

WI Interfaith Climate &
Energy Campaign

People of all faiths working toward a just and sustainable future.

Potawatomi Mourn Mercury Levels, Loss of way of Life



By Al Milham,
Vice Chairman;
Forest County
Potawatomi
Community

The Bush Administration EPA's Proposed Mercury Reductions Rules fail to provide the protection from mercury that our waters and children need. The rules are especially poor in protecting the waters and children of Northern Wisconsin.

The Potawatomi have roots around the Great Lakes, including in Chicago and Milwaukee, but the federal government forced us to leave our home, west to the plains. We are woodland Indians, not plains Indians, and the ancestors of the Forest County Potawatomi knew they would not survive on the plains. So they took refuge from the U.S. military in the thickly wooded areas of Wisconsin. They finally settled along the shores of Lake Michigan and in Northern Wisconsin --- where the federal government has established

trust lands in our interest. This is a place where the waters were once pristine and my people fished, trapped and gathered as a way of life.

Just as the federal government once took resources away from us, coal plants are taking lakes and fish away from us today – by polluting them with toxic mercury.

We recently purchased the site of a proposed metallic mine at the headwaters of the Wolf River in Wisconsin. We decided the best way to protect the environment in the area was to take control of the site ourselves. So, using gaming revenues from our casinos, we joined with the Mole Lake Chippewa to purchase the mine site for \$16.5 million last October.

EPA has estimated that 630,000 children are born every year with levels of mercury in their blood. As shocking as that number is, the risks are probably even greater for the Potawatomi and for other Native Americans, who have cultural traditions of eating fish and live on the lakes of

Northern Wisconsin.

Our tribe's Environmental Protection Department is working with Dr. Carl Watras of the University of Wisconsin to study the transport of mercury in Devils Lake. So far, the study has shown that Devils Lake has high levels of methyl mercury, the most highly toxic form of mercury. From a parallel study, we conclude that a reduction in atmospheric deposition of mercury would result in a rapid reduction in the levels of methyl mercury in Devils Lake.

The hope for our members is in the hands of the EPA. Your agency has found that the most important factor in creating methyl mercury in the environment is emissions from coal-fired power plants. And our study shows that strong mercury controls to reduce those emissions will produce quick and dramatic improvements in Devils Lake and other Northern lakes – if the EPA requires them. When we are told the fish are not safe to eat because of mercury contamination, we have to choose between practicing our culture on the one hand, and protecting our health and the health of our children and families on the other hand. No one should have to face that choice.

WICEC Recognized for Clean School Bus Efforts

In the last newsletter we ran an article about school bus retrofits and the issue of diesel exhaust from school buses. For our efforts to clean up school buses and thus provide cleaner air for Wisconsin schoolchildren, we received a Certificate of Recognition from Clean School Bus USA and the WDNR, both members of Wisconsin Partners for Clean Air, a coalition committed to improving air quality through voluntary action.

As of recent count, \$20,000 had been raised through donations from businesses and individuals. Also, 300 more buses will be retrofitted due to a shift in funding from the Vehicle Inspection Maintenance Program. A participating bus company will receive a grant from Wisconsin Asthma Coalition to use Ultra Low Sulfur Diesel fuel, which will reduce emissions by another 10%.

Thanks to all the readers who contributed. Go online to contribute more!



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WICEC WISCONSIN-INDIA CONNECTION REDUCES GHGs

By Sarah Streed

Social justice and protecting the environment often go hand in hand. This is called “environmental justice” and it basically means that we, the current generation, protect the environment for future generations. It’s very simple: We leave this planet in as good a condition as we possibly can for our children and grandchildren.

WICEC is starting a brand-new venture in environmental justice. We have entered into a partnership with a poor community in India. The idea is very basic. Each one of us sets aside \$5 a month (or \$50 a year) to **offset** the greenhouse gas emissions from the cars we drive. This money goes to Aliguda village in Central India where the people there plant *Pongamia pinnata* trees. (See opposite photo.) As the trees grow, they **sequester carbon**. The almond-like seeds from this tree are crushed in a mill to produce **oil**, which can be used as a **substitute for petroleum**. (The payment by the international community for environmental services meets the terms of the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol.)

