



ARIZONA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

644 N. Country Club Drive, Suite E
Mesa, Arizona 85201

June 11, 2004

Dear Administrator Leavitt:

We write to you as fellow sportsmen and outfitters to convey our concern about the effects of mercury contamination on fish and wildlife. We urge you to ensure that this problem is addressed in a serious and timely manner.

More than 10 million acres of lakes and 400,000 miles of streams in America are contaminated by mercury. Forty-three states and one territory currently warn the public about unsafe mercury levels and advise people against eating locally-caught fish. People who eat fish contaminated by mercury can suffer from myriad health problems. Children, whose brains are still developing, are at particularly high risk of neurological problems such as delays in walking, talking and developing fine motor skills. Evidence continues to mount that mercury causes reproductive problems in ducks and fish-eating birds such as loons, and also threatens reproduction in walleye and other fish species.

In addition to health and wildlife effects, mercury in fish has potential serious economic implications for the sportfishing industry. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's "National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation," the recreational fishing industry generates more than \$100 billion in revenue per year. More than 44 million Americans fish – more than play golf and tennis combined. This includes nearly 10 million children. Few experiences in life are better than witnessing the excitement of a child who reels in his or her first fish, then proudly takes it home for dinner. How do we explain to them that they cannot safely eat what they catch?

Anglers in some states have had to worry about mercury fish advisories for three decades – the difference today is that we now have the technology to feasibly and affordably solve this problem. The current Clean Air Act includes a provision to effectively address mercury pollution. Unfortunately, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's proposal to reduce mercury emissions from power plants falls far short of what the law requires. We urge you to consider the impact mercury has on our wildlife, economy, and children, and strengthen this proposal so it meets the intent and obligations of the Clean Air Act.

Please help us rid our nation's beautiful rivers, streams and lakes of mercury so we can continue to enjoy fishing with our children for generations to come.

Sincerely,