WILKES-BARRE, PA.
INDEPENDENT
SUN. 51,500

NOV 14 1976

Susquehanna River Found to Contain Fatal PCB Chemical

The Susquehanna River carries relatively small levels of PCBs, chemical compounds that have been a subject of national concern, according to a report issued by the State Department of Environmental Resources.

However, the highest levels for PCBs, compounds that are harmful to human and animal life, were found at a testing site in the Wilkes-Barre-Scranton area.

The report, issued after a study of fish in rivers and streams across the state, showed highest levels for PCB in the Susquehanna Basin on the river river upstream of the Lackawanna River. The Lackawanna empties into the Susquehanna River at Duryea.

PCB levels in two samples of five fish each — small mouthed bass and white suckers — were 2.29 parts of PCB per million parts of fish tissue, according to Theodore F. Clista, DER engineer for the Susquehanna Basin.

Health Limit

That is about half of the federal Food and Drug Administration's health limit of five parts PCB per million parts of fish tissue.

PCB is a variety of chemicals that do not break down into more simple compounds easily. They stay in the environment "in excess" of 25 years. They are harmful to birds, animals and humans. Symptoms in human beings who eat excessive amounts of the chemicals in their foods are long-lasting skin lesions, gastro-intestinal lesions, liver disorders and neurological problems.

The PCB was manufactured by Monsanto Chemical Company as a liquid or wax used in closed electrical systems for insulation, as well as in coating waxes, lubricant additives, carbonless carbon paper, pasticizers and sealants before 1971. In the past five years, they have been used in closed systems such as transformers for insulation, Clista said.

The PCBs will be phased out, state authorities said, as soon as Monsanto finds a substitute.

MONS 050827