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Historic Limits on Mercury and Toxics Become Final

December 21, 2011 -- Today, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized new air pollution standards that will result in the first-ever national limits on the amount of mercury spewing from the nation's coal-fired power plants. Over 20 years in the making, the new pollution limits on power plants will cut mercury emissions by 91 percent, while also cutting acid gas, arsenic, lead and nickel emissions.

Larry Schweiger, NWF president and CEO, said "Our children and grandchildren will inherit a safer world thanks to the leadership of President Obama and Administrator Jackson. At long last, these prudent and overdue limits on unchecked mercury and toxic air pollution will ensure our fish will be safe to eat, and our children can breathe easier."

Nebraska Wildlife Federation executive director Duane Hovorka said "these rules are long overdue, and an important step towards cleaner air and cleaner water."

Each year EPA's **new air toxic pollution rules** will prevent 11,000 thousand premature deaths, 4,700 heart attacks, 130,000 cases of childhood asthma and 6,300 cases of acute bronchitis in the USA. It also will **prevent mercury exposure** to children that can adversely affect their developing brains – including effect on their ability to walk, talk, read and learn.

Mercury poses a massive threat to wildlife. [Mercury pollution](#) spewing from power plants settles in lakes and rivers where microscopic organisms convert the inorganic mercury into methylmercury, a toxin that moves up the food chain in fish and then other into other animals when they eat fish. Over half of human-caused mercury in the U. S. comes from coal-fired plants.

Every state has issued a fish advisory of some type because of unsafe mercury levels, according to the National Wildlife Federation's recent report, [Game Changers](#). In Nebraska, 75 lakes, reservoirs and river segments have posted fish consumption warnings related to mercury contamination of fish. Included are portions of the Platte, North Platte, Niobrara, Elkhorn, and other rivers, along with Box Butte, Merritt, and Sherman reservoirs.

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In the Omaha area, lakes with fish advisories for Mercury include Walnut Creek, Wehrspann, Halleck, Standing Bear, and Zorinsky. In the Lincoln area, lakes with fish advisories for Mercury include Holmes, Wagon Train, Wildwood, Bluestem, Stagecoach, Merganser, along with portions of Salt Creek and Oak Creek. A list of all of Nebraska's fish consumption advisories can be found on the Department of Environmental Quality web site, <http://www.deq.state.ne.us/SurfaceW.nsf/Pages/FCA>.

Over 900,000 Americans commented on the proposed rule, the vast majority of whom urged EPA to press ahead with mercury limits, including the National Wildlife Federation, Nebraska Wildlife Federation, Izaak Walton League of America, American Fisheries Society, and Trout Unlimited.

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