



# Wisconsin Clean Air News

214 N. Henry Suite, 203, Madison, WI 53703  
TEL: 608-257-4994, FAX: 257-3513 [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org)

---

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
June 4, 2002

CONTACT: Brett Hulsey, 608-257-4994, 334-4994, mobile

## **New Poll Shows Wisconsin Citizens Support Mercury Pollution Cleanup to Protect Lakes, Health**

Madison, WI – As Wisconsin residents flock to lakes polluted with mercury, three-in-four (73%) citizens support stricter reductions of mercury pollution from coal plants, a Chamberlain Research poll shows.

“The poll results are good news for our breathers and lakes and bad news for Wisconsin utilities fighting a DNR proposal to cut mercury pollution,” said John Berge, Sierra Club Southeast Wisconsin Conservation Chair. “The proposed DNR rule would reduce toxic mercury pollution from coal plants and other large industries over the next 15 years.”

### **Support in Every Voter Group**

In the poll, citizens from every region of the state expressed support for stricter mercury controls. For example the sample showed at least 68% of every congressional district supported the stronger controls. Only one-in-five (20%) of those surveyed oppose stricter controls on mercury pollution.

Independent ticket splitters and third party voters were most likely to support the mercury pollution controls (81%), with Democrats (79%) more likely to support the stronger controls on mercury than Republicans (66%). Ticket splitters and 3<sup>rd</sup> party voters made up 21% of the poll sample. One-third (34%) of the sample selected Democrats and the same number selected Republicans as their voting preference. The remaining numbers of those polled refused to answer or indicated they do not vote.

**-More-**

## **Wisconsin Citizens Support Stricter Mercury Pollution Controls, Page Two**

The results come from a poll of a statewide random sample of 600 citizens taken the last two weeks of April by Chamberlain Research Consultants of Madison. The survey of 600 Wisconsin adults has a margin of error of +/- 3.97% and can be projected to the population at large with a 95% degree of certainty.

The level of support for stronger mercury pollution controls increases with income and education. Two-in-three (67%) of those with incomes under \$20,000 and four-in-five (82%) of those with incomes above \$100,000 support additional pollution controls. Half (52%) of those with some high school or less and seven-in-eight (87%) of those with post graduate work support stricter standards. There was virtually no difference between males and females in their response to this question.

“This poll shows it is time for the DNR to move forward to clean up mercury pollution that threatens our children, our health, and our lakes,” said Caryl Terrell, Sierra Club Wisconsin Chapter Lobbyist. “It is time for DNR action, not more procrastination.”

Power plants and other sources dump mercury, arsenic and other pollutants into the air and ends up in lakes. Mercury is absorbed by fish and by animals and people who eat fish, and causes nerve and brain damage. The DNR has issued fish consumption warnings for all Wisconsin lakes.

*Text of the poll question: Mercury in air pollution from coal-fired power plants and other sources ends up in Wisconsin lakes, leading to government recommendations that people limit the amount of fish they eat from Wisconsin lakes. State utilities argue that mercury also comes into Wisconsin from other states and that limiting their mercury emissions would increase the cost of electricity. Do you support or oppose strict reductions of mercury emissions by utilities and other sources?*