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State Says Salmon in Lake Contain a Toxic Chemical

Consumers were warned last Thursday not to eat salmon from Lake Ontario or striped bass from the Hudson

River because federal and state researchers had discovered that the fish contain dangerously high amounts of

PCB, a toxic chemical utilized in a wide range of manufacturing processes.

The warning was issued by

State DEC Commissioner Ogden R. Reid and State Health Commissioner Dr. Robert P. Whelan, the New York Times said recently.

The salmon taken out of Lake Ontario had levels of between 15 and 20 parts per million of PCB, DEC said.

Polychlorinated biphenyls, known as PCB, has been in use since 1930 in the manufacture of plastics, paints, electrical transformers, printing ink, caulking compounds and hydraulic fluids.

In recent years the state has stocked Lake Ontario with millions of coho salmon, and heavy catches have been reported, particularly in the Pulaski section.

Testing by DEC's Rome laboratory on the salmon was performed at the eastern end of Lake Ontario, a spokesman in Albany said this morning.

The spokesman said - based on the information DEC had received as a result of the testing - the PCBs found in the samplings would not pose a threat to the overall salmon program, which began in the Fall of 1968, and will continue.

According to the spokesman, a statewide study is being made by DEC of all fish in the waters, in addition to the samplings in which the PCB was discovered.

Meanwhile, the Great Lakes Water Quality Board in Windsor, Ont., has recommended that the International Joint Commission urge its respective governments to begin national public discussions on the contamination of the environment by PCBs and the consequences of strictly controlling the sale, use and disposal of PCBs.

The board said the PCB contamination "is of long standing concern in the Great Lakes system" and that the PCB body burden in many valuable Great Lakes fish species exceeds the present U.S. Food and Drug Administration level.

PCB is similar in molecular structure to DDT and is not readily soluble in water but highly soluble in fats. Like DDT, it is a chlorinated hydrocarbon, the dangers of which were voiced by the late Rachel Carson in the early nineteen sixties. But not until the last five years has a broad spectrum within the scientific community begun to warn of PCBs peril. It has already been banned in Canada and Britain.

In the United States, where it is manufactured only by the Monsanto Chemical Company federal standards say that any food containing more than five parts per million of PCB is unsafe to eat.