Here are the numbers: The EPA tells us that an average American produces

greenhouse gases equivalent to 24 tons of carbon dioxide per year (compared with the 1 ton per year of the average Indian). Approximately 30-40% of the emission is attributed to the use of cars. If we take the lower figure of 30%, the average emission works out to be 7.2 tons per vehicle. The cost of offsetting at \$7 per ton is just over \$50 per person per year. If 20 WICEC members contribute \$1,000 to Aliguda village, we pay for neutralizing 142 tons of carbon dioxide. In reality, the emission reduction from the trees is far greater (close to 235 tons).

Dr. Emmanuel D’Silva, a resident of Washington, DC, is our link in this relationship for environmental justice. A native of India, Dr. D’Silva has been working with indigenous communities in Adilabad district in Central India for over six years setting up carbon-offset projects. His research and work is supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development. (Note: I was put in touch with Dr. D’Silva by my brother, Erik Streed, who works at



USAID—Erik is a member of WICEC as well.)

Aliguda village consists of 26 families belonging to an indigenous community called Gonds. Though living in poverty, the villagers are well organized as a social group with women at the center. Seed money of \$1,000 will help to generate an income flow of approximately \$20,000 over a period of ten years. In other words, each dollar contributed helps the women of Aliguda to earn \$20. Last year, the women planted 3,000 *pongamia* trees on village common land and have plans to plant 10,000 more this year. The oil is used to generate electricity, pump up ground water and run farm equipment, with the leftover oilcake replacing chemical fertilizer on the fields. Because of these benefits, the trees will never be cut down. There is no timber value, only the oil in the seeds.

We at WICEC are tremendously excited at this chance to offset our carbon emissions, raise the standard of living of a village in India, help protect the environment, and do our part to ensure social justice. **Looking for a chance to offset your own carbon emissions?** Go to www.wicec.org or contact sarahstreed@wicec.org.

Energy Saving Workshop Deadline Extended . . .

In order to allow more congregational participation, the registration deadline for our unique program to help achieve energy and budget savings while reducing ecological impact has been extended to **Dec. 17, 2004**. The opening workshop will be Jan. 16, 2005.

Call or e-mail for a brochure and registration form for our **Interfaith Energy Stewardship Collaborative**. WICEC staff are available to meet with local committees to provide information on the process. A \$100 deposit enrolls a congregation in the program. Interfaith groups of congregations from one community may register to come together at a special rate.

The Registrar is the Rev. Dave Steffenson, PO Box 21, Columbus, WI 53925; 920-623-4360; dsteffe@powerweb.net. More information is also available on the web at: www.wicec.org.

Questions on Oak Creek Power

As of Oct 1, the Elm Road Generating Station, We Energies 1200MW coal-fired proposal for Oak Creek, has had serious problems with remaining permits. On Sept 29 the Army Corps of Engineers held hearings regarding onshore and offshore impacts. WDNR held up releasing a draft water permit until more questions are answered. Issues still to come: fate of mercury and other poisons after capture by air pollution control devices, pollution impacts on human and environmental health, impacts of proposed cooling water system on the environment and whether the currently planned facility is the best alternative. An additional hearing and comment period will happen around the WDNR issuance of their draft water permits. Call 608-257-4994 or email eric.uran@sierraclub.org for information.

THE WICEC WATT AWARDS



The “**Watt A Winner!**” award goes to Wisconsin Attorney General **Peg Lautenschlager** because she has dedicated the Department of Justice to protecting our air, water, land and habitat through vigorous enforcement of Wisconsin's environmental laws. Peg has proven herself a true steward, especially recently, when she stepped in with fellow attorneys general to announce an historic lawsuit aimed at combating global warming; the coalition of A.G.s sued the top five emitters of carbon dioxide in the U.S. For this bold move on behalf of Wisconsin citizens and the air we breathe now and in the future, we thank our A.G.

