

CLEANER AIR IN NEW ENGLAND

The national success in reducing the emissions of most criteria pollutants has led to dramatically cleaner air in New England, and has helped reduce the risk posed by acid rain.

Between 1974 and 1993, the number of days when air pollution in New England exceeded air quality standards was drastically reduced. Again, it is noteworthy that this decline has occurred while the economy has grown, the population has increased and the number of motor vehicles in use has grown substantially.

Since 1970, national efforts have reduced emissions of sulfur dioxide by 10 percent. Over the same period, the amount of sulfite (which contributes to the production of acid rain) deposited in rain and snow in New England has declined by 10 to 15 percent. More importantly, the observed impacts of increased acidity on New England's lakes have also been reduced. In 1985, 12 percent of New England's lakes were unable to support healthy systems due to increased acidity. Today, only eight percent of the region's public lakes show the deleterious effects of increased acidity. Still, acid rain remains a significant problem in New England.

While this progress in reducing the production of acid rain is heartening, additional controls on sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide emissions will be needed to achieve further improvement in the health of the region's lakes and forests.

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