



John Muir Chapter

Sierra Club - John Muir Chapter
222 South Hamilton Street, Suite 1, Madison, Wisconsin 53703-3201
Telephone: (608) 256-0565 Fax: (608) 256-4562
E-mail: john.muir.chapter@sierraclub.org Website: wisconsin.sierraclub.org

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The Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and
The Natural Resources Board
P.O. Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707

Department of Natural Resources Air Program,

My name is Carla Klein; I am the statewide Director for Wisconsin Sierra Club. On behalf of our 14,000 Wisconsin members, I am here today to request The Department of Natural Resources promulgate the requested rules in our petition calling for a 90% reduction in toxic mercury emissions from all coal burning electric generators by 2012.

My home current is in Madison Wisconsin; however the Eau Claire area is home for me. I was raised on a dairy farm outside of New Auburn. Most of my family members still live in this region. My brother still owns our family farm.

My nieces and nephews all enjoy fishing Wisconsin's lakes and are now introducing their children to the great family tradition of catching and enjoying the fish they catch. The reality of them having to be concerned with what type of fish, and how much fish, their kids can consume before they receive a toxic dose of mercury makes me angry. I have a niece who is newly married and looking forward to starting her family. Her husband is an avid fisherman and the fact that she maybe one of the six women in Wisconsin that already have high enough mercury levels in her system to put her child at risk for mercury poisoning makes me furious.

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that one in six women of child-bearing age already carry enough mercury in her body to put her children at risk for mercury poisoning. Wisconsin's Department of Health and Family Services did a similar study and estimates that 9,000 Wisconsin children are potentially affected by mercury poisoning.

As you well know, Wisconsin has a mercury fish advisory for every one of our lakes, rivers and streams, warning that eating too many fish can poison you and your children. When did this become acceptable?

Mercury does not break down in the environment, every bit we put in the air builds up in the environment and can eventually end up in our bodies. You often hear conflicting stories on different health aspects. One week coffee is bad for you and the next it is good for you depending on a new study. It is important to note however that it is never the case when it comes to toxic elemental health impacts. A pediatrician explained to me that the more we improve our ability to measure toxins at smaller levels we find that elemental toxins like lead and mercury are found to cause negative health impacts at smaller exposure levels.

We have the technology to take care of this problem, to remove these toxins that threaten our children. But the reason given for not doing this is money. What is a child's mental capacity and lifetime earning ability worth?

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Substantial new data and information on the extent and degree of harmful health impacts to the citizens of Wisconsin have become available since NR 446 was established in 2004. According to a Mt. Sinai Medical Center study Mercury robs our children of their ability to think and learn, costing the United States over \$8.7 billion each year in productivity. If that wasn't enough, several compelling reasons for the revision and adoption of the state's power plant mercury regulations at a higher standard now exist.

The old arguments used by industry no longer hold. As stated in our petition beginning on page 5, the control technology is now available with the capability to remove 90% or more of toxic mercury emissions. That is according to the EPA's own estimates.

The cost of the technology is also no longer a barrier. Using the Department of Energy estimates it was determined the control technology would cost \$15 per family per year. I would venture if you walked down the street and asked most Wisconsinites if they would be willing to pay \$15 dollars to ensure the fish in Wisconsin lakes were safe to eat, they would agree it was well worth the cost for the peace of mind. They would probably be willing to reach in their pocket and hand it to you on the spot.

Many States have determined that the Federal mercury rule was neither timely nor protective enough and are proceeding with their own rules. Eighteen states have established more stringent emission limits than the Clean Air Mercury Rule,(CAMR) and their stricter rules will take effect sooner than EPA's. The states with regulations already promulgated represent a broad cross-section of states, including Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon. So why is Wisconsin lagging behind?

I was told back in 1990 by the Missouri DNR Director that California was the leader in environmental protection because they had to be. With their populations they had no choice. He then stated that the second leading state was Wisconsin, because they wanted to be. What has happened to our state? What is this shift in attitude? This race to the bottom? Why would we want to possibly settle for the minimum standard putting our children's health at risk? We wouldn't tell our children to strive for a D in their studies, to do just enough to squeak by to pass, to never go beyond the bare minimum. Why should such a standard be acceptable when it comes to our children's health?

Sierra Club feels it is morally unconscionable to delay the clean-up of mercury from coal fired power plants exposing our children to the potential of serious neurological harm when we could be doing so much more to protect them. We can fix this problem and we must do so. Delay is not acceptable. It time for Wisconsin to once again become a leader in environmental protection. We need to adopt the standards to reduce mercury emissions 90% by 2012 for our families and for our future.



Carla Klein
Chapter Director
Wisconsin Sierra Club