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Settlement of DNR dispute with WPS sets protective mercury pollution limit on Rothschild's Weston 4 coal plant.

MADISON - After nearly five years, Clean Wisconsin, Sierra Club, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Wisconsin Public Service (WPS) have settled a legal dispute regarding how much mercury can be emitted from Weston 4, a coal-fired power plant operated by WPS in Rothschild.

“The Weston coal plant emits toxic pollution, including mercury, which can cause neurological and developmental problems, especially in children,” says Elizabeth Wheeler, senior staff attorney at Clean Wisconsin. “It’s critical that a protective mercury limit is in place for Weston 4 to protect public health.”

Under Wisconsin law, newer coal-fired power plants like Weston 4 are required to limit mercury emissions to the maximum degree achievable. Testing of Weston 4’s equipment showed that it could reduce mercury to 0.8 pounds per trillion British thermal units (lbs/tBTU), but WPS contested the limit, hoping for a far less stringent requirement for the facility.

“Given all its health impacts, weak mercury limitations are not an option,” says Wheeler. “While it has been a long road to this agreement, today’s settlement upholds the DNR’s more stringent limit.”

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 is under a fish consumption advisory due to mercury pollution.

A Win for Public Health in Central Wisconsin

Written by Clean Wisconsin
Saturday, 26 March 2016 09:04

“We support the DNR’s efforts to maintain protective permit limits,” says Wheeler. “Coal plants are Wisconsin’s No. 1 source of mercury pollution, and until they can be replaced with clean energy sources, their toxic emissions must be controlled.”

Read more about mercury pollution in Wisconsin by [visiting Clean Wisconsin's Enviropedia](#).

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*On behalf of its more than 30,000 members, supporters and its coalition partners, Clean Wisconsin protects Wisconsin's air, water and natural heritage.
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