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Report says plants not big PCB culprits

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — A task force report says industrial plants and sewage-treatment facilities apparently are not major sources of polychlorinated biphenoyls (PCBs) pollution in the Mississippi River and its tributarities.

The task force involving agencies from Minnesota, Wisconsin and the federal government was organized last spring to study the PCB problem in the Mississippi River, after fish with high PCB concentrations were found in Lake Pepin.

Water sampled

"The industrial and municipal point sources which were sampled and found to contain PCBs cannot be considered significant sources of PCBs to the Mississippi River and its tributies," the report relased Wednesday said.

PCBs are a group of synthetic industrial chemicals which have been linked to reproductive failure in human beings and animals, and also have been linked to certain types of cancer in laboratory animals.

Samples of river water were taken from Elk River, Minn., north of Minneapolis-St. Paul, downstream to Alma, Wis.

The task force said there apparently is a direct relationship between PCB concentrations in fish and in bottom sediment. The report suggested there are substantial PCB concentrations in the bottom sediment of the Mississippi, especially in Spring Lake and Lake Pepin.

In sediment

The report indicated river dredging activities stir up the bottom sediment, allowing PCBs to mix with the water again.

The report tends to support theories that large quantities of PCBs dumped into the river in past years have settled to the bottom and are being stirred up periodically by dredging operations.

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