



CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK

1707 ST. JOHNS AVENUE
HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS 60035 • (847) 432-0800

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STATE OF ILLINOIS
Pollution Control Board

MICHAEL D. BELSKY
MAYOR

February 24, 2006

Illinois Pollution Control Board
James R. Thompson Center
100 W. Randolph, Suite 11-500
Chicago, Illinois 60601

PC#3

REGARDING: IEPA's Proposed Mercury Emissions Reduction Rule

Dear IPCB Commissioners,

We urge you to support the efforts of Governor Blagojevich and the Illinois EPA to reduce coal-fired power plant mercury emissions by ninety percent by mid-year 2009. If this proposal becomes law, it will reap major benefits for our citizens along Lake Michigan and for all Illinoisans.

Mercury is a known neurotoxin that already contaminates fish in every body of water in the state. Mercury exposure can damage the human brain, heart, and immune system. Developing fetuses and children are especially at risk as even low-level mercury exposure can cause learning disabilities, developmental delays, decreased IQ, and difficulties with memory and attention.

Due to this contamination the Illinois Department of Public Health warns people to eat no more than one meal per week of any predator fish caught in the state, including Lake Michigan. The state's testing in Lake Michigan has found dangerously high mercury levels in such popular sportsfishing species as largemouth and smallmouth bass, coho and chinook salmon, and many varieties of trout. The mercury in these fish endangers everyone, but it does disproportionate harm to people in our communities for whom the lake is central to life: the sports anglers, commercial fishermen, charter boat operators and their clients, Illinoisans who buy local fish at the market, and all of their families.

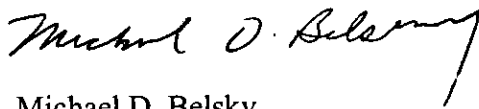
The twenty-three coal-fired power plants in Illinois are the single largest source of in-state mercury emissions, emitting more than all other human activities combined. Researchers tell us that most of this mercury will be deposited locally. A recent National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration study concluded that sixteen of the twenty-five top sources of mercury deposited in Lake Michigan are coal-fired power plants.

Fortunately, despite the profundity of the mercury problem, reducing power plant emission is a solution that we can implement now. Affordable, readily available technologies can capture 90% of mercury emissions. One recent study estimated the cost of implementing a 90% mercury emissions reduction would amount to slightly more than one percent of utility

industry revenues. Shared among customers, that translates to just 69 extra cents per month per ratepayer.

Right now the federal EPA is implementing weak industry-drafted rules that will delay meaningful mercury reductions for at least another decade, putting another generation of developing children and the health of Lake Michigan at risk. But three states have already put their plants on a schedule to eliminate 90% of their mercury emissions, and our state should do the same. For the sake of Illinois's 1,237,000 anglers, our 1200 commercial fishermen, and families that want a healthy environment for their children, and on behalf of the citizens we represent living near contaminated waters, we ask you to approve of IEPA's mercury reduction rule.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Michael D. Belsky". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Michael D. Belsky
Mayor

MBD:dkg

cc: Larry King, Environmental Commission Staff Liaison