PAGE ONE

Coosa PCB level down; river okay for fishing

ANNISTON, ALA.
STAR
D. 24,600

FEB 28 1977

CENTRE — If the recent spring-like weather has stirred your fishing interests but you've been afraid to partake of fish caught in the Coosa River and Weiss Lake, grab your fishing rods and sharpen those hooks — state health officials say everything's all right now.

State Health Officer Dr. Ira Myers has given the Coosa a clean bill of health, saying recent fish samples indicate there is not enough polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) to cause another fishing scare on the Coosa. Some fish samples taken on the Coosa below Rome., Ga., last year were found to contain high levels of PCB from the dumping of such affluents into the river by Georgia industries, Myers said.

THAT DISCOVERY led Georgia health officials to ban fishing in the Coosa inside Georgia. Alabama health officials found traces of PCB in fish caught in Weiss Lake, but never placed a ban on fishing there. Myers and U.S. Environmental protection Agency officials did issue, however, a warning against eating fish taken from Weiss Lake and the Coosa below Rome.

Fishermen and fish-camp operators in the Weiss area are part of a $1 billion class-action suit filed in federal court against two companies — General Electric, whose Rome plant is alleged to be the source of the PCBs, and Monsanto, which manufactures PCBs

(See Coosa, Page 12)

Coosa PCBs

(Continued From Page 1)

and sells them to General Electric.

Plaintiffs said the suit was filed because the PCB scare had cost them thousands of dollars and virtually ruined their businesses.

State Fishery Chief Sam Spencer said Friday recent fish samples showed there is not enough PCBs in Weiss Lake and Coosa River fish to warrant warnings about eating catches of bass, bream, crapple and stripes.

BOTH SPENCER and Myers said crapple and bass contain less PCB than bottom-feeding fish such as carp, buffalo and catfish. PCB is chemically related to DDT, and has been known to cause cancer in rats.

A spokesman for the Cherokee County Tourists Association, which promotes Weiss Lake for recreation and fishing, said the announcement that the fish are safe to eat comes just in time to insure upcoming bass and crapple tournaments on the lake.

Friday's statement from state health officials also gives a clean bill of health to fishing on H. Neely Henry at Ohatchee, Logan Martin at Riverside and Lay and Jordan Lakes further south on the Coosa.