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Where does atmospheric mercury come from?

There are many sources of mercury to the environment, both natural and man related. Natural sources include volcanoes, natural mercury deposits, and volatilization from the ocean. **The primary human-related sources include: The Disposal of Fluorescent and HID lamp and other mercury containing products which are sometimes sent to waste incineration plants,** and landfills also coal combustion, chlorine alkali processing and metal processing. Best estimates to date suggest that human activities have about doubled or tripled the amount of mercury in the atmosphere, and the atmospheric burden is increasing by about 1.5 percent per year.

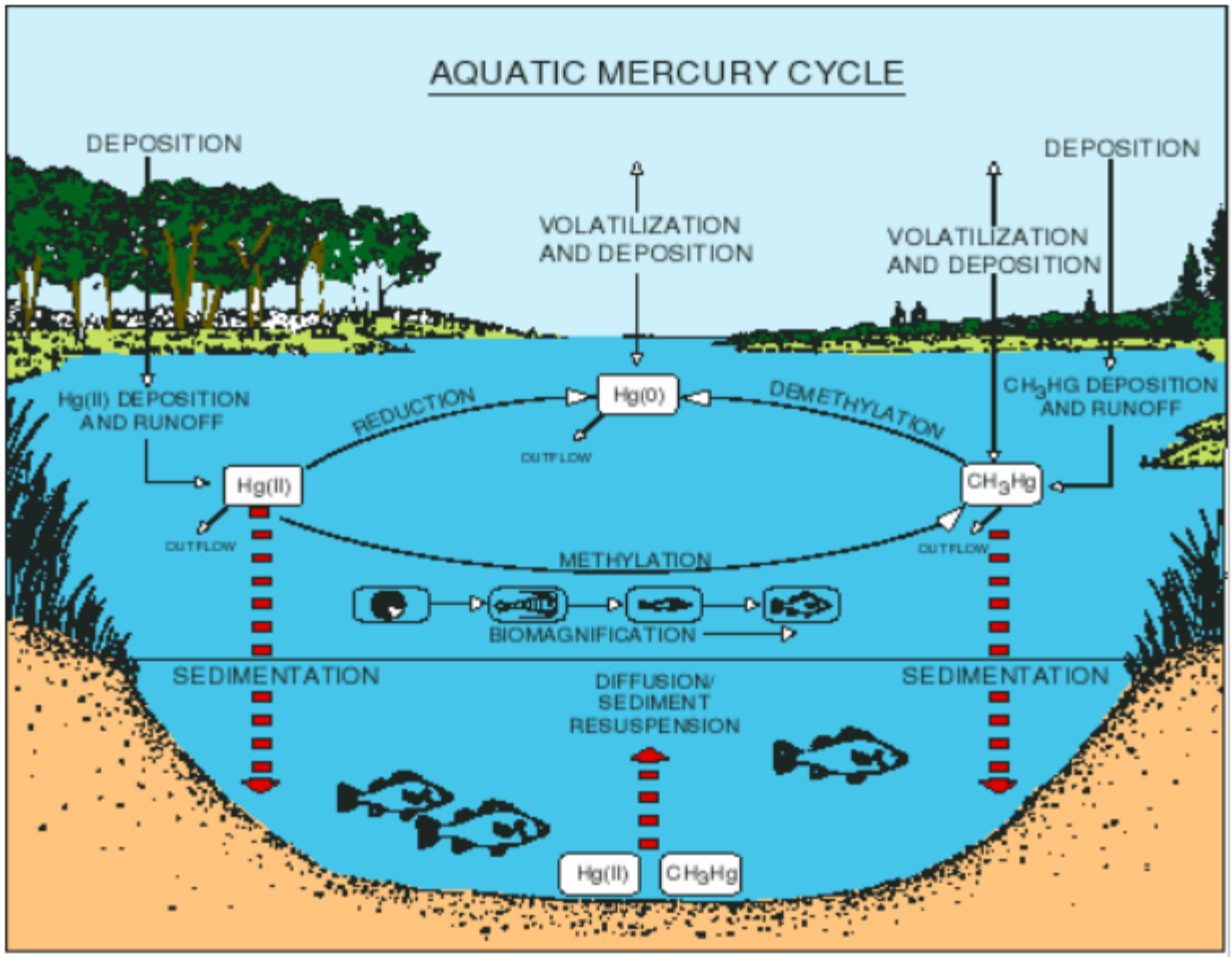

Figure 6. *Mercury cycling pathways in aquatic environments are very complex. The various forms of mercury can be converted from one to the next; most important is the conversion to methylmercury (CH_3Hg^+), the most toxic form. Ultimately, mercury ends up in the sediments, fish and wildlife, or evades back to the atmosphere by volatilization. Reprinted with permission from Mercury Pollution: Integration and Synthesis. Copyright Lewis Publishers, an imprint of CRC Press.*