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EPA urged to ban use of pollutant

LA CROSSE, Wis. — An almost total ban of the industrial pollutant PCB is being urged by the U.S. Department of the Interior, according to an official of the department's Fish and Wildlife Service.

Jack Hemphill, head of the Minneapolis regional office, told the Minnesota-Wisconsin Boundary Area Commission here Friday that research shows the chemical is showing up in the environment at an increasing rate. The interior department is urging the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to ban use of the pollutant except where no alternates exist, Hemphill said.

Monsanto Co. is the only U.S. PCB producer, and manufactures 29 million pounds of the chemical annually for use in electrical equipment.

Hemphill said that use is now being monitored, but added there are thousands of imported and domestic products which contain the chemical in unknown quantities.

Prior to Hemphill's comments, members heard a report from Darryl Brown, U.S. Food and Drug Administration official, and Marvin Hora of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

The two explained a multi-agency task force report which indicated Mississippi River game fish are generally within the federal limits of five parts per million PCB.

Commissioners drafted a "letter of concern" to be sent to all members. If the letter is approved at commission level by members, it will be sent to EPA head Russell Train.

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