THE NEW YORK TIMES, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1975

P.C.B. IN FISH STIRS NEW STATE STUDY

Reid Reports High Levels of the Toxic Chemicals in 3 More Waterways

By ROBERT HANLEY

Unhealthy levels of the toxic chemical PCB have been found waterways, prompting the State Environmental Conservation Department to begin planning a broadened campaign to detect, analyze and possibly combat the compound.

The department's discovery of tainted fish in the St. Lawrence River, the Mohawk River and Lake Champlain follows warnings in the last five weeks by Ogden R. Reid, the Environmental Commissioner, that several species of fish in the Hudson River and Lake Ontario had been contaminated by PCB and rossibly were unfit for human consumption.

Mr. Reid disclosed the additional findings over the weeken after he met last Thursday in Albany with 40 scientists from around the country to consider ways to rid the Hudson of the chemical.

Tracing all the sources of PCB, which is used in the manufacture of electrical equipment, printing inks, paints and hydraulic fluids, is an elusive goal, the Commissioner said.

Hudson Contamination High

Qyef-all the contamination found in the Hudson River has been the highest of the five bodies of water, and Mr. Reid said he feared that the river was "approaching irreversible and irreparable damage."

Restoration, he said, "is a process that could take decades."

A major problem in combating PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl) is that it is not readily soluble in water, Mr. Reid explained. Thirty per cent heavier than water, it sinks to lake and river bottoms and clings to particles in silt and sediment.

Once ingested, PCB is highly soluble in the under in fats and concentrates in the underbellies and eggs of fish, researchers say.

In mink, chimpanzees and rats, the chemical is thought to raise liver cancer and skin diseases. Its effect on humans is unclear under study.

Federal Limits Set

But Federal standards say that fish containing more than five parts of PCB per million parts of fish are unsafe to eat and should not be shipped in interstate commerce.

Recent tests on walleyed pike caught in the Mohawk River near Albany on Sept. 2 showed an average of 13.7 parts of PCB per million of flesh, Mr. Reid said. Other average readings from the catch included small-mouth bass, 13.4 parts per million, and brown bullheads, 14 parts per million.

In the St. Lawrence, 8.6 parts per million were found in some small-mouth bass caught on Aug. 27 off Cape Vincent, near the point where the river flows from Lake Ontario.

A recent catch of white suckers from Lake Champlain showed an average of 36 parts per million.

Commissioner Reid also reported that new testing in the Hudson showed the following averages in several catches on Aug. 26 at Waterford, near Albany: small-mouth bass, 41.5 and 53.5 parts per million; white suckers, 28.2 and 48.9 parts, and walleyed pike, 32.4 parts.

Salmon Ban Considered

And chinook salmon taken recently from Lake Ontario and from the Salmon River, which empties into the lake about 50 miles east of Oswego, contained averages of 10 and 12 parts.

Because of those findings, Commissioner Reid said, he is considering an attempt to ban any commercial sales of Lake Ontario chinook salmon in the state.

The only documented industrial source for PCB in the Hudson is two General Electric plants about 80 miles north of Albany. The Environmental Conservation Department has begun action to halt those discharges by Sept. 30, 1976.

One theory to be examined closely by the department is that PCB in the waterways somehow becomes part of the evaporation process.

"We've had one report that virgin snow in Wisconsin had the PCBs," Commissioner Reid said. The interference is that they were carried by the air."

He said he was also puzzled over findings that some small-mouth bass in the Chemung River, near Elmira, N.Y., had traces of the chemical in them, although well below the Federal danger standard. But none of the five companies in the state that use PCB is situated anywhere near Elmira.

An in-depth source-study is one facet of a long-range program being prepared by Mr. Reid's staff for sumission to Governor Carey on Oct. 15.

Other elements of the program include the following:

¶The hiring of additional fish pathologists.

¶The expansion of testing laboratories in Delmar and Rome.

¶Extension of the monitroring program to include fish, sediments and au aquatic wild fowl in and around Lake George and the Finger Lakes, the reservoirs and rivers of New York City's watershed and Long Island Sound.

MONS 033528