RHINEBECK, N. Y.
GAZETTE ADVERTISER
RED HOOK ADVERTISER EDIT.
W. 3,000

FEB 26 1976

PCB level in river hurts Hudson fishing business

PAGE C-16

Toxic amounts of industrial polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in Hudson River fish are forcing local fishermen to cast their lines elsewhere. The ban on commercial fishing in the Hudson announced last week by the State Commissioner of Environmental Conservation has already put some local fishermen out of business.

Andy Anderson, a Red Hook resident for 25 years, quit his job as a truck driver last year to become a full time commercial eel fisherman on the Hudson. He caught and sold more than 25,000 lbs. of eels in the six month season before State tests revealed that the eels contained more than 35 parts per million of the PCBs, an amount which far exceeded the allowable limit. He had to dump 3,000 lbs. of them with a market value of $1,500. Now he's out of a job.

PCBs are believed to be carcinogenic (cancer causing) compounds that are present in some kinds of industrial waste. Two General Electric capacitor manufacturing plants in Fort Edward and Hudson Falls, about 50 miles north of Albany, have been named as the PCB pollutors of the Hudson. Without complex scientific analysis, PCBs are almost impossible to detect.

"I'm going to have to move," Anderson said, "maybe to Connecticut. I have a lot of money tied up in fishing (including two boats worth $3,000 each). I started from scratch."

Anderson sold all of his catch to an exporter in Rhode Island, who shipped them live to Germany and Italy for smoking. The live eels sold for up to $1.20 per pound in the peak fall season.

Anderson said that if the PCBs, supposedly being discharged from two General Electric capacitor plants 50 miles above Albany, were reduced back to "acceptable" levels, he would "move back here in a minute with four or five boats. The Hudson River is one of the best places in the world for eels."

Although Anderson will be forced to move from Red Hook to stay in the fishing business, he has maintained a sense of humor. "If you know anybody who wants to buy some contaminated eels, let me know," he said.

The commercial fishing ban will immediately affect fishermen of all indigenous Hudson River fish, like eels, striped bass, white perch and catfish. Migratory fish, like the popular shad and herring, will (Please Turn To Page 6).

MONS 033017



Andy Andersen, a commercial eel fisherman living in Red Hook, stands behind his eel pots which he can no longer use in the Hudson because of the state ban on commercial fishing. Photo by Neal J. Rosenstein.

. . . PCB level hurts fishing

(Continued From Page 1)

still be caught commercially unless they are also found to have toxic levels of PCBs.

Chester Day, also of Red Hook, does some part time commercial shad fishing with some friends out of Barrytown. The ban, he said, "won't affect us so far." He is planning to fish this year when the season starts in early April.

Another part time commercial shad fisherman from Red Hook, Robert L. Bard, is also a fish and wildlife technician for the State Department of Environmental Conservation. He said the future of shad and herring fishing on the Hudson is uncertain because the species had completed their spawning runs in the river when the bulk of the PCB testing was done late last summer.

"I just bought a round bottom Hudson River shad boat," Bard said, "but I don't know if I'll be able to use it this year."

Bard's uncle, Robert S. Bard, used to fish every season for shad and herring until about two years ago.

Tastes like fuel

"I stopped because the river was so dirty," he said. "I smoked the shad and made pickled herring," but because of the pollutants in the water, the fish "sometimes tasted like diesel fuel." Bard added that he won't start fishing again until the PCB problem is over.

For now, most commercial fishing on the Hudson will come to a halt. The shad and herring fishermen may cast their nets when the season starts in late March, but their catch may be worthless if tests show that these species too have been saturated with the industrial waste.

Until the PCBs can be reduced or eliminated from the waters of the Hudson, the younger Bard said, "It's a real of a waste of a natural resource."

MONS 033018