

# News Release

## **Wisconsin to be World's Focus For Mercury Pollution Debate in August; *Parallel Conference to Focus on Taking Action***

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Scientists, researchers, regulators, industry representatives, activists and policy makers from around the world will gather in Madison Wisconsin for a week this August to participate in two conferences focused on mercury contamination of the Earth's water resources, the fish that swim there, those who eat fish, and what to do about it.

The Eighth "International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant" will be held Friday, August 6-11<sup>th</sup>, at the Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center in Madison. This conference focuses primarily on scientific research and expects to present research from more than 1000 scientists from more than 44 countries. Conference planners include staff from UW-Madison, the U.S. Geological Survey and UW-La Crosse.

Environmental and health groups will host a parallel conference at the Hilton Hotel, connected to the Convention Center. This event will also include sessions on the science of mercury pollution, but will have a greater emphasis on policy and advocacy solutions to reduce mercury pollution around the world. The advocacy conference is titled "Finding Solutions to the Global Mercury Crisis" and is free and open to the public.

The International Science conference organizers say their primary goal is to distill current scientific knowledge about mercury into succinct statements that will be directly relevant to government policy-makers and resource managers. The advocacy conference will include more discussion about actions policy-makers must take to address the problem.

"To the extent possible, "cross pollination" is being encouraged between the two meetings and we invite everyone to attend our opening plenary on Monday evening," said Michael Bender, Director of the Mercury Policy Project and organizer of the advocacy conference. "At that time, we will hear the latest from some of the world's top experts on the impacts of mercury on people and wildlife, view a new Norwegian documentary on mercury effects on dental assistants, and reflect on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Minamata."

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Bender explained that this year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the world's largest mercury pollution-caused accident, called Minamata Disease, where thousands of Japanese living in Minamata, Japan in the 1950's were poisoned by fish contaminated with mercury.

“Wisconsin is a very appropriate stage for this historic gathering mercury pollution,” said Keith Reopelle Program Director for Clean Wisconsin. “Wisconsin has highly contaminated fish with a health advisory on every lake and river, and we're also at a critical juncture for decisions on mercury reductions from coal plants and products.”

Over 1000 papers have been submitted for presentation at the international conference. Concurrent sessions presenting research run throughout most of the conference and many poster sessions will present additional research. The four days of the conference proceedings will result in a wealth of new information.

“We need an end to the ‘paralysis of analysis’ on mercury. I invite all of Wisconsin to follow the media coverage from these two conferences,” said Eric Uram, Mercury Free Wisconsin founder. “In the end, after seeing what gets said, we need to ask ourselves ‘Do we need to keep analyzing the problem or do we need to take action?’ The world, including Wisconsin, remains poised to hear that answer.”

Co-sponsors of the advocacy conference on mercury include the Mercury Policy Project, National Wildlife Federation, Natural Resources Defense Council, Clean Wisconsin, Sierra Club, Mercury Free Wisconsin, European Environmental Bureau, International Academy of Oral Medicine & Toxicology, Oceana, Health Care Without Harm, Toxics Link of India, Green Action of Japan, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, Physicians for Social Responsibility Wisconsin, and Madison Environmental Justice Organization.

For more information on each of the conferences, see:

<http://www.mercurypolicy.org/new/documents/AgendaWINGOHgMtg061506.pdf>

<http://www.mercury2006.org>

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