

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

North Carolina Air Quality

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature

We hear people talk about ground-level ozone as an air pollution problem. On high-ozone days, we're cautioned against outdoor activity for the good of our lungs, and elevated ozone can impact plants – damaging the leaves of plants sensitive to ozone. Ozone is not emitted directly, but forms in the air when nitrogen oxides, largely from auto exhaust and power plants, react with hydrocarbons on hot, sunny days with little wind.

The good news is North Carolina ozone levels were the lowest on record in 2014, with no exceedances of the federal ozone standard for the first time since air monitoring began in the early 1970s, this due to lower air emissions and favorable weather conditions.

Stricter state and federal requirements for industrial facilities as well as motor vehicles have contributed to the emissions reductions. These requirements have included:

- The Clean Smokestacks Act that the General Assembly passed in 2002, requiring the state's coal-fired power plants to reduce their ozone and particle-forming emissions during the following decade.
- Stricter federal controls on emissions from power plants and other industrial sources.
- More stringent federal standards for car and truck engines as well as gasoline and diesel fuel.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.