

GREENPEACE USA  
November 2, 1990



GREAT LAKES REGIONAL OFFICE

Dear Great Lakes/Zero Discharge Activist:

As you may know, the Zero Discharge Alliance is now a reality. Organizations and grass roots groups from around the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence River Basin have joined together to press for implementation of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement's zero discharge goal. The basin-wide campaign for Zero Discharge is steadily gaining momentum -- it's now time to turn up the heat.

Please carefully read the **Zero Discharge Alliance Statement of Principles** in the enclosed brochure. It was produced after very thorough discussion by numerous organizations around the Great Lakes Basin. We wanted to make sure that we all mean the same thing by the term "zero discharge." We agreed that zero discharge means ending the use, the production, and thus the disposal of persistent and bio-accumulative toxic substances.

The statement is a good beginning. In order for the governments to hear us, however, our voice needs to be louder. As one activist stated: "The time has come for an all out mass mobilization to protect human health and natural resources in the Great Lakes region."

Use the brochure to gather endorsements for the Statement of Principles. Take it to your organization, your PTA, your labor union, your church, your tribal counsel, your local city counsel, your governor, your premier, etc. Join in the basin-wide effort to build support to convince all governing jurisdictions that bold action to achieve the Zero Discharge goals is urgently needed. (Write or call if you need more brochures. A second printing of the brochure will be done the week of November 26 and any new endorsers will be included on it.)

In March, the Zero Discharge Alliance will hold a series of press conferences throughout the Great Lakes Basin to announce its formation and to publicize the common platform. If you would like to help organize or participate in a press conference in your area, give me a call. Preliminary organizing efforts are already under way.

There is no time to waste!

Sincerely,

Joan D'Argo  
Greenpeace, Great Lakes/St. Lawrence campaign

In  
Pulp and  
paper file

## WHAT IS THE ZERO DISCHARGE ALLIANCE?

**Definition of Zero Discharge:** Zero Discharge means ending the use, the production and, thus, the disposal of persistent and bioaccumulative toxic substances.

### Zero Discharge Alliance Mission Statement

The ZDA is a network of organizations and grassroots activists working together to promote the philosophy of zero discharge. The means for achieving this goal will include, but not be limited to:

- \* education and public outreach
- \* networks
- \* sponsoring of events
- \* assisting local group activities
- \* transforming regulatory systems

### Background

\* In 1978, the Canadian and U.S. governments signed the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement which commits both societies to Zero Discharge as a framework for dealing with persistent toxic inputs into the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence River water system.

\* In 1986, the U.S. Governors of the Great Lakes states signed The Great Lakes Toxic Substances Control Agreement which declares: "that the problem of persistent toxic substances constitutes the foremost environmental issue confronting the Great Lakes."

\* In spring 1990, the International Joint Commission concludes "that there is a threat to the health of our children emanating from our exposure to persistent toxic substances, even at very low ambient levels," and it recommends that the governments of Canada and the U.S. "implement immediately a bi-national toxic substance management strategy to provide a coordinated framework for accomplishing, as soon and as fully as possible, the [Great Lakes Water Quality] Agreement philosophy of zero discharge."

\* In summer 1990, the New Democratic Party in Ontario unexpectedly swept to power in the provincial election on a platform that includes the promise to achieve zero discharge of persistent toxic substances by the year 2000.

### Enough Rhetoric: We Need Action

With growing urgency, grass roots and environmental activists of the Great Lakes/ St. Lawrence basin have been demanding zero discharge of persistent toxic substances. The reply from the governments of the basin has been increasingly eloquent lip service: good promises -- no action.

The reason the Zero Discharge Alliance has been formed is to change this. We want to persuade the societies of the basin to take meaningful steps that put us on the road toward achieving the zero discharge goal. We understand that these steps have a real social and economic price tag and that political leaders will not actually move until they understand that zero discharge is an important demand of a broad-based constituency.

The Zero Discharge Alliance is a loose association of groups and individuals that will:

- 1) Educate the public in the U.S. and Canada on the urgency of achieving zero discharge of persistent toxic substances with special reference to the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence River ecosystem. By means of literature, public speaking, door-to-door canvass, resolutions at meetings and other techniques, build a popular mandate for governments to implement the zero discharge strategy.
- 2) Hold a series of press conferences in March, 1991 throughout the Great Lakes Basin announcing the formation of the Zero Discharge Alliance common platform.
- 3) Incorporate the definition of zero discharge in each of the Remedial Action Plans for the 42 Areas of Concern in the Great Lakes Basin.
- 4) As a short-term goal, campaign to achieve a ban of chlorine and chlorine compounds in the pulp and paper industry. Challenge the truthfulness and sincerity of any government or politician who claims to be for a zero discharge policy, but who fails to support the application of this policy to the paper industry.
- 5) Campaign for a ban on incinerators throughout the Great Lakes Basin since they are also a major source of persistent toxic chemicals.
- 6) Work to establish the Zero Discharge Alliance Statement of Principles as the basis of a common zero discharge platform for environmental and grass roots activists of the basin by obtaining endorsements on local, state/provincial, national and binational levels. As public support for zero discharge grows, it is important that grass roots and environmental activists agree on what we mean so that this important concept is not redefined by those who oppose our goal.
- 7) In Ontario, to reformulate the Municipal Industrial Strategy for Abatement (MISA) as a zero discharge regulatory strategy for persistent toxics; in Quebec, to do the same for the Depollution Program (PRRI); and in the U.S. to press for these revisions in Clean Water Act reauthorization of 1992.
- 8) Build up to basin-wide grassroots conference in Summer, 1991 so zero discharge activists all over the Basin can convene to strengthen our common agenda.

## The Zero Discharge Strategy

There are two strategies society has tried that attempt to deal with the serious problem of persistent toxic inputs into the environment: the regulation strategy and the zero discharge strategy. Only the zero discharge strategy works.

When society decides to actually stop the use and/or the production of a toxic substance, the impact of this poison on our environment decreases. Barry Commoner, in his book: "Making Peace With The Planet," gives some examples:

-- After the United States banned many uses of leaded gasoline, airborne lead concentration at national test sights decreased by 92 percent and lead levels in children's blood went down significantly.

-- After PCBs were banned, PCB body burdens in fresh water fish decreased by 56 percent and in starlings by 86 percent. The number of humans with relatively high PCB levels in their fatty tissue decreased by 75 percent.

-- After DDT use was banned, the average DDT content of brown pelicans in South Carolina decreased by 77 percent and the number of fledglings more than tripled.

The zero discharge strategy means that society bans the use or production of persistent toxic substances. Governments in the U.S. and Canada, however, actively promote another strategy, the regulation strategy. The government gives the polluter a permit that limits the amount of poison it can legally put into the environment and sets up an agency charged with enforcement.

This strategy assumes that the environment has the capacity to "assimilate" toxics and clean itself up. It is based on the view that dilution is a solution to pollution. This assumption is false for those toxic substances that persist in the environment and/or bio-accumulate. When we put even small amounts of these substances into the environment, they do not dilute and go away. They concentrate in living tissues and work their way up the food chain.

Many persistent toxics do not occur naturally and have powerful biological effects even in very small amounts. Most of these substances have been produced in quantity only since World War II. Now, humans and other living things carry these toxic substances in their body tissues causing cancers and serious problems with reproduction, birth defects, immune systems, and behavior. This problems will continue and grow until we stop producing and using persistent toxics.

When persistent toxics are produced, used or disposed in or near the Great Lakes Basin, they find their way into the water. Because these bodies of water are so large, toxics will stay in

the system for hundreds of years. Even after society moves to ban the use and production of toxic substances, they will still remain active and toxic in the Great Lakes for several generations. Recovery will be slow. The longer we delay, the worse the problem and the longer and more severe the suffering the peoples of the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Basin will endure.

The zero discharge strategy means that for persistent and/or bio-accumulative toxics -- all processes that use or produce these substances must be banned and alternative, clean production techniques developed. A system of permits may still be needed in implementing a zero discharge strategy, but the function of the permit changes. Today, the permit issued by government grants the polluter a right to put persistent toxic substances into the environment. Instead, we need to institute a system of "sunset permits" that establish a time table within which society phases out the polluting process.

The permit establishes a sunset date -- the date after which a particular production process can no longer produce or use persistent toxic substances. It also establishes dates and goals for intermediate steps along the way to total phase-out.

The zero discharge strategy has been talked about in the Great Lakes Basin for many years -- but little progress has been made towards actually implementing this approach. The Zero Discharge Alliance is an effort by organizations and grass roots activists to build support for the zero discharge strategy within Canadian and U.S. societies.

## The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement

and

## The International Joint Commission

"We have concluded from wildlife and and laboratory animal information that persistent toxic substances in the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem pose serious health risks to living organisms. Sixteen Great Lakes wildlife species near the top of the food web have had reproductive problems or declines in populations at one time or another since 1950. In each case, high concentrations of contaminants have been found in animal tissue. Together with available human data, the information leads us to conclude that persistent toxic substances in the Great Lakes environment also threaten human health. It would be unwise and imprudent not to take immediate action."

International Joint Commission, from its Fifth Biennial Report on Great Lakes Water Quality, 1990.

These words introduce recommendations by the International Joint Commission (IJC) to the governments of Canada and the U.S. outlining the responsibilities of the two governments under the terms of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

The IJC is no radical group. It has as its members, three appointees of the Bush administration in Washington and three appointees of the Mulroney administration in Ottawa. The mandate of the IJC is to inform both governments of the steps that need to be taken to fulfill the objectives of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, an agreement which declares that the waters of the Great Lakes System should be "free from materials ... entering the water as a result of human activity that ... will produce conditions that are toxic or harmful to human, animal or aquatic life."

More specifically, Annex 12 of the Water Quality Agreement declares:

"Regulatory strategies for controlling or preventing the input of persistent toxic substances to the Great Lakes System shall be adopted in accordance with the following principles:

(i) The intent of programs specified in this Annex is to virtually eliminate the input of toxic substances in order to protect human health and to ensure the continued health and productivity of living aquatic resources and human use thereof;

(ii) The philosophy adopted for control of inputs of persistent toxic substances shall be zero discharge;

Environmental organizations, grass roots groups and private citizens from around the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Basin have been pressuring the IJC with the demand that the terms of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement be enforced. This alliance, in 1989, mobilized hundreds of people from around the basin to attend the IJC Biennial Meeting in Hamilton Ontario. The IJC Commissioners got the message. They issued a strongly worded report to the governments which reflects the demands of the citizen activists of the basin. This report calls on the governments:

- \* To take every available action to stop the inflow of persistent toxic substances in the Great Lakes environment;
- \* To provide a coordinated framework for accomplishing, as soon and as fully as possible, the Agreement philosophy of zero discharge;
- \* [To] designate Lake Superior as a demonstration area where no point source discharge of any persistent toxic substance will be permitted.

The IJC Report, however, also acknowledges that both governments have so far made little progress toward implementing the Agreement. It states:

"Early decreases in certain persistent toxic chemicals have leveled out above presently acceptable targets, and no clear strategy has been established to achieve further reductions.

"The environment has become a priority social and political issue -- locally, nationally and globally. Yet there are many competing issues when it comes to providing resources. Unfortunately, each nation's rhetorical commitment concerning 'best efforts' to meet the Purpose and General and Specific Objectives of the Agreement has not been enough. What has been, and continues to be lacking, is a level of resource commitment congruent with the admirable pledges each nation took upon itself in signing the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement."

Citizens of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence have succeeded in pressuring the IJC to articulately voice our concerns to the governments of the Basin.

Words must now be translated into action. Generalities must be translated into specific meaningful steps.

To make this happen, organizations and citizens of the Basin are launching the Zero Discharge Alliance, a bi-national effort to foster communication, organization and action.



**ENVIRONET COMPUTER BULLETIN BOARD  
ZERO DISCHARGE CONFERENCE**

As the campaign for zero discharge gains momentum, citizens all over the Basin will need to develop various ways to communicate with one another -- to share information, to discuss strategies and tactics and to just keep in touch. One means of communication is a computer bulletin board.

Greenpeace supports a computer bulletin board called ENVIRONET that allows environmental groups and activists to communicate with one another. I have recently set up a new conference on this bulletin board specifically for Great Lakes/St. Lawrence zero discharge activists. PLEASE USE IT!

To use ENVIRONET, all you need is a personal computer, a modem and communications software (we can provide the software for IBM compatibles). The only cost of accessing ENVIRONET is that of making a long distance telephone call. However, community based organizations and activists can apply to me for a toll-free 800 number so that access is free.

Here are some of ENVIRONET's other features:

- \* Conferences on toxics, disarmament and wildlife, including "Stepping Lightly on the Earth" -- a conference section dedicated to detoxification of one's lifestyle and "clean living."
- \* A mail section, where you can send and receive messages to and from other activists;
- \* A files section, where useful documents have been stored on computer so that you can download them and print them yourself;
- \* Daily press releases on a variety of environmental topics from around the world as well as national environmental newsletter from Greenpeace.

If you are interested in using Environet, please don't hesitate to call for the toll-free number. In addition, please pass the word around to other Great Lakes/Zero Discharge activists who would be interested -- the more people use it, the more useful it is. Environet is one tool that can make the campaign for zero discharge one we can win just a little bit easier.

(please flip page)

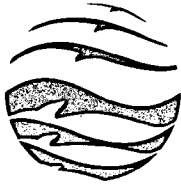


## Accessing ENVIRONET

1. To call ENVIRONET the first time, you will have to ask your computer's communications software to call 415-512-9108, which is the ENVIRONET number.
2. When ENVIRONET answers, it will ask you a series of questions that will register you as a new user. The first question asks you to type in your first and last name.
3. Next, you will be asked your calling location. Enter your city and state. (Example: "Detroit, MI.")
4. Next, you will be asked some questions about the computer you are using. Tell ENVIRONET that your terminal width is 80, "yes," you do want pauses after each screen, and that you want 24 lines of text. Tell the system that your terminal type is IBM PC, which will work for all systems, unless you are using something really exotic.
5. Next, you will be asked to fill out a simple New User Questionnaire. When you are done, you will be ready to log off.
6. Now wait a few days for your new user registration to be processed. Next time you log on, you will have full system access, and use of all of ENVIRONET's features. Some features may seem a bit confusing to you at first. The best way to learn how to use them is by trial and error, so have fun browsing. If you have particular questions, feel free to contact Greenpeace. Be sure to check out the various conferences and associated "files" sections, which contain useful information.
7. Using ENVIRONET costs as much as making a long distance telephone call. However, community-based organizations and individuals can apply to me for a toll-free 800 number so that access is free.

If you are such an activist, please don't hesitate to apply. To apply, either give me a phone call at 312/666-3305 or send me a "mail" message on ENVIRONET's mail section. In the message describe your group affiliation, if any, and the nature of your work on Great Lakes toxics and zero discharge issues. State that you are interested in applying for toll-free access to ENVIRONET. To send the message, hit your carriage return key twice. A short menu will appear. Type "S" for "Save" and your message will be routed as addressed. We'll process your application and get you on line as soon as possible. Sometimes it takes us two or three weeks; but usually, much less time. When your application has been processed, we will notify you by electronic mail on ENVIRONET.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call.  
Joan D'Argo, Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Campaign, Greenpeace,  
1017 W. Jackson, Chicago, IL 60607 312/666-3305.

**NO TIME TO WASTE**

As one of the forty million custodians of the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence River Basin, you are probably well aware of how your right to clean air and clean water has been eroded. Extremely persistent and bioaccumulative toxic chemicals are building up in the ecosystem and in the bodies of wildlife and humans. These chemicals are foreign to nature -- they are foreign to life itself. Consequently, they are not only reducing our ability to reproduce, they are also affecting the physical health and mental functioning of our offspring.

Our reproductive systems are being impacted on a daily basis by toxic pollution. Hundreds of contaminants, including PCBs, dioxins, and furans have been found in the tissues and breastmilk of the general population. Women's awareness of toxic body burden is particularly important because of the transfer of pollutants across the placenta to the developing fetus and through breast milk to the developing child. Newborn infants may accumulate pollutants in their bodies at concentrations even greater than those in their mothers' bodies, despite never having any direct exposures except through the mother. Infants are extraordinarily sensitive to the effects of these chemicals, both before and in the months after birth.

The possible impacts of these chemicals are sobering. Chemical exposure can cause spontaneous abortion, induce physical birth defects, or result in premature birth, decreased birth weight, and decreased skull size at birth. Further, some of the chemicals to which fetuses are exposed in utero can cause subtle, and possibly permanent impairment in the developing nervous system, resulting in deficits in mental, intellectual, and behavioral functioning. For example, human children and rhesus monkeys exposed to extraordinarily low doses of PCBs and dioxins in utero have shown impaired performance on learning, memory, and other cognitive tasks at several years of age; doses in these tests were on the same order as the amounts to which women and children are routinely exposed. Dioxin-exposed rhesus monkeys showed behavioral abnormalities as well, including altered relationships with their mothers and increased aggression in peer groups.

Exposure to toxics takes place through a number of avenues including inhalation, drinking water, and eating contaminated food. For the most dangerous chemicals (the dioxins and PCBs and chlorinated pesticides, for instance), the highest doses (more than 90 percent of total exposures) occur through the food chain. Meat, fish, eggs and dairy products carry the highest concentrations of these chemicals, but fruit and



vegetables carry a range of industrial pollutants as well. The highest exposures to these bioaccumulative chemicals come through animal products (meat, fish, milk, eggs, etc.) because these pollutants tend to be far more soluble in fat than in water, resulting in higher and higher concentrations as they move up the food chain. Accordingly, these chemicals accumulate in human tissues once ingested.

Exposure can also occur through contact with consumer products that contain toxics. For example, disposable diapers and women's sanitary products --like most other types of paper products, including writing paper, toilet tissue, coffee filters, and milk cartons--are bleached with chlorine to make them white. Hundreds of toxic organochlorine chemicals (including dioxins) are produced during the chlorine bleaching process and are released to the environment or concentrated in the product. Contaminants in chlorine bleached products such as coffee filters and milk cartons have been found to migrate into the food product. "Sanitary" products come into intimate contact with womens' bodies and diaper's with childrens' bodies.

### A CALL TO ACTION

Routine exposure to toxic pollution does not have to be a way of life. Citizens are standing up for their rights to have clean air, water, and land. Citizens also have the right to not be poisoned by the products they use.

Chlorine bleaching of pulp and paper is one example of a needless process that is causing harm to the environment and human health. Alternatives to this bleaching process are readily available and already in use in other countries.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO

\*Reduce your use of paper products and disposables.

\*Write or phone public officials, let them know what you think. Demand the implementation of procurement policies that give a price preference to chlorine free or unbleached paper products for use in state and local public agencies. Demand comprehensive recycling programs for your community.

\*Write producers of harmful products and poisonous discharge. Tell them you want a safe environment and safe products, like chlorine free paper and sanitary products.

\*Join a local environmental group; participate in the Zero Discharge Alliance.

\*Write or call Beth Fitzgerald or Joan D'Argo for more information.

