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Chesapeake Bay Pollution Low

ANNAPOLIS (AP) — A two-year study of the upper Chesapeake Bay shows that pollution from industrial chemicals does exist, but that the pollution is far below critical levels.

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources, which released results of the study Tuesday, said it was intended to give state officials an assessment of the level of pollution by industrial chemicals — called PCBs — before the pollution becomes a serious problem in the bay as it has in some other areas of the nation.

Researchers checked pollution levels in shellfish as well as in sediment on the bottom of the upper bay.

The highest concentration of PCBs found in shellfish was .15 parts per million. A department spokesman said this was nowhere near the accepted critical level of five parts per million.

The study also turned up concentrations of PCBs in sediment as high as .28 parts per million. The department said that, by way of comparison, measurements in some portions of the critically polluted Hudson River in New York reached levels of 10 parts per million.

The study was conducted by the University of Maryland's Department of Microbiology, the Chesapeake Bay Institute of Johns Hopkins University and Westinghouse's Oceanic Division.

About 90 per cent of the fresh water flowing into the Chesapeake Bay comes from the Susquehanna River, and the researchers determined that the river also brought most of the PCBs and chlorinated hydrocarbons into the upper bay. Chlorinated hydrocarbons are insecticides and herbicides.

The only other major source of pollution was the Baltimore area.

Department scientists said the study points up the importance of Maryland's proposal that sewage facilities in the Susquehanna River watershed be floodproofed to avoid contamination caused by flooding. The Susquehanna River Basin Commission has approved the Maryland proposal and is conducting an inventory to see what must be done to floodproof the sewage plants. As far as the Baltimore harbor area is concerned, the department said it will attempt to locate users of PCBs in the Baltimore region to try to cut down on levels of pollution in the harbor.

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