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PCB Levels in Lake Trout Reported

By CLIFF LEE
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A new twist has been added to the growing controversy surrounding PCB discharges in the Glens Falls area.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation (EnCon) has reported that analysis of lake trout taken from the Bolton area of Lake George in 1974 revealed various levels of PCB contamination, some of which are considered prohibitive to human consumption.

Robert McManus, press secretary to EnCon Commissioner Ogden Reid, said Tuesday that some of the lake trout taken from the Bolton area showed PCB levels above five parts per million, which is considered to be the tolerance level in fish for human consumption.

He added, however, that the majority of the fish taken showed levels well below the 5 ppm.

McManus said the department will be taking more fish from the lake within the next few months to conduct further tests of PCB levels and try to determine the source of the chemical contamination, if the contamination is as extensive as some of the 1974 samples indicated and if the chemical levels have increased, decreased or stabilized.

EnCon officials have dismissed the possibility of the trout in Lake George being contaminated from PCB discharges into the Hudson River due to the lack of direct or indirect flow between the lake and the river.

Department officials are reluctant to speculate as to the source of the PCB contamination, but have indicated that it may have originated in Lake Champlain, which is the major water source for Lake George.

Due to the lack of industrial development around Lake George, the department has ruled out the possibility of direct discharge of PCBs into the lake.

McManus explained that the reason it took about one year before the lake trout taken in 1974 were analyzed is that the fish were frozen and stored for future tests when the commissioner ordered a statewide sampling of fish for PCB contamination this year, the fish were finally taken out of the deep freeze and immediately tested.

EnCon is currently involved in adjudicatory hearings into the allegedly illegal discharge of PCBs into the Hudson River by the Hudson Falls and Fort Edward General Electric plants and is hoping to obtain a ruling preventing further discharges by the plants.

McManus said the discovery of PCB contamination is lake trout from Lake George would not be brought into the GE hearings and legal proceedings against a particular industry in the area is not being contemplated as a result of the findings.