TOP TEN FRIGHTENING FACTS
About The Missouri River

While the ghosts and ghouls of Halloween costumes disappear after October 31st, the very real and very scary problems facing the Missouri River are not going anywhere. Agricultural runoff, irresponsible development, and industrial waste are all contributing to a river that is filled with toxic chemicals. In honor of this scariest of holidays, Environment Missouri offers ten of the most frightening facts about the Missouri River, and what we can do to make next Halloween a lot less terrifying for the river and everyone who depends on it.

Top 10 Frightening Facts:

1. According to the EPA, in 2007 the amount of pollution dumped into the Missouri River within the boundaries of our state totaled over 11,000 pounds.[i]

2. Right now, 66 percent of streams in Missouri are at risk of losing their Clean Water Act protections because of the U.S. Supreme Court's recent decisions.[ii]

3. Over 2.5 million Missourians get their drinking water from sources fed by streams that may no longer be protected by the Clean Water Act.[iii]

4. In 2007, Bayer CropScience released 342 pounds of cancer-causing chemicals into the Missouri River.[iv]

5. Pollution from construction and development has decreased the number of fish available for fishermen, and as a result commercial fishing harvests on Missouri River have decreased by up to 80%.[v]

6. Already, 3 million acres of river habitat have been altered. In conjunction with construction, damming, and shortening, this has severely impacted the health of wildlife and natural ecology of the river.[vi]

7. Of the river's original 161 islands, only 18 remain. This radical change in the flow and depth of the river, not to mention the constant construction on the river itself, has negatively impacted the natural cycle of the aquatic life.[vii]

8. In 2009, Tyson Fresh Meats, the world's biggest beef and pork supplier, was fined two million dollars for pumping animal waste into the Missouri River upstream from Missouri's borders.[viii]

9. Agricultural pollution is especially hazardous because of the high level of nutrients it deposits into the water, often leading to dead zones, areas where nothing can survive. Dead zones are caused by dramatic increases in the algae population that use up all the oxygen needed by fish and other aquatic life and blocks out the sun needed by underwater grassed to survive.[ix]

10. In 2008, 70 miles of Missouri's streams were affected by point source pollution, and 21,750 lake acres and many streams were impaired by mercury. When mercury is deposited into the water, it is absorbed by fish and then transferred to the animals and humans that consume those fish, putting people at serious risk of mercury poisoning. The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services advises children under 12 years of age and women who are pregnant or may become pregnant to limit consumption of all fish caught in Missouri to one meal per week.[x]

Right now we have a chance to improve the condition of the Missouri River and reduce the amount of pollution going into the waters that feed it, so that next Halloween the health of the river will be far less scary. Two recent Supreme Court decisions have put Clean Water Act protection of streams and wetlands across the state in jeopardy, opening them up to unlimited pollution. In order to ensure the health of the Missouri River, we need the EPA to guarantee the Clean Water Act's protection of the streams and wetlands that keep the Missouri River clean.

We cannot let this opportunity to clean up and protect the Missouri River pass us by, which is exactly why Environment Missouri is calling on the EPA to restore the Clean Water Act. By acting now, the EPA can protect the Missouri River for many Halloweens to come.

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[i] Tony Dustzik, Frontier Group, and Piper Crowell, John Rumpler, Environment America Research and Policy Center, *Wasting Our Waterways*, Fall 2009. See Methodology Section on page 24 for data source.

[ii] Data Source: National Hydrography Dataset (NHD) from Reach Address Database (RAD) v2.0 at 1:100,000 scale. Percentages are calculated relative to total stream length using total kilometers of linear streams in watersheds that are totally or partially contained within each state boundary. Watersheds are at the 8-digit Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) level.

[iii] Data Sources: NHD (1:100,000 scale), Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS); Preliminary Analysis. Source water protection areas (SWPAs) (based on SDWIS 4th Quarter 2003 data) for this estimate encompasses the drainage area of up to 15 miles upstream from a drinking water intake, and any SWPA that contains at least one start reach or intermittent/ephemeral stream is included in the count. Only SWPAs of intakes located on the NHD are included in this analysis (EPA has located over 85% of intakes on the NHD).

[iv] Tony Dustzik, Frontier Group, and Piper Crowell, John Rumpler, Environment America Research and Policy Center, *Wasting Our Waterways*, Fall 2009. See Methodology Section on page 24 for data source.

[v] Wheelock College Whale Net, Pollution and Problems, downloaded from http://whale.wheelock.edu/watersheds/mississippi/Pollution.html#TheMissouriRiver, 11 October 2010.

[vi] Ibid.

[vii] Ibid.

[viii] Associated Press, August 21, 2009.

[ix] Ibid.

[x] Missouri Department of Natural Resources, *Missouri Water Quality Report*, 2008.