



Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

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AFFILIATED WITH NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION

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Assembly Natural Resources Committee Buys Utilities' Story on Mercury Emissions: "Hook, Line and Sinker"!

On August 20, 2003 the Assembly Natural Resources Committee voted to oppose the Department of Natural Resources' proposed rules reducing mercury emissions from four Wisconsin utilities by 80% by 2015 and have asked the Department to modify the rules to address concerns raised by Wisconsin utilities and business groups.

The utilities and business groups requested that the rule be amended to assure that Federal regulations that may be adopted in the future would preempt DNR's proposed rules and that the requirement for an 80% mercury emission reduction by the year 2015 be totally eliminated leaving in place only a 40% reduction standard by the year 2010.

"Wisconsin utilities are the single largest contributor of the mercury that contaminates our lakes and streams, the fish that live in them and the anglers and their families that eat the fish from our waters," said Bob Miller, Chair of the Fisheries Committee of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation. "Every single lake and stream in the state is listed on the DNR's Fish Contaminant Advisory thereby greatly restricting the number of fish that may be eaten by children and women of reproductive age."

"Despite these very real health threats to Wisconsin citizens and extensive support for the rule by DNR professionals, doctors, other health professionals, women of reproductive age, anglers, tourism officials, labor representatives, native Americans, representatives of religious organizations and a large number of environmental groups, the Assembly Natural Resources Committee totally bought the position advanced by utility and business groups and abdicated its responsibility to protect the health of Wisconsin citizens" said George Meyer, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation.

"If the Committee believes that the federal government is going to adopt mercury emission reduction rules that will effectively reduce mercury in our lakes, fish and kids, it is whistling past the grave yard," said Meyer. "These same utility and business groups either directly or through national groups that they belong to, have been leading the way to assure that the federal rules that are adopted do not adequately reduce mercury in our waters," indicated Meyer.

“The fact that Wisconsin, which is so heavily impacted by mercury contaminated fish, doesn’t adopt a reduction level greater than 40%, will be used by those same groups to weaken future federal mercury standards,” stated Meyer.

The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, an affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation, is the state’s largest conservation organization comprised of eighty-two hunting, fishing and trapping organizations throughout the state. It is dedicated to conservation education and the advancement of sound conservation policies. For further information contact George Meyer, Executive Director at 608-5 16-5545.