GLOBAL WARMING WILL DESTROY TROUT, STREAMS

At its recent annual meeting, **Trout Unlimited** publicly took a stand against global warming, voting to add this issue to its National Conservation Agenda. Steve Moyer, national TU, said, “...In the Midwest and Eastern U.S., an increase in average temperatures as forecast by different models could reduce the range of brown trout by up to 50%, and could eliminate native brook trout from most of its current range.”

Bill Pielsticker, chair of Wisconsin TU, is incensed over the recent EPA re-classification of mercury from a toxic substance to a hazardous pollutant, thereby enabling the Bush administration to stretch out the compliance schedule under the Clean Air Act:

More than a million anglers fish Wisconsin's lakes, streams and rivers each year, spending more than \$1 billion annually on everything from fishing licenses to bait and tackle to boats and hotels. Fishing isn't just an economic benefit for Wisconsin's economy – it's a heritage we all cherish and want to protect.

Wisconsin anglers are upset that all of the state's waters are under a warning that because of

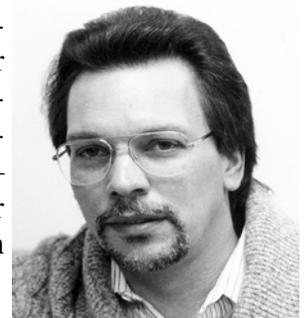
high mercury levels people should limit the amounts of many fish they eat. This month Wisconsin TU joined nearly 100 other Wisconsin sports groups, and more than 370 other groups nationwide, in a letter to EPA Administrator Mike Leavitt urging him to re-think the current proposal to weaken and delay mercury reduction requirements from the largest unregulated source: coal-fired power plants. In a recent poll, 71% of hunters, anglers said power plants should be required to remove mercury pollution within 10 years.

The EPA is currently considering a plan to cut mercury emissions from the nation's coal-fired power plants. Unfortunately, this plan does too little, too late. It sets a weak initial mercury reduction of 30% by 2008, and then creates a cap and trade scheme that would allow dirty plants to keep polluting if they purchase pollution credits from newer, cleaner plants. Since many of our oldest plants sit right on our lakes and rivers, this is particularly bad news for Wisconsin outdoors people.

It will be 2018 before power

plants would have to meet a 70% mercury reduction requirement. Worse yet, we would see no real reduction in mercury pollution until 2025 or beyond. **Children going fishing for the first time this summer will have kids of their own before power plants would be required to make serious cuts in their mercury emissions.**

We need a strong federal regulation that will require deep cuts in mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants in neighboring states as well. We have the technology today to drastically reduce mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants. Tests on plants across the country show that up to 90% mercury control is feasible and affordable for plants burning all kinds of coal – particularly for those burning bituminous coal – like our plants in Wisconsin.



ETHICAL ENERGY

WI Interfaith Climate &
Energy Campaign

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● *People of all faiths
working toward
a just and sustainable future.*

We're on the Web!
www.wicec.org

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WICEC Membership- Join Now

WICEC membership is a whole lot more than joining another club ... It's a commitment to a way of living. Join efforts with others who feel as you do. Use the enclosed envelope for your convenience. If the envelope is absent, send to the WICEC office at : 525 Lincoln Ave/ Stoughton, WI/ 53589

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|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Annual Membership | \$35.00 |
| Students, Low Income & Seniors | \$20.00 |
| Family Lifetime Membership | \$100.00 |
| Corporate Membership | \$100-500.00 |
| Congregational Membership | \$100.00 |
| Commercial Membership- | \$100.00 |

Make your check payable to: WICEC

WICEC'S CLIMATE CAFE



(From left) **Dave Steffenson, Drew Luhn, Sarah Luhn, Laura Nordstrom** and **Sarah Streed** recently handed out cups of water at the Dane County Farmer's Market. Each cup sported a sticker showing how many ounces of gasoline it takes to drive various vehicles a single mile. "CAFÉ" is short for Corporate Average Fuel Economy, which is the federal government's term for motor vehicle fuel efficiency standards. Takers were able to identify their own vehicle efficiency. WICEC will soon offer CAFÉ cup packets to congregations to use during coffee hours to raise awareness of the impact of cars upon global warming. Go online at www.wicec.org to find out more!