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Pennsylvania to Tackle Mercury Pollution From Power Plants

Frequently Asked Questions

Are coal-fired power plants a significant source of mercury pollution in PA?

Yes. Coal-fired power plants in Pennsylvania emit nearly 8,000 pounds of mercury into the environment each year. They account for 83% of all mercury releases to the air in the state. Pennsylvania ranks third nationwide for the most mercury emitted by power plants - behind Texas and Ohio.

Do mercury emissions from power plants have local impacts?

Mercury emitted locally contaminates locally. Studies repeatedly show that reducing mercury emissions directly benefits the local environment. Mercury levels have been found to drop in fish and wildlife in a matter of years – not decades – when upwind sources of mercury reduced their emissions.

How did PA begin the process of tackling mercury pollution from power plants?

In August 2004, NWF and its Pennsylvania affiliate, PA Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, joined a coalition of organizations in submitting a petition to the Environmental Quality Board (EQB) requesting that state regulations be adopted to control mercury emissions from the state's coal-fired power plants. In January 2005, the EQB voted to accept the petition for initial review, requiring the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to complete a report evaluating the petition. On May 18, 2005, DEP released a report recommending that state regulations be established.

What is the next step in this process?

In August, 2005, the EQB reaffirmed its support of DEP's recommendation to move forward and write regulations controlling mercury emissions from PA's coal plants. DEP has established a rulemaking workgroup consisting of a diverse set of stakeholders – including PFSC and NWF. The workgroup has had several meetings to review the facts about mercury pollution and options for controlling emissions from power plants. DEP is expected to submit a draft regulation to the EQB by April of 2006. If the EQB accepts the proposal, it will go out for public comment with a final rule expected by November 2006.

For more information, including how you can help influence the process, contact:

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www.pfsc.org/mercurypage.html