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Choccolocco

PCBs study proposed

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MONTGOMERY — A Birmingham conservationist has suggested that Choccolocco Creek fish and biological life be studied to determine the long-term effects of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

PCBs are persistent chemical compounds used in the manufacture of electrical transformers and capacitors.

They have been associated with various health complaints. The State of Georgia recently closed to commercial fishing the portion of the Coosa River from its source where the Oostanaula and Etowah rivers converge at Rome, Ga., to the Alabama state line because of excessive PCB pollution.

THE SOURCE of that pollution was the General Electric plant at Rome, according to Georgia health officials.

Alabama officials have reported elevated levels of PCBs in fish and wildlife in Weiss Lake at Centre, a Coosa River impoundment immediately downstream from the segment of river Georgia closed. But the river has not been closed in this state.

Mrs. Louise Smith of Birmingham suggested that Choccolocco Creek should be studied because it was polluted with PCBs until the early 1970s. The Monsanto Co. manufactured PCBs in its Anniston plant until 1971.

AT A HEARING on the Coosa River Basin Water Quality Management Plan Tuesday in Montgomery, Mrs. Smith of the Alabama Conservancy said Choccolocco Creek in Calhoun and Talladega counties should be studied because the date of termination of PCB contamination in that stream is known.

Experts are unable to say how long PCB contamination lasts. Although the river has not been closed in Alabama, state citizens have been warned against excessive consumption of fish from the Weiss Lake area.

In an earlier meeting of the Alabama Water Improvement Commission, State Health Officer Ira Myers said continuing checks of the Coosa where Choccolocco Creek empties into it showed low PCB readings.

QUARTERLY SAMPLING is continuing with samples being analyzed by Pesticide Residue Laboratory of the State

(See PCBs, Page 6A)

PCBs

(Continued From Page 1)

Department of Agriculture and Industries.

Mrs. Smith complained in comments on the proposed water quality plan for the river that toxic contaminants such as PCBs are not being addressed in the plan, which outlines future use and water quality of the stream and its tributaries.

Toxic substances such as PCBs are apparently being ignored by the plan although they could "close the Coosa for 10 or 15 years or longer," she said.

The three-inch thick proposed plan was presented for public comment by the Water Improvement Commission staff. It is a comprehensive document including material on climate, topography, soils, water resources, population and land use characteristics of the multi-county Coosa drainage basin.

It was presented with the Tallapoosa and Alabama River plans for public comment.

The commission invites written comments on the plan until Nov. 30. It will then be presented to the Environmental Protection Agency for final approval.

The plan recommends upgrading of Cane, Snow, Choccolocco and Eastaboga and Tallahatchee Creeks in the Calhoun County area from "Fish and Wildlife as a Goal" to "Fish and Wildlife."

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