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## **Survey: State Residents Reject Mercury Pollution “Hot Spots” in Ohio River**

(Louisville) According to a recent survey, a solid majority of Kentucky residents oppose recent moves to allow mercury “hot spots” in the Ohio River near industrial plants. Kentucky Waterways Alliance, a statewide environment and public health organization, released the survey results at a time when Governor Beshear’s public health appointees are considering doing just that.

“Mercury is a dangerous toxic chemical, especially for children -- and there’s already too much of it in the Ohio River,” said Judy Petersen, Executive Director of Kentucky Waterways Alliance. “State residents want the governor and his appointees to do more to protect their water supply, not less.”

Mercury is a heavy metal, known to be poisonous to both animals and humans - especially children. There is already too much mercury in the Ohio River, and it is not safe to eat the fish. In 2004, public health officials ordered facilities along the river to cut how much mercury they release into the water. But more than 10 years later, there are still about 60 facilities that haven’t met the new standards and want to be excused from the requirement.

This summer, public health officials appointed by Governor Beshear and other governors along the Ohio River will vote on whether to allow these plants to create pollution hot spots of toxic mercury in the river near their facilities.

Among the top findings in this survey:

- A majority of Kentucky residents believe the state’s water pollution standards are too lax (16% much too lax, 47% somewhat too lax).

- 87% said that Governor Beshear should prioritize “Protecting water supplies, even if some plants must invest in upgrades to reduce pollution.” Only 13% said that the governor should prioritize “Keeping costs for businesses low, even if more pollution enters the water supply.”
- More than half of Kentucky residents believed that public health officials should give industrial facilities just one or two years to comply with new pollution standards. Less than 11% believe that plants should have 10 or more years to comply.
- A majority of Kentucky residents supported fining (48%) or shutting down (28%) facilities that cannot meet pollution standards in time. Only 3% supported relaxing the standards.

Kentucky residents clearly recognize the dangers of mercury. In the survey, state residents described the chemical with statements like:

- “Mercury is an element that can be harmful if a great amount is ingested. A lot of Mercury is found in fish so you have to be careful what you eat. This is why it is important for businesses to maintain their companies the right way.”
- “It’s a poison and I think its in our water supply.”
- “Causes brain damage if you drink it. Symptoms appear like mental illness. And death”

The full survey questions and answers can be found [here](#)..

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**About Kentucky Waterways Alliance:** *Working statewide for over 20 years, Kentucky Waterways Alliance (KWA) has won better protection for Kentucky’s waterways through community-based efforts, advocacy, and educational outreach. With a mission to protect and restore Kentucky’s waterways, our work is making a difference in the quality of life for all Kentuckians one victory at a time. Visit them at: [www.KWAlliance.org](http://www.KWAlliance.org)*