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Some PCB Found in Lake Superior Fish

Duluth, Minn. –AP– Duluth scientists say they have found the toxic industrial chemicals (PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) in 28 kinds of fish — most of the marine life varieties in Lake Superior.

The scientists, conducting a survey for the Lake Superior Basin Study Center, said the chemicals were discovered during a three week tour last month. Wayland R. Swain, center director, released the preliminary findings Wednesday.

Swain said all fish taken as samples contained PCBs, but few of the fish contained levels of the chemical high enough to be considered immediately alarming.

The types of fish containing the highest chemical levels are generally not consumed directly by humans, Swain said, but are part of the lake's food chain.

Ciscowet trout, an oily deep-water fish taken from the trough between Grand Portage and Isle Royale, contained the highest level of PCBs, he said.

The trout contained between 8.2 and 8.4 parts per million (ppm) of the chemicals. That was far below the levels found recently in trout from Lake Michigan and carp from Lake Pepin, where the Mississippi River widens along the Minnesota-Wisconsin border between Red Wing and Wabasha.

The US Food and Drug Administration has established a safe level of 5 ppm for PCBs, which are known to cause birth defects in fish, birds and mammals.

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