



GLRC Toxic Pollutants Initiative Progress Report – September 2008

Introduction

The GLRC Strategy calls for continuing the reduction and virtual elimination of persistent toxic substances such as mercury and PCBs in the basin, as well as preventing new toxic threats to the basin through pollution prevention and enhanced surveillance, protecting public health through education and outreach, and working with international forums to address sources outside the basin. This Toxic Pollutants Initiative sets forth a series of near term activities undertaken by members of the Collaboration to implement those recommendations.

Activities

1. Mercury Phase-down Strategy

A basin-wide Great Lakes mercury product stewardship strategy has been completed to fulfill the Strategy recommendation to phase down mercury in products and waste. A workgroup of state, tribal, and city staff was formed in April 2006 to develop the strategy. The Strategy presents a series of recommendations, which include legislative and policy responses to the strategy's recommendations and implementation actions for state and local governments as well as individuals, to remove mercury in products and waste from the Great Lakes basin.

Progress to Date

- The Draft Mercury In Products Phase-Down Strategy was put out for public comment through November 5, 2007. A total of 47 comments were received, including from the following organizations:
 - American Dental Association
 - Council of Great Lakes Industries
 - DTE Energy Company
 - Mercury Free Wisconsin
 - Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP)
 - Consumers for Dental Choice
 - Association of Lighting and Mercury Recyclers
 - Clean Air Foundation, Environment Illinois
 - Zero Mercury Working Group
 - Great Lakes Natural Resource Center - National Wildlife Federation
 - Illinois State Dental Society
- The final Strategy was approved for release by the GLRC Executive Committee on June 19, 2008. The Document can be viewed at: <http://glrc.us/documents/MercuryPhaseDownStrategy06-19-2008.pdf>

2. Burn Barrel Education and Outreach Campaign

U.S. EPA with Great Lakes states, tribes, and cities have jointly developed an education and outreach program to address open burning across the Great Lakes basin. This project targets local and tribal waste management officials with:

1. Education about environmental concerns associated with trash burning;

2. Information on infrastructure and alternatives to burning in communities; and
3. Tools to strengthen burning ordinances and support greater compliance with current regulations. Staff will present this program at meetings in all Great Lakes states through 2008. Basin outcomes will include: number of ordinances banning burning, trash disposal alternatives implemented, and reductions in the practice of burning garbage.

Progress to Date

- IL-IN Sea Grant, Great Lakes states, and U.S. EPA staff have presented information to local solid waste management officials and others on open burning at numerous conferences in 5 of the 8 GL states in the basin.
- Hundreds of Learn not to Burn kits have been distributed. Kits are on-line at <http://www.iisgcp.org/learnnot2burn/>.

3. Unwanted medicines and Electronic Waste Disposal Education and Outreach

U.S. EPA, Great Lakes states, tribes, and cities have developed an education and outreach campaign to address unwanted medicines and electronic wastes in the Great Lakes basin. Similar to the burn barrel campaign, the unwanted medicines campaign targets waste management officials with information about all aspects of unwanted medicines, including impacts on the environment, how to hold a collection event or set up a program, how to find partners and case studies and legislation. IL-IN Sea Grant staff will attend and/or cosponsor a series of state-wide meetings of local and tribal government officials in the Basin to present and provide toolkits through 2008. Outcomes include: collection and recycling activities implemented as a result of the campaign; pounds of unwanted medicines collected and safely disposed.

The ecyclingtools.com website was designed for small and medium sized businesses to green the whole life cycle of their computers. The website provides information, tools, contacts, etc. to choose greener computers, to operate them with energy efficiency in mind, and what to do when the business is ready to replace the computer. The tool provides information on reuse, recycling and proper disposal options. Outcomes will include better informed computer purchasers who will choose greener and more energy efficient computers. More computers will be reused and recycled and fewer computers will be thrown away.

Progress to Date

- Toolkits have been developed with information on: health and environmental concerns with these wastes; current regulations on recycling and disposal; examples of take-back programs and success stories; and a list of resources.
- IL-IN Sea Grant, Great Lakes states, and U.S. EPA staff have presented information to local solid waste management officials and others on unwanted medicines at numerous conferences throughout the basin.
- Disposal of Unwanted Medicines, a Resource for Action in Tour Community kits are on-line at <http://www.iisgcp.org/unwantedmeds/>. The toolkit is being used by many individuals across the Great Lakes Basin as part of their planning and execution of collection events and programs.
- The E-waste campaign was launched at the Consumer Electronics Show in January 2008. Over 600 visitors to the booth were given information about the new website: ecyclingtools.com: Greening the Lifecycle of the Computer. The website is now available and is being updated and revised based on feedback from the meeting. This website is geared toward small to medium sized businesses to green the whole lifecycle of their computers from purchasing energy efficient computers, to managing computers to be more energy efficient and longer lasting, and how to best deal with computers at the end of life. Although geared toward small to medium sized businesses, the tools can be used by anyone. The

ecyclingtools.com site will also be showcased at the Green Procurement Meeting in Chicago in June 2008.

- US EPA sponsored a Great Lakes Campaign during Earth Week 2008, challenging citizens around the basin to safely dispose of 1 million pills of unwanted medicines and 1 million pounds of electronic waste. Over 100 partners signed up to hold collection events across the basin, and preliminary results indicate that the targets will easily be met. EPA estimates that over 5 Million pills of unwanted medicines and over 5 million pounds of electronic waste were collected during the Earth Week Campaign.

4. Great Lakes Sport Fish Consortium Project

The Great Lakes Sport Fish Consortium, the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, and representatives of Great Lakes states and tribes have been funded by U.S. EPA to finalize a basin-wide uniform mercury protocol for sensitive populations. As part of this project, the Great Lakes Sport Fish Consortium is working to develop a Great Lakes basin fish consumption advisory outreach toolkit. This toolkit will include several outreach components which will focus on youth education, AOC community education, health care professional education and restaurant and culinary school education. Each component of the toolkit will be implemented and evaluated for its effectiveness. The consortium would like to expand and improve the most successful components of the toolkit. Pilot outreach projects and an effectiveness evaluation will be completed by the end of 2008.

Progress to Date

- The Consortium has finalized the Protocol for Mercury-based Fish Consumption Advice: An addendum to the 1993 Protocol for a Uniform Great Lakes Sport Fish Consumption Advisory. The protocol represents a workgroup consensus. However, workgroup members did not participate as official agency representatives but as knowledgeable and experienced individuals. Tribal and federal representatives participated as observers.
- The protocol was presented to the Environmental Council of the States and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials.
- Basin wide outreach materials are currently under development.

5. Mercury Emission Reduction Initiative

In 2007, the GLRC decided, under its Toxic Pollutants Initiative, to develop a strategy for reducing mercury emissions across the Great Lakes region. 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. A Strategy will be drafted in 2008, including an evaluation of the major sources of mercury deposition in the Great Lakes region, identification of priority sectors, and reduction approaches. Expected milestones include:

- Meet with Binational Toxics Strategy mercury workgroup to discuss workplan and opportunities for input. (December 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 (September 2008)

- Distribute for technical and limited public review through Binational Toxics Strategy mercury workgroup. (November 2008)
- Develop draft Strategy, including recommended actions (February 2009)
- Distribute for technical and limited public review through the Binational Toxics Strategy mercury workgroup (March 2009)
- Revise draft Strategy (May 2009)
- Release draft Strategy for general public comment (May 2009)
- Revise draft Strategy based on public comments (July 2009)
- Complete GLRC membership review of final Strategy (August 2009)
- Release final Strategy and begin implementation of recommendations (September 2009)