



State denies request for exception to pollution standards at Weston 4 power plant near Wausau.

MADISON - The state Department of Natural Resources has denied Wisconsin Public Service's request to abandon the protective standards limiting mercury pollution at the Weston 4 power plant.

"This denial amounts to a victory for thousands of people in central Wisconsin who deserve clean air and water," said Elizabeth Wheeler, Staff Attorney for Clean Wisconsin, the state's largest environmental organization. "As coal plants are Wisconsin's number one source of mercury pollution, the DNR is right to be protective of public health and the environment."

Under Wisconsin law, newer coal-fired plants such as Weston 4 are required to limit mercury emissions to the maximum degree achievable. Testing of Weston 4's equipment shows that the maximum reduction could be in the range of 0.21-0.61 pounds per thousand British Thermal Units. After evaluating the testing, DNR set the limit at 0.8 lbs/tBTU. WPS then asked to remove the permit limit altogether.

"It's unfathomable that a company with proven control technology to limit mercury would instead ask for permission to pollute more," said Wheeler. "Given that people in Wisconsin remain at risk from mercury in our fish, air, and water, it's important that we continue to push for more stringent standards – and it's imperative to enforce existing permit limits."

Mercury is a potent neurotoxin that can affect the brain, liver and kidneys, and cause developmental disorders in children. The EPA estimates that more than 10,000 children born in Wisconsin every year are prenatally exposed to elevated levels of mercury, an exposure that puts them at risk of having lower IQs and reduced memory. In addition, every inland body of water in Wisconsin, including Mayflower Lake, Big Rib River and several other locations in Marathon County alone, is under a fish consumption advisory because of mercury pollution.

DNR: WPS Must Comply With Mercury Limits

Written by Clean Wisconsin
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A 30-day public comment period has begun regarding the DNR's decision, and a public hearing is scheduled for Sept. 11 at 10 a.m. in Wausau.

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Clean Wisconsin, an environmental advocacy organization, protects Wisconsin's clean water and air and advocates for clean energy by being an effective voice in the state legislature and by holding elected officials and polluters accountable. On behalf of its 10,000 members, supporters and its coalition partners,

Clean Wisconsin protects the special places that make Wisconsin such a wonderful place to live, work and play. 608-251-7020, www.cleanwisconsin.org.