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Chemical ban sought to protect lake fish

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LANSING, Mich. — The Michigan Natural Resources Commission has urged a state and national ban on a chemical that is contaminating Lake Michigan fish.

Although DDT levels in Lake Michigan fish have declined since the chemical was banned in 1970, samples show levels of PCB have remained the same or increased and are above standards allowed by the Food and Drug Administration.

"A ban is a drastic step to take, but this is a drastic problem," said William Turney, director of water management for the Department of Natural Resources.

The only American producer of PCB, Monsanto Chemical Co. of St. Louis, has cut its production drastically since 1971. The chemical — technically polychlorinated biphenyl — appears in a wide range of products, from paper to hand soap.

"I would like to see Michigan lead the way (in a ban) because I think it could be much more detrimental to mankind than we had realized," said Carl Johnson, commission chairman.