



Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs
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The Voice Of Sportsmen & Conservationists in the Commonwealth

Attachment B #2547

Independent Regulatory Review Commission Public Meeting
Re: Standards for Contaminants; Mercury, EQB Regulation #7-405 (#2547)
November 16, 2006

Statement by:
Ed Zygmunt
Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs

Good morning. My name is Ed Zygmunt and as the environmental committee chairman for the PA Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, I am here today on behalf of our 327 member clubs that represent almost 100,000 sportsmen and women across the state.

Mercury contamination levels in Pennsylvania's environment are a great concern for our members and the over 2 million hunters, anglers, and trappers in the Commonwealth. As a result, the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs stands in strong support of the regulation before you today to reduce the mercury pollution coming from our states coal plants. ***We urge you to approve this regulation that is so critical for the health of people and wildlife in Pennsylvania.***

Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs has been concerned about mercury contamination in our state for many years, but became increasingly so when the state issued its first mercury fish advisory back in 2001. We do not believe that the federal government has done enough to reduce mercury pollution in this country, and that is why our organization chose to become more involved in this issue locally.

Coal-fired power plants are the largest source of mercury pollution in the state of Pennsylvania. Unless DEP takes initiative to require these plants to clean up their mercury emissions, we will not see relief from the toxic pollution that contaminates our waters, fish, and wildlife. We know that local emissions play a role in contaminating local waters with mercury. Without a strong state policy, Pennsylvanians will be left with the weak federal program that would allow coal plants in our state to buy pollution credits instead of reducing their local emissions.

This is why it is so essential that the regulation before you becomes law. Today, ***Pennsylvania's mercury advisories cover every lake and stream in the state*** – warning people to limit or avoid eating certain species of fish because of the dangers of mercury exposure. DEP is on the right track to address this serious issue, and has developed a strong plan for requiring the local reductions in mercury pollution that are needed to protect our treasured fish and wildlife species. We are grateful that the DEP has decided to tackle this source of mercury pollution with the level of urgency it requires.

As you know, when DEP put this regulation out for public comment, they received overwhelming support from Pennsylvanians across the state, from all walks of life. Support from sportsmen and

women - those who treasure the state's fish, wildlife, and outdoor recreation opportunities – was expressed in an unprecedented way. DEP received letters from statewide organizations, local and county-level clubs, and individual hunters and anglers, all in support of taking action to cut mercury pollution from coal plants right here in the Commonwealth.

All of us who love to fish, hunt and enjoy Pennsylvania's environment are tired of advisories warning of the dangers of eating the mercury contaminated fish found in Pennsylvania's waters. We're also concerned about recent studies finding dangerous levels of mercury accumulation in birds such as ducks and songbirds, and mammals such as mink and otter. Mercury pollution has gone on unchecked in Pennsylvania for far too long, and it is time we did something about it.

Most of the fish caught in Pennsylvania are unsafe to eat in large quantities, especially by children or women. Over the last few months some people have actually argued that this is no big deal, since no-one eats local fish in Pennsylvania anyway. We at the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs know better. Going fishing – whether with our parents, friends, or children – is a part of our culture and way of life. We bring our catch home and cook it up with pride.

However, because of high levels of mercury contamination in our waters, this actually is a serious public health threat. Pennsylvania's 1.2 million anglers are consuming harmful levels of mercury-contaminated fish, and yet there is something we can do about it.

There are very clear, tangible benefits that will result if DEP's mercury rule is finalized. Pennsylvania is home to some of the nation's biggest mercury sources. It is time for our state to take advantage of technology that will stop mercury pollution from contaminating our fish and threatening our families. Left unchecked, mercury pollution from smokestacks here in Pennsylvania threatens to damage our state's \$1.6 billion sportfishing industry.

Across the country, studies have repeatedly shown that when mercury pollution is reduced, mercury levels in local fish and wildlife also go down. With DEP's mercury rule, Pennsylvania can see similar benefits. Instead of letting Pennsylvania plants off the hook from reducing mercury emissions, DEP's rule will require that mercury is reduced right here in Pennsylvania. It is about time.

The technology to fix our mercury contamination problem is readily available and affordable. Many states across the country – such as Maryland, New Jersey, and Minnesota - have already finalized regulations similar to DEP's rule, and several others – such as Illinois, Michigan, and New York - are in the process of doing so.

In closing, the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs strongly supports DEP's mercury rule - as should anyone who enjoys hunting, fishing, or other outdoor recreation in our state. We have waited long enough for a policy that will guarantee real reductions in mercury emissions from Pennsylvania's power companies, and the federal rule is simply too weak. Anything short of DEP's plan will leave future generations of people and wildlife at risk from the harmful effects of mercury exposure. Pennsylvanians deserve better, and we urge you to support this important policy.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important matter.