

# Clean Wisconsin

*(Founded as Wisconsin's Environmental Decade)*

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## **Poll Advises: Across Party Lines, Wisconsin Voters Want Mercury Pollution Dealt With *Federal government abandons strict mercury reductions: Will Wisconsin's Natural Resources Board and Legislature act?***

*Madison, WI* – Eighty-eight percent (88%) Wisconsin voters believe mercury pollution is a problem to be dealt with. This is among the findings of a 2003 statewide poll sponsored by Clean Wisconsin to gauge public attitudes on water issues.

The new poll echoes one that was conducted in 2002 By Chamberlain Research Consultants which found that 73% of Wisconsin citizens polled support strict reductions of mercury emissions from coal plants even though it would increase electricity costs.

The issue is particularly important in Wisconsin because there is a health advisory on every lake and river in Wisconsin due to widespread mercury contamination. Mercury exposure happens primarily from eating fish.

“It was clear two years ago and it is clear now: Wisconsin citizens support mercury reductions from power plants because they want fish that are safe to eat,” said Marc Looze, clean air campaign director for Clean Wisconsin. “The question now is why aren't the Natural Resources Board and elected officials listening to the will of the people?”

The Natural Resources Board is meeting today. Despite the fact that the Board approved unanimously a mercury reduction rule in June, Board leadership is backing away from the mercury issue and refusing to allow the mercury rule to be put on the meeting agenda. The Board may be looking to the federal government for a solution.

But according to internal documents leaked yesterday from the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Bush administration is proposing to delay and water-down the federal mercury standard. The Bush EPA is proposing to replace a strict standard that would require all power plants to install the best technology for reducing mercury pollution with a trading system that would allow many plants to make little reductions, if any at all. Even worse, the proposal would delay much needed mercury reductions.

“For years, sporting and environmental groups have said that we can't wait for the federal government, especially the Bush administration, to do something about the mercury pollution that contaminates our lakes and fish,” said Looze. “Now that we have proof, will the Natural Resources Board and Legislature fulfill their responsibility for the health of Wisconsin and take action to reduce mercury pollution?”

“The Natural Resources Board and Legislature should send a message to the federal government that they want a real commitment to reducing mercury pollution that harms people who eat fish,” said Looze. “These poll results are one more indication that Wisconsin voters, across party lines, want a reduction in mercury pollution.”

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The survey of 1200 (with a margin of error of 2.8%) registered Wisconsin voters clearly cuts across party lines as those polled consisted of 34% who vote or lean towards the independent party, 30% who vote or lean democratic, 27% who vote or lean republican, and 8% who lean elsewhere, don't know or decided not to say.

**Text of these two poll questions:**

Q. Here are some facts about Wisconsin. Do you think each is an urgent problem that should be dealt with right away, a problem but not urgent to deal with, or something that is not a problem right now? \* *Wisconsin's lakes and rivers have become increasingly polluted with mercury that comes mainly from incinerators, coal-burning power plants and chemical factories.*

For additional information on Clean Wisconsin's water poll, go to [www.cleanwisconsin.org](http://www.cleanwisconsin.org) and click on PRESS ROOM.

Clean Wisconsin, an environmental advocacy organization founded as Wisconsin's Environmental Decade, protects Wisconsin's clean water and air and advocates for clean energy by being an effective voice in the state legislature and by holding elected officials and corporations accountable. Phone: 608.251.7020, Fax: 608.251.1655, Email: [info@cleanwisconsin.org](mailto:info@cleanwisconsin.org), Website: [www.cleanwisconsin.org](http://www.cleanwisconsin.org).

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