PCB Count Higher Than First Report

ST. PAUL (AP) — Carp samples taken at Twin Cities area stations on the Mississippi River showed concentrations of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) up to six times the federal standard for human consumption, according to a preliminary report by an inter-agency task force.

The report, made public Thursday, said the contamination of Minnesota and Wisconsin waterways by the industrial chemical may be more widespread than previously thought.

The carp samples showed concentrations up to 33 parts per million. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration standard for human consumption is five ppm.

Fish samples taken at Black Dog and Carver Rapids on the Minnesota River had levels up to 8.4 ppm. One fish sample as far upstream on the Mississippi as Monticello had a concentration of 4.5 ppm, but other fish from upstream stations showed lower levels.

Samples from the St. Croix River showed up to 3.6 ppm.

The preliminary study was based on 158 fish samples from 14 stations on the St. Croix, Minnesota and Mississippi. The PCB concentrations ranged from .03 to 33 ppm, with the average in carp and white bass at 4 ppm and the average for smallmouth bass and crappies less than 1 ppm.

The task force, with representatives from 10 Minnesota, Wisconsin and federal agencies, was formed in May to study the problem. The group plans to sample the effluent from industrial and sewage treatment plants along the rivers in an attempt to locate sources of the PCB pollution.

PCBs are known to cause reproductive failure and birth defects in animals, and also are suspected of causing cancer in laboratory rats.

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