

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 18, 2020

The Honorable Andrew Wheeler
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington D.C. 20004

Dear Administrator Wheeler:

We write to express our concern over the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) decision to relax important standards for coal-fired power plants wastewater disposal that allows toxic metals to be released into American waterways. We urge EPA to instead use the strict 2015 standards that would continue to eliminate substantial amounts of such toxic metals and pollutants.

The EPA's new regulation—one that scales back wastewater treatment technology and allows for compliance dates to be pushed back or to be exempted altogether—is a step in the wrong direction for ensuring the safety and health of all Americans. Strict regulation of arsenic, cadmium, chromium, lead, mercury, and selenium are required to protect Americans from developing devastating health problems, including certain cancers, developmental issues in children, and damage to vital organs.

We are particularly concerned with the pollution from the Oak Creek coal-fired power plant, one of the most significant sources of toxic pollution in the country, and the largest emitter of toxic metals into the Lake Michigan watershed. According to a recent *Chicago Tribune Article*, over 2,100 pounds of toxic metals are dumped into Lake Michigan from the Oak Creek coal plant in Wisconsin. This discharge into Lake Michigan is simply unacceptable, and your agency should be doing more to protect our constituents and all who value our lakes, streams, and waterways—not less.

By siding with industry over the health and well-being of communities that are most affected by these toxic discharges, including low-income communities and communities of color, the Trump Administration's EPA is demonstrating their blatant choice for whom they seek to protect.

We urge the EPA to put the health and safety of Americans first, and to require effective treatment solutions for toxic metal discharges into the bodies of water that our constituents and fellow Americans rely on.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator