



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

JAN 15 2009

OFFICE OF  
WATER

Mr. Mark McDermid  
Lead ECOS Representative of Quicksilver Caucus  
Director, Bureau of Cooperative Environmental Assistance  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
101 S. Webster Street  
Madison, WI 53707-7921

Dear Mr. McDermid:

Thank you for your letter of December 16, 2008, on behalf of the Quicksilver Caucus. I appreciate your interest in reducing discharges of mercury from the use of dental amalgam at dental offices. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) shares that interest and therefore conducted a study of the use and discharge of dental amalgam as part of its 2008 Effluent Guidelines Planning Program. Your letter references the report that was generated from this study.

In addition, as an outgrowth of EPA's 2008 study, EPA has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the American Dental Association (ADA) and the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA). A copy of the MOU is enclosed and can also be found at <http://epa.gov/waterscience/guide/dental/>. The purpose of this MOU is to have dental offices install and properly maintain amalgam separators, and recycle the collected amalgam waste. The program will also establish performance goals, and track the percentage of dental offices that install and use amalgam separators.

The next steps as outlined in this MOU are to establish a baseline of current practice at dental offices across the country. From this baseline, the parties will develop specific goals and timeframes for the expansion of the use of amalgam separators. EPA anticipates that discussions will begin in the very near future on the timeline for developing this baseline and welcomes input from the Quicksilver Caucus.

EPA will also identify opportunities to reach out to dental offices and local wastewater authorities to educate and inform them on the benefits of amalgam separators.

EPA welcomes the participation of the Quicksilver Caucus in our efforts to educate and promote best practices for reducing discharges of dental amalgam, particularly the use of amalgam separators. Mary Smith of my staff has been in contact with Matt Jones of the Environmental Council of States and will schedule a conference call in the next few weeks to discuss how EPA and the Quicksilver Caucus can work together on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Benjamin H. Grumbles  
Assistant Administrator

Enclosure