

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CLEAN AIR AND NUCLEAR SAFETY

**“REVIEW OF MERCURY POLLUTION’S IMPACTS TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE
ENVIRONMENT”**

UNITED STATES SENATE

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Good morning Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Barrasso, and other members of the sub-committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of Michigan’s sportsmen and women representing the great ole state of Michigan. I am here in support of the EPA’s Mercury and Air Toxics Standards.

I am a fourth generation ice angler. I live on Black Lake in Cheboygan, Michigan (in the northern Lower Peninsula). Black Lake is the eighth largest Inland Lake in Michigan. Black Lake is world renowned for its lake sturgeon population, a threatened species in Michigan.

Michigan’s wildlife and natural resources are the backbone of our \$5 billion annual recreational tourism economy. The Great Lakes are a national treasure. Michigan's wildlife is as unique as the shape of its shoreline and the variety of habitats found within its borders. Whether it is a moose in the Upper Peninsula, the iconic lake sturgeon in the Northern Lower Peninsula, or our blue-ribbon trout streams, wildlife helps define Michigan's sense of place. Our state's history and cultural identity are inseparably linked to our wildlife and natural resources. It is what makes us PURE MICHIGAN!

Across America hunters and anglers have contributed more than \$10 billion to fish and wildlife conservation, and in a typical year pump \$75 billion into the economy.

In Michigan:

- There are 1.7 million hunters and anglers
- Spend 3.3 billion dollars annually
- That supports 46,000 jobs

Sportsmen and women are particularly concerned about mercury. This harmful air toxic settles from the air onto our lakes, rivers, and forests, polluting the environment and accumulating up the food chain as fish and wildlife consume

the contamination. This directly affects many species, including waterfowl; walleye, bass, trout, muskie, and sturgeon...all are revered as part of our state's angling, hunting and conservation heritage.

Last December, over 14,000 Michigan hunters, anglers and conservationists joined a tele-town forum on mercury with Dr. David Evers, lead researcher on a newly published report on the extent and effects of mercury pollution in the Great Lakes region, and sportsman Bob Garner, former host of Michigan Out-of-Doors television show and chairman of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board. Michigan conservationists participated in a discussion on the importance of the EPA's new mercury and air toxics pollution limits to Michigan's lakes and wildlife. Anglers and conservationists on the tele-town forum spoke up in support for strong air toxics protections. As Bob Garner stated, "We can't fillet our way out of mercury in fish."

This potent neurotoxin is especially harmful to children; where exposure affects a child's ability to walk, talk, read, and learn. As many as one in six women of childbearing age are likely to have mercury levels in her blood high enough to put her baby at risk.

Few experiences in life are more precious than witnessing the excitement of a child who reels in their first fish, then proudly takes it home for dinner. How do we explain to them that they cannot safely eat what they catch? Our families should be able to eat safe fish without having to worry about toxic mercury in their bloodstream.

Anglers have had to worry about mercury fish advisories for decades. There are 204 fish consumption advisories in Michigan. 204!! All 50 states have fish advisories of some type because of unsafe levels of mercury.

For over 40 years, the Clean Air Act has made progress in reducing the threats posed by pollution. History has shown we can clean up pollution, create jobs, and grow our economy all at the same time. Over the same 40 years since the Clean Air Act was passed, the GDP of the US grew by more than 200 percent.

It is misleading to say that enforcement of our nation's environmental laws is bad for the economy and employment. It isn't. We should never have to choose between a job and a healthy environment. We are entitled to both. Americans are no less entitled to a safe, clean environment during difficult economic times than they are in a more prosperous economy.

Safeguarding our natural resources is important to those of us who hunt, fish and spend time in the woods and on the waters, but it is also a wise investment in our economic future. Reducing mercury, air toxics and industrial carbon pollution will help protect our long standing investment in our outdoor heritage.

We have the pollution control technology to right this wrong. EPA's recent action to crack down on mercury pollution from power plants coupled with the proposed first-ever national limits on industrial carbon pollution is a milestone in the fight to rein in a warming climate that seriously threatens people and wildlife. These actions will provide certainty to businesses and investors, spur innovation and deployment of clean technologies, and help to ignite the revitalization of our manufacturing sector.

By utilizing our environmental laws we can help rid the air and water of these harmful pollutants and restore the health of our eco-systems. We cannot afford to return to the days when our rivers burned, smog darkened our skies, and our native species were driven to the brink of extinction.

We strongly urge Congress to support EPA's mercury and air toxics standard, and the agency's current effort to reign in carbon pollution, insuring our outdoor legacy for future generations. Now and in the future, the EPA and other federal and state environmental policies can help ensure that the legacy we leave our children is a clean and healthy planet.

If not now, when?