states that may be affected by emissions from North Carolina. The goal of the program is to reach natural (background) visibility conditions for the 20% most impaired days and ensure no degradation in visibility for the 20% clearest days tracked by monitors located in most Class I areas.

This year, North Carolina prepared the Regional Haze SIP for the second planning period (2019 – 2028). This proposed plan builds on the success of the previous plan to show continued progress toward natural conditions for each of the state's Class I areas. The calculations, documentation, and analyses of the SIP for the second planning period can be found [here](#).

The public hearing for the Regional Haze SIP will be held on Wednesday, October 6 at 6 p.m. The public comment period will close on Friday, October 15. Information of the public hearing and public comment period will be posted on the NCDQA website [here](https://deq.nc.gov/regional-haze).

