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Lake trout may contain toxic materials

DULUTH, Minn. (AP) — The consumption of Lake Superior lake trout should be limited to one meal per week due to excessive levels of toxic materials, the Great Lakes Environmental Contaminants Survey recommended Monday.

In its annual report, the cooperative body involving federal and Michigan governmental agencies also suggested that pregnant women be particularly careful not to eat the lake trout more than one a week.

The Duluth Water Quality Laboratory had issued a similar warning for lake trout earlier.

The GLECS recommendation was made after data analyzed in late 1975 indicated sample trout found in western Lake Superior — particularly around Isle Royale — exceeded U.S. Food and Drug Administration guidelines for mercury, the insecticide DDT and the industrial chemical polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

Mercury levels were greater than one part per million; .05 ppm is the FDA minimum tolerance level for human consumption. The trout also exceeded the five ppm limit established for DDT and PCBs.

The study was conducted on trout taken in 1974 but not analyzed until late 1975. GLECS had noted high toxic levels previously but not until the latest analysis had "the full extent of fish contamination in certain areas of Lake Superior (become) apparent," the report said.

Although the survey sample was small when compared to the total fish population in Lake Superior, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources believes the data are sufficient to indicate the general extent and severity of fish contamination in Lake Superior.

"We do not wish to be alarmists in this matter but, based on the medical judgment and the toxicological information available to us," lake trout consumption should be limited, said Dr. Maurice Reizen, director of the Michigan Department of Public Health.

Reizen said both residents and tourists should follow the guidelines, and noted the largest part of the problem exists in western Lake Superior.

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