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LAKE PEPIN IS DYING!

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Lake Pepin is dying, and little is being done to save it. This was the central concern of the July Executive Committee meeting of the Industrial additive polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, found in fish samples. This additive, according to Norman Kirschbaum of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, who met with the committee, is known to cause skin problems, birth defects, and even death. The level in the tainted fish from Lake Pepin was in excess of federal and state health limits. Kirschbaum admitted that not enough is presently known about PCBs either to be sure that the limit of five parts per million is sufficient to ensure public health, or to hold that it is unrealistically restrict-

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ive.

PCBs are used in a wide range of manufactured products, all the way from automotive lubricants to agricultural fertilizer containers. When released to the environment, they act somewhat like DDT; in fact, until recently, laboratory tests did not distinguish the two. They both remain in the food cycle for years without degrading to safe levels. However, Kirschbaum noted, PCBs are much more widespread than DDT, appearing in municipal and industrial sewage, in the air, in water supplies, and in food products.

Since the dangers of PCBs first became evident, the sole U.S. supplier has restricted its sales, but it has not halted production. This supplier has not chosen to release the names of PCB purchasers, so the search for the source of the Lake Pepin contamination is made that much more difficult. Mrs. Ed Hill, of Pepin, maintains that the only logical source is the Twin Cities area. Representing the Citizens for the Preservation of Lake Pepin, Mrs. Hill told the Commissioners of the adverse local effects of both the closing of the fishery and the increasingly noxious conditions brought about by the Lake's pollution.

In response to requests by Mrs. Hill's organization and by Commissioners from the River counties, Commission Chairman John Thomas will appoint an action group of Commissioners and citizens to look into the situation. The group will seek a coordinated response from Wisconsin's Congressional delegation, Governor Lucey, and all the state and federal agencies involved. The Great River Environmental Action Team has a similar goal, and it pledged to work closely with the Commission in this and other River-related matters.

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