PCB - Article

Scientists Mull Lake Anne PCB

PCB, From C1

they did not know the effect of the chemical on the lake.

"PCBs are everywhere," Walker said. Nobody knows where they came from." Although he also said it was "very unlikely" they came from the construction materials.

The effects of the chemical on Lake Anne are difficult to measure because of scientists' continuing debate over PCBs first manufactured 40 years ago, and a lack of standards denoting acceptable concentrations.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has recommended a maximum limit of 0.01 micrograms per liter of water (1.056 quarts), or one pound in 50 billion quarts. Water samples were taken at 19 spots in the lake and 19 in the streams feeding it, and traces of PCB were found in all the samples. The sampling equipment was not sophisticated enough to determine if the amount found in the water exceeded EPA's recommended maximum limit.

Sediment samples at 52 locations, including 19 in the lake, showed PCB concentrations ranging from 15 to 140 micrograms per kilogram. A kilogram is 2.2 pounds. Martell said he knows of no standard for an acceptable level of PCB in sediment.

Martell said he also found the chemical in two bluefish caught in the lake last May. The concentrations—140 and 440 micrograms per kilogram—were well below the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's PCB limit for food, 5,000 micrograms per kilogram.

The Reston findings were part of a study presented to the American Chemical Society last month by three Geological Survey scientists. The report said that the chemical was found in unexpectedly large amounts in water and sediment samples in 17 of 30 states tested, including Maryland and Virginia.

Other Virginia locations showing PCB concentrations were in the South Fork of the Shenandoah River, around Elkton, Rhoadsdale, northwest of Luray, and Front Royal; and in the North Fork of the Shenandoah near Strasburg.

In Maryland, the Geological Survey said it found traces of PCB in the Potomac River at Point of Rocks, in the Savage River at Barton and at two points on Collection Creek. A reading of 0.1 was found at another spot in the Antietam.

The agency said it found concentrations of the chemical in sediment at Williamsport in the Monocacy River; in Antietam Creek at Hagerstown, in Washington County and near Sharpsburg; in the Potomac near Sideroller and Hancock; in Deep Creek Lake near Mellenee and in the Savage River at Reservoir.

Mystery in Lake Anne: No Industry, but PCB

By Kenneth Bredemeier
Washington Post Staff Writer

The toxic chemical PCB, widely used for industrial purposes, has been found in all 85 water and sediment samples taken during the last year at Reston's Lake Anne and two streams that feed it, U.S. government scientists revealed yesterday.

U.S. Geological Survey chemist James Martell described amounts of the man-made chemical found in the lake and its tributaries as average, but said, "It's still surprising that in a community like Reston, which has no industry [illegible] waters into the lakes, you still find PCBs."

The chemical, (technically known as polychlorinated biphenyls, is similar to the insecticide DDT in its chemical makeup and is used in such products as transformers, paints and plastics. Its precise, long-term effects on humans are unknown.

Martell said he thinks that silt runoff from construction materials led to the PCB presence in the Reston lake (one point of the most populous in new town in northwestern Fairfax County).

Martell and Vernon Walker, environmental director of the Reston Homeowners' Association, which owns and maintains the lake, said

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