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Further tests needed of PCB levels in lake

RED WING, Minn. (AP) — The chief of the U. S. Food and Drug Administration laboratory in Minneapolis says further testing must be done before it is known whether the PCB concentration in Lake Pepin has lowered.

Recent tests by a private agency show PCB levels well within federal limits in fish taken from the lake, a wide part of the Mississippi River on the Minnesota-Wisconsin line.

The toxic industrial chemicals —polychlorinated biphenyls—were found last month in fish taken from Lake Pepin. The specimens contained quantities of the chemical exceeding the federal standard of five parts per million. That finding resulted in a federal ban on the interstate sale of Lake Pepin fish.

PCBs are believed to cause birth defects and reproductive failure in fish, birds and mammals. They also are suspected of causing cancer among human beings.

Lake Pepin fishermen say they had a test made recently by the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF), Madison. The tests reportedly showed PCB levels in nine fish taken from a typical seining area in the lake to be below one part per million.

Darryl Brown, head of the U. S. Food and Drug Administration Minneapolis laboratory, says the data is not conclusive. He suggested fish taken for the WARF testing were of a different size than those earlier tested.

Brown said he has "full confidence" in the WARF laboratory and the procedures it used in testing the latest sample. But he added that differences in size could account for a difference in PCB readings.

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