Great Lakes Commission
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Adopted Oct. 8, 2010

Resolution: Promoting Comprehensive Mercury Monitoring, Research and Reduction Efforts

Whereas, mercury is deposited to the Great Lakes and its inland lakes and the St. Lawrence River basin where it is transformed into methylmercury which is a potent neurotoxicant, causing irreversible damage to human fetuses and infants and cardiovascular effects in adults;

Whereas, it is estimated that hundreds of thousands of children born each year in the United States and Canada are exposed to levels of methylmercury in the womb that are high enough to impair neurological development; and

Whereas, methylmercury concentrations in fish in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River basin routinely exceed thresholds considered potentially harmful to humans, triggering numerous fish consumption advisories; and

Whereas, significant local sources of mercury still exist within the basin, while a major fraction of mercury atmospheric deposition to the Great Lakes has been shown to originate from international sources beyond local and federal regulatory control; and

Whereas, the United States and Canada have jointly signed an Air Quality Agreement, the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, and the Great Lakes Toxics Control Agreement to control transboundary emissions and to cooperate on research and development projects to eliminate toxic substances, including mercury in all its forms; and

Whereas, the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Toxics Strategy team outlined immediate actions to be taken to move toward elimination of persistent bioaccumulative toxins (PBTs) in the environment, including mercury; and

Whereas, many states and provinces in the Great Lake St. Lawrence River basin have developed and implemented mercury monitoring and reduction efforts, which have recently been jeopardized or terminated due to budgetary shortfalls, demonstrating that dedicated funding is needed to ensure long-term monitoring efforts are sustained; and

Whereas, a comprehensive long-term mercury monitoring program focused on ambient concentration, mercury deposition, watershed transport and levels in key biota has been proposed to track mercury cycling in the environment and to better inform local, national, regional and/or international mercury reduction policies; and

Whereas, the Great Lakes Commission, in consultation with federal, state, provincial and academic experts, published a report in 2007 recommending that existing regional mercury deposition monitoring programs need to be maintained and in some cases enhanced.

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission supports efforts in the United States and Canada to authorize and fund comprehensive, collaborative, long-term mercury monitoring and research programs within and outside of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin; and

Be It Further Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission urges the U.S. and Canadian federal, state and provincial governments to expand capabilities to reduce mercury exposure, including but not limited to environmental monitoring, fate and transport science, regional mercury reduction strategies, pollution prevention programs and health advisory efforts; and

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Be It Finally Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission urges the U.S. and Canadian federal, state and provincial governments to engage their international counterparts to encourage global reductions in mercury emissions that adversely affect the health and well-being of all constituents in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin.

Adopted at the 2010 Annual Meeting of the Great Lakes Commission, Toronto, Ont., Oct. 7-8, 2010.