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Citizen DNR Board Approves Doyle Administration Rules Reducing Mercury Emissions by 75%

Wisconsin will have one of the toughest mercury rules in the nation

Governor Jim Doyle today praised the citizen Natural Resources Board for unanimously approving a rule proposed by his administration that will give Wisconsin one of the strongest mercury reduction regulations in the nation. The rule will require Wisconsin utilities to reduce their mercury pollution by 75 percent by 2015.

"This is a major step forward in protecting Wisconsin's lakes, rivers, and streams," said Governor Doyle. "I'm proud that Wisconsin will be at the forefront of reducing mercury pollution, which has dangerous effects on all our citizens, particularly children and pregnant women. It will also ensure that anglers can continue to enjoy all that Wisconsin's outdoors have to offer."

The fate of the mercury rules had been uncertain for many months. The Governor's administration worked with business and environmentalists to ensure that the state had strong rules that were technologically feasible, would protect ratepayers as well as the environment, and would not compromise Wisconsin's competitiveness.

Mercury is emitted into the air when fossil fuels are burned in power plants and other large industrial sources. Through precipitation, it eventually ends up in lakes, rivers and streams and is converted to a more toxic form, methylmercury. Because it persists in the environment, it enters the food chain and, through bioaccumulation in fish, is eventually consumed by people and animals, where it can cause neurological and other health problems. It is a particular concern for children and pregnant women.

The Governor thanked DNR Secretary Scott Hassett for the Department's work in developing the rule.