

## Mercury Pollution Threatens Wisconsin's Fishing Tradition

Written by Clean Wisconsin

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<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/fishing-on-lake-s5.jpg>



***But new analysis shows the Clean Power Plan would greatly reduce mercury emission levels.***

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**MADISON** - Anglers across Wisconsin will embark on a decades-old environmental tradition Saturday when the state's annual fishing season begins. However, as Wisconsin's fishermen and women head out to cast their lines this weekend, it's important they remain aware of the risk mercury pollution from coal plants poses to our waters, our health and this prized fishing custom.

"As an avid fisher and outdoorsman, I know Wisconsin's annual fishing opener is a great way to spend time with family and enjoy the places we love," says Keith Reopelle, senior policy director at Clean Wisconsin. "It's unfortunate but Wisconsinites need to consult [the state's fish consumption guidelines](#) before they feed their families fish they catch from any of the state's lakes and rivers due to unsafe levels of mercury pollution."

Coal-fired power plants are a significant source of mercury pollution, affecting our air and water; it takes just one gram of mercury a year to contaminate a 20-acre lake over time. In 2012, Wisconsin's coal-fired power plants emitted 1,974 pounds of mercury into the environment, according to Clean Wisconsin's analysis of data from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). However, last year the EPA put forth the Clean Power Plan, a new set of rules limiting emission levels from coal-fired power plants. If implemented as proposed in Wisconsin, the plan has the potential to reduce mercury emissions from large coal plants by 22 percent. By 2030, the plan could keep more than 400 pounds of mercury from entering Wisconsin's air each year.

"Pollution from coal plants is one of greatest but most preventable threats to Wisconsin's environment," says Reopelle. "The Clean Power Plan is a realistic solution that offers us a chance to reduce mercury in our waters and make outdoor pastimes safer."

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Right now, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources lists every inland body of water under fish consumption advisories due to high levels of mercury contamination. Mercury is a chemical toxic to humans, causing brain, kidney and liver issues. Young children and developing fetuses exposed to mercury are especially in danger of cognitive disabilities, including lower IQs, reduced memory and reduced language skills. The EPA has estimated that more than 10,000 infants born each year in Wisconsin are at risk of these developmental problems because of prenatal exposure to elevated levels of mercury.

"The health risks mercury pollution poses are undeniable," says Reopelle. "It's disheartening to know our families continue to face this kind of danger when we have opportunities like the Clean Power Plan that would seriously reduce Wisconsin's mercury emissions."

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Clean Wisconsin, an environmental protection 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](http://www.cleanwisconsin.org)