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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release:** September 15, 2003

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### **Local Group Joins Call to Congress for Clean Air in National Parks**

**Houston, TX**— Mothers for Clean Air joined the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) and 165 conservation, health, recreation, business, and community groups today in urging Congress to clean up the air in our national parks. The letter, delivered to every congressional office this week, stresses the importance of national parks as America's heritage and urges delegates to protect and restore air quality in America's national parks.

"While we are working to clean up the air in our cities, we need to be able to breathe clean air in our national parks. Parks are not just places for enjoyment, learning, and inspiration now, but their treasured wildlife and natural features need to be preserved for future generations. Pollution from industries, power plants and other sources damages our parks and affects our quality of life every day. Our elected officials have stalled too long and must stand up now to restore clean air for people and parks," said, Jane Laping, Executive Director of Mothers for Clean Air.

National parks across the country suffer the effects of air pollution, including visibility loss, acid rain that pollutes park soil and waters, mercury contamination, and negative health effects for park visitors, staff, and wildlife. Haze generated from power plants and other sources frequently blocks scenic views at every national park that monitors visibility. And America's most visited national park, Great Smoky Mountains, is also the most polluted. During the summer of 2002, the park recorded 42 unhealthy air days—surpassing eastern cities including Atlanta. Air pollution has landed the park on America's Ten Most Endangered National Parks list for five consecutive years. The same pollution that harms America's national parks also threatens human health in communities across the country.

In Texas' own Big Bend National Park, the National Park Service is conducting the Big Bend Regional Aerosol and Visibility Observational (BRAVO) study to determine the source of sulfate aerosols that affect visibility in the park. Preliminary studies indicate that the highest sulfate levels "are associated with sources along the U.S.-Mexico Border, in Mexico, and to the north and east of Big Bend, including those in Texas and the Eastern U.S."

"Air pollution is one of the most immediate and widespread threats to our national parks and nearby communities," said Jill Stephens, spokesperson for NPCA's Clean Air for Parks and People campaign.

It is essential that Congress adopt power plant proposals that will make things better, not worse for our parks. Without strong leadership in Congress, air pollution in our national parks will not improve. The letter sent to Congress today outlines criteria air pollution proposals must meet to be considered park protective.

For information about Mothers for Clean Air see [www.mothersforcleanair.org](http://www.mothersforcleanair.org).

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