



Mercury Emission Reduction Initiative

October 2007

Introduction

While certain persistent toxic substances (PTS) have been significantly reduced in the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem over the past 30 years, they continue to be present at levels that pose threats to human and wildlife health, warrant fish consumption advisories in all five lakes, and disrupt a way of life for many in the basin, particularly the life ways and culture of tribal communities. The GLRC Strategy calls for the continued reduction and virtual elimination of persistent toxic substances such as mercury in the basin.

In 2006, the GLRC began a Toxic Pollutants Initiative that set forth a series of near term activities undertaken by members of the Collaboration to implement these recommendations, including the development of a strategy for reducing mercury in products. This new initiative will build on those activities and, expanding on a pilot Michigan program, develop a regional strategy for reducing mercury emissions across the Great Lakes region.

Proposed Activities

Create region-wide strategy to reduce mercury emissions.

A Great Lakes mercury emission reduction strategy would be developed in a manner similar to the Great Lakes mercury in products phase-down strategy. This effort should produce institutionalized activities to sustain mercury emissions reduction from new and existing sources whose mercury emissions have not been regulated, and from sources where regulations have been implemented but additional reductions are technically feasible and economically reasonable. Examples of potential sources include manufacturing processes that produce mercury emissions, and the disposal of mercury-containing products.

The strategy would be drafted by a group that includes staff from each of the Great Lakes states, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and interested tribes and cities. This group would solicit input from stakeholders on an ongoing basis using the existing Great Lakes Binational Toxics Strategy mercury workgroup.

The strategy should acknowledge existing work within the region among various agencies and organizations (states, municipalities, tribes, universities, etc.). Where consensus exists among the group, the strategy should include specific recommendations for action by appropriate levels of government and the stakeholder community, whether through legislation, regulation, permits, or voluntary approaches. Where consensus is not possible, it should list the available options for reducing emissions from a sector. The strategy should also include a reference table and summary of existing and planned actions to reduce mercury emissions.

Proposed Schedule

The schedule for developing a mercury emission reduction strategy would include:

- Initial teleconference to discuss mission and goals. (October 2007).
- Conference call with Binational Toxics Strategy mercury workgroup to discuss workplan and opportunities for input. (November 2007).
- Draft an evaluation of the major sources of mercury deposition in the Great Lakes region and a list of priority sectors to include in the strategy, based on amount of emissions within the Great Lakes states and current availability of measures to achieve reductions. Also identify sectors for future work (February 2008).
- Distribute for technical and limited public review through Binational Toxics Strategy mercury workgroup. (March 2008).
- Develop draft Strategy, including recommended actions (May 2008).
- Distribute for technical and limited public review through the Binational Toxics Strategy mercury workgroup (May 2008).
- Revise draft Strategy (August 2008).
- Release draft Strategy for general public comment (August-October 2008).
- Revise draft Strategy based on public comments (October-December 2008).
- Complete GLRC membership review of final Strategy (January 2009).
- Release final draft and begin implementation of recommendations (March 2009).