

mercury



FIGHT FOR VIRGINIA'S HEALTHY FUTURE

Protect Our Communities from Toxic Mercury Pollution

Why Advocate for Mercury Prevention?

Toxic mercury pollution not only threatens the health of Virginia's citizens, but the viability of our vital tourism and fishing economies. In the past two years, Virginia's General Assembly has approved two bills that have the potential to significantly affect how much toxic mercury pollution is released in Virginia. We must act now to require significantly greater reductions in mercury pollution from power plants.

In 2006, the state legislature approved the "*Virginia Clean Smokestacks Act*" (HB 1055/SB 651), which required that Virginia adopt a weak federal program to control toxic mercury pollution from coal-burning power plants. As part of this legislation, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is required to conduct a detailed assessment of mercury deposition in Virginia, which will help determine whether the state can require additional measures to control mercury emissions. The progress of this study will be reported on at a symposium in November 28-29, 2007. Information on the study's progress can be found at <http://www.deq.virginia.gov/air/vamercury/vamercurystudy.html>.

In 2007, the state legislature approved HB 3113/SB 1403, which replaces Virginia's citizen air pollution, water control, and waste management boards with a single board, removing the responsibility for reviewing and strengthening permits from the new consolidated board, and giving it to the Director of the DEQ. The single board established by these bills would be a limited policy-making board with no authority to review and strengthen permits, as is currently the function of the three boards. A provision of this bill establishes one citizens' appeal board without binding authority. Citizens advocated for a provision (called a "reenactment clause") to be added to the bill, which requires the General Assembly to re-visit the bill in the 2008 session.

While supporters of this policy argue that the decision-making processes of the DEQ would be "streamlined" by the reduction in numbers of boards and change of function, many people are concerned that this policy diminishes the opportunity for the public input into pollution permits



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Protecting Our National Parks for Future Generations®



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that impact our quality of life. Creating one citizen board, or stripping any citizen board of its authority to review and strengthen permits, could keep important questions from being raised in a public forum, and lead to greater degradation of natural resources, and increased threats to human health.

Reduce Toxic Mercury Pollution in Virginia—How You Can Help:

1. Contact Virginia Governor Tim Kaine at **telephone: (804) 786-2211** or through <http://www.governor.virginia.gov/> and tell him that you are concerned about toxic mercury pollution in the Commonwealth, and that you want him to support state policies to significantly reduce toxic mercury pollution.
2. Write a letter or send an email to all of the candidates for delegate and senator in your district, and tell them that you want them to support state policies to significantly reduce toxic mercury pollution in Virginia. To find out how to contact all the candidates, http://www.sbe.state.va.us/cms/Election_Information/Index.html
3. Educate your community by holding public meetings on issues involved with mercury pollution and policies that could lead to greater increase of mercury pollution.
4. Increase your energy efficiency. For example, use compact fluorescent light bulbs; turn down the temperature on your water heater and use Energy Star appliances (see the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy <http://www.cleanenergy.org> and <http://www.aceee.org/consumerguide/> for more information)
5. Sign up for email alerts about mercury pollution via the National Parks Conservation Association's website at www.npca.org.

Tell Policy Makers to Protect Virginia from Toxic Mercury Pollution:

- Virginia needs to protect the health of our communities, our citizens, and our wildlife by significantly reducing toxic mercury pollution.
- Virginia's children, infants, and pregnant women are especially susceptible to the threat of mercury pollution, and we must do all we can to protect these vulnerable groups.
- Virginia's citizens want to preserve our hunting and fishing traditions, and protect fish and wildlife from mercury contamination.
- Virginia's business leaders want to protect and ensure the viability of our fishing and tourism economies that could suffer due to toxic mercury pollution.
- *Forbes* magazine named Virginia the best state in the country for business, and included among its deciding factors, Virginia's regulatory environment. Why would Virginia change a regulatory process that works well for Virginia business?
- Meaningful citizen input into DEQ decision-making must be assured.

*For additional information, please contact Catharine Gilliam, Virginia program manager for the National Parks Conservation Association at 540-460-5105, or cgilliam@npca.org.
Visit the "Mercury or Me" website at www.mercuryorme.org .*