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**For Immediate Release
Thursday, May 20, 2004**

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**Sierra Club Puts Barron County's Largest Polluter on Notice,
Demands that the Barron County Incinerator Clean Up Its Act**

Madison, WI – Sierra Club put the Barron County Incinerator on notice today, demanding that the facility stop violating its air permit and clean up its act.

“The Barron County Incinerator is burning things it is not permitted to burn,” notes Paul Ebel of Sierra Club’s Chippewa Valley Group. “The incinerator is breaking the law and polluting the air with toxic chemicals that build up in our bodies, can cause cancer and learning disabilities, and get passed on to our children.”

Today, the Sierra Club issued the Barron County Incinerator a 60-day notice of intent to sue for permit violations. The incinerator is permitted to burn only municipal solid waste. In the notice, the Sierra Club alleges that the facility has and continues to burn non-municipal waste, including “process wastes” from industry, tires, toxic pesticides, and other items not found in household garbage.

“When the Barron County Incinerator burns tires, plastics, and other industrial wastes, toxic chemicals like dioxin and mercury, a potent neurotoxin, are released into the air,” explains Jennifer Feyerherm of the Sierra Club’s Great Lakes Program. “These chemicals do not break down. When they are dumped into our air and water, they will remain for generations.”

“Experience has shown that incineration is not safe, nor is it economical when factoring in the hidden costs of damage to Wisconsin's environment, to its important sporting and vacation industries, and to the health of humans and animals. Because life everywhere is affected, we think it is time to responsibly address the Barron County Incinerator’s problems,” concludes Ebel.

Midwest Environmental Advocates and Madison Attorney David Bender are the lawyers representing the Sierra Club in order to bring the Barron County Incinerator into compliance with the federal Clean Air Act.

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Fast Facts:

- ✓ BCI is one of only two municipal waste incinerators left in the state. It has been **permitted to burn only solid municipal waste**. BCI has been in **continuous permit violation** by burning tires, industrial waste, and other materials not found in ordinary household garbage.
- ✓ In 1999, BCI ranked as the states **second-largest source of air emissions of dioxin**, emitting 25 times more than the third ranked facility.¹ Dioxin may cause cancer. It accumulates in the environment, moves into the fatty tissues of our bodies and is transferred to babies in the uterus and through mother's milk. Dioxin and its metabolites can distort normal hormone metabolism and sexual development in the young of many species.
- ✓ In 2002, BCI **ranked as the state's sixth** largest source of **air emissions of mercury**, worse than many of the state's largest coal-fired power plants.² This toxin converts to **methyl-mercury**, enters the food chain, and concentrates to dangerous levels in many game fish. Low blood levels can lead to lasting mental impairment in children and even in adults. The EPA estimates that one in six women of childbearing age have accumulated blood levels that would put their babies at risk. Health advisories due to mercury contamination are already in place on almost all of Wisconsin's 15,000 inland waters.
- ✓ In 2002, BCI **ranked as the state's twelfth** largest source of air emissions of **lead**.³ This toxin is dangerous for children; it is linked to mental problems such as attention deficit, impulsiveness, poor learning ability, and unusual aggressiveness. High blood levels cause spinal cord degeneration and loss of motor control.
- ✓ Midwest Environmental Advocates is Wisconsin's first and only non-profit, public interest environmental law center. Midwest Environmental Advocates provides legal representation and community organizing assistance to community groups who are working to protect air and water resources. For more information, go to www.midwestadvocates.org.
- ✓ The Sierra Club is a non-profit environmental organization with over 700,000 members nationwide. The Chippewa Valley Group of the Sierra Club is the local group in the Barron County area and has approximately 670 members.

¹ Data from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Air Emission Inventory

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.