



Great Lakes-St. Lawrence
Legislative Caucus

2020 Virtual Meetings of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus

September 11-October 9

The Dangers of Coal-Tar-Based Sealcoats and Other High-PAH Sealants

- WHEREAS,** it is the goal and duty of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus (GLLC) to inform citizens of the social, environmental, and health-related consequences of water pollution, to which recent studies indicate coal tar sealcoats may contribute; and
- WHEREAS,** coal tar sealcoat is the black, viscous liquid sprayed or painted on many asphalt parking lots, driveways, and playgrounds to protect and enhance the appearance of the underlying asphalt; and
- WHEREAS,** studies by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), academic institutions, and State and local agencies have identified coal-tar-based pavement sealcoat as a major source of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) contamination in urban and suburban areas and a potential concern for human health and aquatic life; and
- WHEREAS,** as coal-tar-based sealcoat ages and erodes by weathering, foot and vehicle traffic, and snow plowing, it wears into small particles with high levels of PAHs that can be transported into homes and onto nearby soils and can be carried by storm water and other runoff into the waterways; and
- WHEREAS,** the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry states that PAHs are linked to risks of cancer and birth defects in humans; and
- WHEREAS,** exposure to PAHs, especially early in childhood, has been linked by health professionals to an increased risk of lung, skin, bladder, and respiratory cancers; and
- WHEREAS,** runoff from coal-tar-sealcoated pavement is toxic to fathead minnows and water fleas, two species used to assess toxicity to aquatic life; and
- WHEREAS,** PAHs already threaten our waterways, as demonstrated by a study by the USGS that took sediment samples from 71 tributaries to the Great Lakes and found every site tested had measurable levels of PAH contamination; and
- WHEREAS,** coal-tar-sealcoated pavement dust is identified as the primary source of PAHs; and



MIDWEST

WHEREAS, environmental impacts and health risks can be minimized by the use of safer alternatives to coal tar sealcoats with fewer carcinogenic PAHs; and

WHEREAS, some states, counties, and municipalities have banned the use of coal tar sealcoats and other high-PAH sealants; and

WHEREAS, the American Medical Association has adopted a policy advocating for legislation to either ban the use of pavement sealants that contain PAHs or require that sealant products used contain minimal PAHs; and

WHEREAS, the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus is organized around the guiding principle of ensuring the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River continue to provide a plentiful source of clean, affordable water to the region's residents, businesses, and industries, as well as promoting the restoration, protection, economy, and sustainable use of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River; and

WHEREAS, coal tar sealcoats pose a significant danger to residents' drinking water and to aquatic habitats in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River, jeopardizing the health of our citizens and our environment; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus educate GLLC members about the dangers of coal-tar-based sealcoats and other high-PAH sealants and encourage the banning of these products.

Adopted on October 9, 2020.