



SIERRA
CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

Maine Chapter

1 Pleasant Street, Portland, ME 04101

Phone: (207) 761-5616

Fax: (207) 773-6690

<http://maine.sierraclub.org>

Environmental Protection Agency Docket Center
Attention Docket I.D. Number OAR-2002-0056

Why is the Bush Administration rewarding corporate polluters at the expense of our children's health and safety?

March 1, 2004

Thank you Congressman Allen, for holding a hearing on this issue in Maine. My name is Maureen Drouin, I live in Hallowell, Maine, and I am here representing the 5,000 Maine members of the Sierra Club.

The Maine Chapter of the Sierra Club calls on Administrator Leavitt to throw out EPA's proposal to regulate mercury emissions and instead craft a serious plan that adequately protects Americans children from harmful mercury. Specifically, we call on the EPA to require 90% reductions in mercury emissions from ALL coal-fired power plants by 2008.

Coal-fired power plants constitute the largest source of industrial mercury emissions in the United States. This mercury falls to earth through rain and snow and enters lakes, rivers, and estuaries. Once there, it changes into its most toxic form, methylmercury, and accumulates in fish tissue. Americans are exposed to mercury primarily by eating contaminated fish.

Mercury poses a serious threat to Maine's families:

- As with many toxic pollutants, children are the most susceptible to harm from mercury
- New estimates by the EPA indicate that one in six U.S. women of child-bearing age have mercury levels in their blood high enough to put their babies at risk.
- During December 10th - 11th, 2003, the FDA and the EPA issued a draft joint warning to pregnant women, women who may become pregnant, and nursing mothers against eating certain types of mercury-laden fish.
- In 2001, the EPA estimated that if current clean air laws were enforced in conjunction with the use of current technology, mercury pollution would decrease by 90% by 2008.

Why is the Bush Administration rewarding corporate polluters at the expense of our children's health and safety?

Congressman, you and Representative Waxman recently sent a letter to EPA Administrator Leavitt requesting information regarding a report in The Washington Post that portions of EPA's latest mercury air pollution control proposal may have been "copied word-for-word from industry lobbying materials."

You pointed out that "Specifically, it appears that EPA has proposed a regulatory approach to mercury air pollution that in part is copied word-for-word from memos prepared by the law firm Latham & Watkins, which represents some of the largest polluters in the country."

Both Jeffrey Holmstead, EPA's Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation, and William Wehrum, Mr. Holmstead's chief counsel, worked for Latham & Watkins prior to assuming their positions at EPA where they have played key roles in the mercury pollution rule-making process.

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, the Energy Industry, which would be affected by these rules, gave nearly \$50 million in campaign contributions to the Republican Party during the 2000 election cycle. Of that amount, \$2.9 million went directly to the Bush-Cheney campaign.

Perhaps this is why the Bush Administration is rewarding corporate polluters at the expense of our children's health and safety.

Last spring, I went fly-fishing with a few friends at Little Lyford Pond Camps in T7 R10. In the heart of the 100-mile wilderness of Maine, the ponds there are remote and pristine and constitute the headwaters of the West Branch of the Pleasant River. The brook trout fisheries there date back 10,000 years to the retreat of the last glacier. I thought about how rewarding it would be to catch one of these primeval fish and cook it for dinner. But even far away in T7 R10, the fish are contaminated by upwind pollution, and Mainers, especially women and children, are advised to limit their fish consumption.

Maine is one of 19 states that have issued statewide fish advisories for all of their inland freshwater lakes and rivers.

We have the solutions to reduce mercury pollution now and we should implement them immediately to protect our communities.

Thank you again for holding this hearing and for the work you are doing to protect Maine's children by decreasing mercury pollution.