Greenpeace, 1017 W. Jackson, Chicago IL, 60607. (312) 666-3305

**We ask individuals,  
organizations and governing  
bodies throughout the  
Great Lakes/St. Lawrence  
River Basin to endorse the  
Zero Discharge Alliance  
Statement of Principles.**

**Society can not continue  
putting persistent toxic  
substances into the  
ecosystem.**

**Join in this basin-wide effort  
to convince all governing  
jurisdictions that bold action  
is urgently needed to achieve  
the Zero Discharge goals.**

**Partial List of Organizations  
Endorsing Zero Discharge Alliance  
Statement of Principles**

Atlantic States Legal Foundation  
Canadian Environmental Law Association  
Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy  
Citizen's Environmental Coalition (NY)  
Clean Water Action  
Ecology Center of Ann Arbor  
Environment North  
Evergreen Alliance  
Great Lakes United  
Greenpeace  
Lake Michigan Federation  
Ohio Environmental Council  
Pollution Probe  
Save Lake Superior Association  
STORM Network  
Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition  
Windsor and District Clean Water Alliance

# **ZERO DISCHARGE ALLIANCE**



## ZERO DISCHARGE ALLIANCE STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

**Z**ero Discharge means ending the use, the production and, thus, the disposal of persistent and bio-accumulative toxic substances. Organizations and individuals around the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence River Basin have agreed to work together to promote and implement the goal of Zero Discharge as defined in this Statement of Principles. We will do so through campaigns to reformulate industrial processes, to ban the use and/or production of persistent toxic substances and to change regulatory systems.

In 1978, Canada and the U.S. signed the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement to protect the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence River Basin. This agreement calls on both societies to virtually eliminate the input of persistent toxic substances into the Great Lakes ecosystem. It goes on to say: "the philosophy adopted for control of inputs of persistent toxic substances shall be zero discharge".

Until recently, both societies have viewed the concept of Zero Discharge as more rhetorical than real. Now, pushed by the strength of the environmental movement of the Great Lakes Basin and by a growing public demand for pollution prevention and toxics use reduction, the International Joint Commission is beginning public discussion on real steps to achieve the Zero Discharge goal. Responsibility shifts back to the environmental community to create the popular will to move this important process forward.

**F**or us "zero" means zero. Pollution must be prevented before it is generated. Production processes (including agriculture) must be reformulated so that these toxic substances are not used, produced or discharged. "Zero" does not mean reducing

discharges beneath some arbitrary level or even beneath the level of detection. Zero means none.

**T**he use of the term "discharge" is not limited to a single environmental medium. It applies to toxic discharges into water, air, landfill, product, etc. Nor can persistent toxics be eliminated by shifting them from one medium to another or by attempting to recycle them after they have been produced.

**T**he Zero Discharge goal applies to more than just a small list of the most notorious toxic substances. Rather, it applies in all cases where there is good reason to believe the substance itself is a persistent or bio-accumulative toxic or when persistent toxics are generated during its production, use or disposal. Unless strong contrary evidence is presented, the Zero Discharge standard applies to all substances listed in the appendices of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, as well as other organohalogen and numerous other substances.

In our view, at stake is the future health and survivability of wildlife, humans and other life in the ecosystem.

I/We \_\_\_\_\_  
please print name of individual, organization or governing body

endorse the Zero Discharge Alliance Statement of Principles.

street address \_\_\_\_\_

city, state/province, postal code/zip \_\_\_\_\_

phone \_\_\_\_\_

Check box if you would like to be contacted for active help in support of the Zero Discharge Alliance Statement of Principles.

Check box if you can help get endorsements for the Zero Discharge Alliance Statement of Principles.

signature \_\_\_\_\_

date \_\_\_\_\_

your title if endorsement is for an organization \_\_\_\_\_

Return by mail to:

Zero Discharge Alliance  
P.O. Box 32246  
Detroit, MI 48232

or

Zero Discharge Alliance  
P.O. Box 7243  
Windsor, Ontario  
N9C 3Z1