



**Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs**  
**2426 North Second St. • Harrisburg, PA 17110**  
**Phone: 717-232-3480 • Fax: 717-231-3524**  
**info@pfsc.org • www.pfsc.org**

Providing leadership and advocacy for the enhancement of fish and wildlife resources for the benefit of all hunters, anglers and conservationists.

## **Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee**

### **Mercury Hearing**

**April 25, 2006**

Good morning, Senator White, Senator Musto, and committee members. My name is Melody Zullinger; I am the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs (PFSC). With me today is Felice Stadler, from the National Wildlife Federation (NWF). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of PFSC's 100,000 members, NWF's 55,600 Pennsylvania members, and on behalf of the over 2 million hunters, anglers, and trappers in Pennsylvania.

PFSC has been concerned about mercury contamination in Pennsylvania for many years, but became increasingly so when the state issued its first statewide advisory back in 2001. At that time, PFSC and 10 of its clubs sent a letter to the federal government urging them to issue a federal mercury rule that would guarantee reductions of this harmful pollutant by the end of the decade, and in a manner that would guarantee reductions occur in our state so that we could realize the full benefits of those reductions.

We do not believe the final rule developed by the federal government goes far enough to do either of these things, and that is why our organization chose to become more involved in this issue. Because of the failure of federal leadership, in 2004, PFSC joined with 50 other state sportsmen, environmental, public health, religious and other state organizations to petition the Environmental Quality Board to take measures that will protect Pennsylvania's fish, wildlife and people.

Last month, 105 clubs representing over 33,000 individual sportsmen joined PFSC on a letter to the state legislature calling for swift action to reduce mercury pollution in Pennsylvania. The signatures came from club representatives from across the state whose lives and livelihoods are being affected by mercury contamination, and who are concerned about the future health of Pennsylvania's natural resources, as well as human health.

Anglers, some who fish year-round, and who would like to eat the fish they catch, signed the letter. Hunters and trappers signed the letter, because they are concerned that mercury over time is affecting the reproduction and overall health of wildlife like waterfowl, mink and otter. These concerns are not without scientific basis. I bring today a short report that summarizes the findings of 30 separate scientific studies, all documenting the impact of high mercury levels on wildlife, even our song birds.

So, why should we care if fish like walleye can't school properly, making them more susceptible to predation? Or why should we care if mercury-laden mink and otter don't reproduce as well because their offspring have weakened immune systems and higher mortality rates? Or why should we care what happens to our duck populations, whose reproduction, and overall survival skills diminish with increased mercury levels?

Here's why: **Hunting, fishing, and trapping are integral to our life and our economy here in the Commonwealth:**

- 1.3 million people in Pennsylvania fish (many of these are women and children)
- 1 million people hunt & trap
- We have a recreational fishing industry that contributes \$1.6 billion to the Commonwealth's economy every year.
- More Pennsylvanians hunt and fish each year than attend Pittsburgh Steelers, Philadelphia Eagles and 76ers games combined.
- Annual spending by Pennsylvania sportsmen is more than the cash receipts from dairy products, the highest grossing agricultural commodity in the state.
- Hunters & Anglers create a \$3.8 billion ripple effect on the state economy.
- Our commercial fisheries also are significant, generating millions of dollars and putting catfish and many other varieties of fish on people's plates in restaurants and stores across the state. (Catfish, by the way, is one of the many species of locally-caught fish that people eat that is heavily contaminated with mercury.)

Some argue that there is no urgency with reducing mercury pollution in our state borders because it is a global problem and Pennsylvania's pollution isn't affecting anyone's health in Pennsylvania. They argue that the only fish that people eat is canned tuna, and for their mercury we should blame China. But that's not the entire case.

We do like to eat the fish we catch. Yes, many anglers today are catching and releasing, but many anglers still want to bring some home to share with their families and friends. And you know who likely keeps all of their catch? The folks who have lower incomes and who rely more heavily on locally caught fish to stretch their grocery dollars.

So, that's why we care about mercury in our fish and in our wildlife. Now let me tell you why we care about the debate that is unfolding in your halls and in the Rachel Carson Building about how to best address this problem.

We want to see Pennsylvania take quick action to clean up our mercury problem. And I believe you do too, for no one can support the continued, unchecked release of a dangerous pollutant into the environment where it only builds up and never goes away. But here's the fundamental difference:

**We want a guarantee that mercury pollution is going to go down significantly in our own backyards right here in Pennsylvania.**

Studies show that reducing mercury from local sources will have a near-immediate impact on the amount of mercury that falls downwind of that source. At least four different studies confirm this. And we want to realize the benefits of in-state pollution reductions before today's toddlers are as old as me.

This seems to be where we disagree. We believe that your legislation, and the bill that was introduced in the House, like the federal rule, will not guarantee that we will see reductions in Pennsylvania. We're not quibbling here about whether 90% by 2015 or 86% by 2018 is the right amount by the right date. Instead, it's whether the state should require power companies here at home to actually reduce their mercury to these levels.

We agree that power companies can likely get significant mercury reductions by installing control equipment that's also going to get rid of other troublesome pollution (like sulfur dioxide). But again, we want assurances. Without specific requirements, there's no guarantee that plants in Pennsylvania will install pollution controls—either for sulfur dioxide or mercury. The end result is that the fish and wildlife in Pennsylvania will see little, if any, relief.

So, the difference lies in whether we make the 86% or 90% mercury reduction level a hard emissions cap, or a target that we may or may not meet. Under your plan, like the federal plan, we may not meet this reduction level until 2030, because by allowing plants to buy pollution credits rather than install pollution control equipment, power companies, and the state, are never obligated to meet this target. Why? Because neither the federal government, nor your bill, sets a date by when the 86% target needs to be met. And that's unacceptable.

Is it really okay to delay getting real mercury reductions from Pennsylvania's power companies? When we have the technical means to start doing it today, why shouldn't we? We will not be sitting in the dark or be without air conditioning because of the Governor's proposed rule. We will not see the coal industry in Pennsylvania go belly up because of the Governor's proposed rule. What we will see instead is the environment getting healthier for all of us, while giving companies a much needed nudge to clean up their operations once and for all. Either we pay now, or we'll pay even more in the future.

In closing, we urge you to work with the administration to finalize a rule that works for all of us here in Pennsylvania, and one that guarantees real reductions in mercury emissions from Pennsylvania's power companies.

Thank you again, for providing PFSC the opportunity to testify today. I, and my colleague Felice Stadler from the National Wildlife Federation, would be happy to answer any questions.