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Ohio EPA Issues Wastewater Discharge Permit for FirstEnergy's Bay Shore Power Plant

Ohio EPA has renewed a wastewater discharge permit for FirstEnergy Corp.'s [Bay Shore power plant](#) in Oregon. The permit includes modifications requiring the company to reduce fish mortality due to the operation of the plant's cooling water system. It is the first time Ohio EPA has required fish mortality reduction for a facility with a cooling water structure.

The permit also regulates the amount of contaminants allowed in the discharge, including mercury. Ohio EPA is granting FirstEnergy a variance to water quality standards for mercury. The permit and variance are valid for approximately 4.5 years.

In order to address fish mortality concerns, the permit requires FirstEnergy to reduce fish impingement by 80 percent and entrainment by 60 percent by April 1, 2013, through technology improvements at the facility and/or operational changes. The original time line to meet reduction requirements was October 1, 2014. Moving the date up will reduce two peak seasons of fish kills, which are highest during the April to June fish migration period. Public comments about the draft permit also requested Ohio EPA to move the deadline forward.

The fish impingement and entrainment issue is particularly important at this location near where the Maumee River drains into Maumee Bay because it is a very productive fish spawning area.

"We have taken the first step to address unacceptable fish mortality at the facility and I'm pleased that FirstEnergy will be taking appropriate measures to protect this important Ohio natural resource," Ohio EPA Director Chris Korleski said.

Millions of fish, their eggs and larvae are captured or killed each year by cooling water intake systems at the nation's power plants, including the Bay Shore facility. Impingement occurs when fish and shellfish are trapped against the plant's cooling water intake screens. Entrainment occurs when fish eggs and larvae are drawn into the cooling water system. The federal Clean Water Act requires facilities to use the best technology available to minimize these adverse environmental impacts.

Ohio EPA held a public hearing on the draft discharge permit in April 2010. At the meeting and during the public comment period, Ohio EPA received a lot of feedback from the community.

The mercury variance limits the mercury level in the plant's wastewater discharge to an average monthly concentration of 11 nanograms per liter (ng/l). Federal and state rules are reducing the allowable mercury limit for Great Lakes watershed dischargers to 1.3 ng/l. However, since Ohio EPA has determined that there are currently no cost-effective treatment technologies that can reliably remove mercury from wastewater to meet a concentration of 1.3 ng/l, the variance requires the company to identify sources of mercury in its wastewater and take steps to minimize releases from those sources.

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