

The Clean Air Act Protects People and Wildlife



A FACTSHEET OF THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION'S CLEAN THE RAIN CAMPAIGN

For more than three decades the Clean Air Act has worked to improve public health and protect the environment from harmful air pollutants. Many types of air pollution have decreased at the same time the nation's economy and population have grown dramatically. The Clean Air Act allows industry flexible methods for achieving air pollution reduction goals and financial incentives for those that work to use cleaner sources of energy and reduce air pollution. Unfortunately, Senator Inhofe's proposed legislation, S. 131 the Clear Skies Act of 2005, would strip the Clean Air Act of critical provisions that protect the health of people, wildlife, and our nation's air quality.



S. 131 delays clean up of toxic pollution from power plants, exempts other industrial sources from toxic pollution standards, delays clean-up of smog and soot pollution in dozens of counties and national parks, and impedes downwind states from taking action to protect their citizens from regional air pollution caused by industrial sources located in upwind states.

NWF urges Congress to oppose all efforts to weaken the existing Clean Air Act—efforts that will only guarantee more pollution for decades longer. The current law needs to be enforced and only efforts to strengthen federal clean air provisions should be considered. NWF supports the bi-partisan Clean Power Act, S. 150, which proposes clean up of all major air pollutants from industrial sources and encourages companies to make cost effective investments that fully address America's air pollution problems.

Mercury

Across the United States, mercury air pollution from coal-fired power plants contaminates our lakes, rivers, and oceans. Toxic mercury emissions are deposited from the air into water bodies and then concentrate in fish. Eating mercury-contaminated fish damages the brains and nervous systems of children and can harm cardiovascular and immune systems in adults. Mercury also negatively affects the health of wildlife including fish, otters, mink, birds, whales, seals, alligators, and panthers. Reducing toxic mercury air pollution results in lower levels of mercury in people, fish, and wildlife. Corporations should act responsibly by investing in American technology that would prevent most mercury pollution into our air, fish, and wildlife.

Affordable technology exists today that can effectively control up to 90% of mercury air pollution from coal-burning power plants.

Mercury Controls under the Clean Air Act	Mercury Controls under Proposed "Clear Skies" Legislation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ By the end of this decade, each coal-burning power plant must control its toxic mercury emissions by the maximum extent possible using modern technology. ✓ Creates economic growth and new jobs by encouraging investment in new affordable technologies. ✓ Limits toxic pollution from other industries such as chlor-alkali plants, cement manufacturers, and metal refineries by the maximum extent technologically possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Eliminates current health protections for mercury and other toxic air pollutants by removing EPA's authority to set health risk-based standards. ✗ Fails to stop contamination of local lakes and streams by allowing unrestricted toxic emissions trading. Exempts many power plants from all requirements to reduce their mercury emissions or buy pollution credits. ✗ Allows coal-burning power plants to emit nearly 7 times more mercury for a decade longer than the Clean Air Act. ✗ Discourages early usage of modern pollution control technology and new cleaner power plants by giving away free credits to older and dirtier facilities. ✗ Allows industries to continue emitting with no serious mechanism for limiting their toxic pollution.



Global Warming

The earth's climate is changing due to the build up of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other heating trapping pollution in our atmosphere. Global warming caused by carbon dioxide and other green house gas pollution from fossil fuels is already impacting people and wildlife, and will do so more severely in the years to come. Global warming is disrupting the planet's climate system, raising average temperatures, shifting precipitation patterns, and altering ecosystems we all depend on. In light of this evidence, stronger measures are needed now to combat this unchecked pollution.

Proposed "Clear Skies" Legislation and Global Warming

- ✘ Allows CO₂ pollution to continue unchecked. The legislation would encourage another generation of investments in carbon polluting power plants, increasing future costs for utilities and their customers once the need to address climate change is finally recognized.

Healthy people and a clean environment result in a healthy economy. NWF supports enforcing and strengthening existing clean air laws and strong measures to reduce global warming pollution. NWF opposes any efforts to undermine the health and ecological safeguards of the Clean Air Act or repeal the Clean Air Act's requirement that industrial sources control their toxic mercury emissions by the maximum extent achievable.

S. 131 aims to weaken vital public health protections of the Clean Air Act by:

- ✘ Significantly impeding states from protecting their own citizens from air pollution.
- ✘ Allowing coal-burning power plants to emit nearly 7 times more mercury, a dangerous neurotoxin, for a decade longer than the existing Clean Air Act.
- ✘ Weakening air quality protection for people, wildlife, and wild places. This proposed plan would repeal the haze cleanup requirements for existing pollution sources, threatening our national parks, forests, monuments, and other special places.
- ✘ Delaying deadlines for meeting public health standards. The plan allows power plants to emit twice as much SO₂ and more than one and a half times as much NO_x for nearly a decade longer than the existing Clean Air Act.
- ✘ Ignoring the threat of climate change by failing to addressing greenhouse gas emissions.

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