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News Release

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Anglers, Sierra Club Tell President Bush: “Clean up Mercury Pollution Putting Wisconsin Families at Risk”

*Sierra Club Runs Newspaper Ad Friday, Holds Saturday Afternoon Mercury
Pollution Summit, and then Saturday Evening Rallies for Clean Fish*

MADISON, WI – Sierra Club will run an ad in Friday’s *Wisconsin State Journal* to highlight the Bush administration proposal’s worsening of mercury pollution problems for Wisconsin’s fishing families. On Saturday afternoon, Sierra Club will join local anglers at Monona Terrace to learn more about Wisconsin’s mercury problem. Afterwards, prior to a Republican fundraiser hosted by Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson, they will rally to show the Bush administration their currently proposed rules threaten Wisconsin fishing families.

“Wisconsin’s Hunting and Fishing Bill of Rights protects our rights to hunt and fish, now we need to make sure we can all safely eat our catch too,” said Bill Kordus, past-president of the Twin City Rod and Gun Club in the Fox Valley.

Currently, the FDA under HHS Secretary Thompson is finalizing increased public warnings for mercury contamination in commercially-sold fish. At the same time, the Bush administration’s EPA is proposing scaling-back mercury controls on power plants, the nation’s largest mercury pollution source.

“To protect Wisconsin fishing families we need what the Clean Air Act requires; a 90% reduction in mercury coming from power plants by 2008,” said Lacinda Athen, Chair of Four Lakes Group Sierra Club. “There is a better way; develop cleaner, cheaper, and safer forms of energy while cleaning up older, polluting coal-fired power plants – this will ensure Wisconsin fishing families will have the right to eat what they catch.”

In January of this year, EPA doubled the estimated number of children born every year at risk from mercury’s effects to over 630,000 – this works out to over 11,000 Wisconsin children annually. This study, based on blood samples, was taken from a broad cross-section of US residents by the Centers for Disease Control (Centers for Disease Control, *Second National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals* <http://www.cdc.gov/exposurereport/>)

Because of widespread mercury pollution, 45 states and territories have issued mercury advice for fish caught from waters under their jurisdiction. Of those 45, 19 have issued statewide advice for lakes or streams or both, including Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota – and fourteen, including Wisconsin, have additional advice about mercury in commercially-sold fish such as canned tuna.

“The Bush administration needs to realize there are other things that need to be protected – like tourism, recreation and culture. Here in Wisconsin, we pride ourselves on being one of the best places to catch fish. In

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fact, many local businesses and industries rely on fishing to be successful. We need to make sure we can safely eat those millions of fish caught every year,” said Eric Uram, event organizer and Midwest Representative for Sierra Club.

In Wisconsin, fishing families catch over 50 million fish annually. According to a USFWS survey, these fishing interests generate over \$1.22 billion in fishing-related expenditures which in-turn produces \$2.3 billion in economic activity for Wisconsin.

“Industry held up Wisconsin’s efforts to implement rules saying the Federal government would solve the problem. Now, after the Bush administration’s proposal was released, we find out those efforts won’t protect Wisconsin’s fishing families. We need a Wisconsin-friendly solution now,” concluded Uram.

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To see the ad go to

<http://www.wisconsin.sierraclub.org>

Other sources of information:

<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/fhp/fish/advisories/>

Wisconsin’s fish advisory

<http://www.glifwc.org>

Tribal information on fish and contaminants from Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission -- see the Mazina’igan Fall 2000 supplement

<http://www.gotmercury.org>

An easy-to-use online seafood mercury calculator was developed to help consumers make informed choices about their seafood consumption. The calculator allows consumers to calculate what their blood mercury levels would be from eating mercury-contaminated seafood and compare it to values that are considered safe by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Schedule and locations for Saturday events:

Mercury Summit

3:00 to 5:30 pm

Monona Terrace Room MN

Mercury and Clean Fish Rally preceding Thompson fundraiser

5:30 to 6:00 pm

Monona Terrace Entrance area