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Lake Pepin Gains Support in Battle

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La Crosse, Wis. – The Mississippi River Planning Commission decided Wednesday to assign a special five man committee to apply pressure to keep state and federal officials busy seeking solutions to PCB problems on Lake Pepin.

The commission responded to a plea for help from Mrs. Edwin Hill of Pepin, co-chairman of the recently organized Citizens for the reservation of Lake Pepin.

"We need people with important letterheads," Mrs. Hill said. Her group's correspondence with senators, congressmen and governors has produced little satisfaction, she said.

"They are procrastinating," she added.

Losses Noted

"With nine counties, we can provide some of the clout that is necessary," added Commission Chairman John Thomas of La Crosse.

"You people are suffering financial disaster up there," responded Commissioner Russell Aldrich of La Crosse, as he made a motion that a committee be named to get the commission involved.

Commercial fishing and tourism in the Lake Pepin area has been hard hit by the seizure of lake carp by Food and Drug Administration officials because they contain more than the five parts per million of the industrial chemical PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl).

DNR Report

Lake Pepin, which is in Buffalo County, is a widened stretch of the Mississippi River.

The commission heard reports Wednesday that studies were underway by a Minnesota Wisconsin-federal committee, and the first report would be ready Aug. 1 on PCB in sediments and fish on the Mississippi.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources also plans hearings on a proposed rule to control discharges of PCB into Wisconsin waters. It was noted that Minnesota industries upriver were the likely source of PCB in Lake Pepin.

The commission also agreed to urge the Army Corps of Engineers to study the possibility of clearing the Kickapoo River of debris that causes flooding and the possibility of dredging and installing wing dams on the Chippewa River to reduce flooding at Durand. About 1,300 acres were flooded this year, with $11,000 damage.

Commissioner Tony Polzer of Durand said the corps had been promising a study of the Chippewa for 10 years, but nothing had come of it.

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