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## Issue Brief – Mercury Dry Deposition Monitoring

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TEQNG IB 3

### **SUMMARY**

The mission of the Department of Environmental Quality is to safeguard public health and quality of life by protecting and improving the environment while considering the benefits to public health, the impacts on economic development, property, wildlife, tourism, business, agriculture, forests, and other interests. One area addressed more specifically by the Department in recent years is mercury contamination.

The Analyst recommends that the Transportation, Environmental Quality, and National Guard Appropriations Subcommittee consider funding \$100,000 one-time from the General Fund and \$19,000 ongoing from the General Fund for mercury dry deposition monitoring.

### **DISCUSSION**

The Department of Environmental Quality has discovered in recent years increased levels of mercury in the environment particularly in fish and waterfowl. The Department wishes to delineate the sources of the increased mercury levels in order to inform and protect Utah's citizens of this potential health and ecological threat. Once the source or sources are determined DEQ can undertake measures to minimize sources and manage impacts posed by mercury to public health and the environment. DEQ is requesting \$100,000 one-time from the General Fund to purchase a monitoring system and hire a part time FTE for \$19,000 from the General fund mercury dry deposition monitoring.

It is the goal that the dry deposition monitoring will serve as a useful and accurate tool in evaluating mercury concentrations. This monitor will be a companion to the functional wet deposition equipment currently in use. The limitations of the wet deposition monitor are that samples are collected only during precipitation events. The wet deposition monitor was installed this summer with a limited number of samples being collected due to dry weather conditions. Such limitations do not occur with a dry deposition monitor. This monitoring system will provide both real-time analysis of mercury concentrations in the atmosphere and provide data necessary to identify the sources of mercury through modeling and determining the back trajectory to identify the likely sources. This monitoring effort will allow investigation and identification of sources contributing to the ambient levels of mercury and provide policymakers with information to address the sources of this problem.

### **LEGISLATIVE ACTION**

The Analyst recommends that the Transportation, Environmental Quality, and National Guard Appropriations Subcommittee consider funding \$100,000 one-time from the General Fund and \$19,000 ongoing from the General Fund for mercury dry deposition monitoring.