State Issues a Warning on Toxic Chemicals in Striped Bass and Salmon

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bass or salmon.

Mr Reid's restraint was endorsed by Dr Michael M. Bowden, deputy chief medical examiner of New York City. "I think it is important," he said, "that the preliminary findings not frighten anyone, because they must be more fully evaluated to determine what risks there are to humans in the concentrations found."

In the Glen Hills

The chemical in question is polychlorinated biphenyl, more commonly known as PCB. It has been, in the manufacture of plastics, paints, electrical transformers, printing ink, caulking compounds and hydraulic fluids.

It 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 category of widely used pesticides that includes Dieldrin, not yet banned in the United States, and Kepone, which has caused a broad spectrum of health problems in workers in Virginia. Dieldrin is already banned in Canada and Britain.

In the United States, where it is manufactured only by the Monsanto Chemical Company, Federal officials say that as little as one part per billion of PCBs is enough to kill.

In recent years, Federal researchers have found PCBs in the tissues of fish in many parts of the country, including the Hudson River at Fort Edward Falls, Albany, and in Lake Michigan.

Last year two General Electric plants that have dumped PCBs into the water

The rock bass contained 200 parts per million of PCB and the salmon 78 parts per million.

Testing Is Continued

The Federal researchers reported their findings to Mr Reid, who ordered his staff last Monday to continue and amplify the testing. His striped bass caught near the Tappan Zee bridge here, from 20 miles from New York City, had an average of 8.7 parts per million of PCB in their flesh. One had 17 parts per million.

The Department of Environmental Conservation now has 40 more striped bass, six of them caught between Poughkeepsie and Peekskill, and hopes to have laboratory which completed on them by next Monday.

The salmon taken out of Lake Ontario had levels of between 15 and 20 parts per million of PCBs.

Mr Reid says he was told by General Electric's officials that discharges into the river have contributed to the PCB problem and that other companies are involved. Some fish caught north of Hudson Falls also contained PCB.

"I have asked our counsel to contact Monsanto and get from them as quickly as possible a list of their customers in New York State," Mr Reid said.

G. E., which has a permit to dump some toxic wastes into the river, has closed the two plants in question for summer vacation and will reopen them Aug. 18. Robert Peel, of G. E.'s community-relations department at the Fort Edward plant, said, "We don't put PCBs into the river intentionally but we live in a real world, and it is going to take time to solve the problem."

Mr Reid has also ordered his staff to start checking quality of drinking water at various points in the state. People in communities, for example, taking their drinking water directly out of the Hudson River, and so receiving river-purification process known as reverse osmosis, could remove PCBs.

There are no data to suggest that contact with fish from New York waters has harmed either fishermen or their families, but Dr. Joseph A. Spadaro, a spokesman for the Federal Environmental Protection Agency, said yesterday that the agency still "not normally" checks for PCBs. This was confirmed by Dr. Bodien.

"Checking for this kind of compound is a research project, and is not done in routine post-mortem studies here or anywhere else in the country that I'm aware of," Dr. Bodien said.

Pastured at Restaurants

It is difficult to assess how many people have eaten various fish that thrive in the Hudson, Lake Ontario and other waterways in the state. Consumption data has been collected by the staff of the Hudson River Valley Commission, but it has been limited to striped bass pastured at restaurants in the Hudson Valley.

Mr Reid said he feared that northern pike, large-mouth and small-mouth bass, yellow perch, white perch and white catfish would have vulnerable concentrations of PCBs in their flesh. He is more hopeful that shad and sturgeon, which spawn in the river in the spring, may be less affected. Not all of the many varieties of fish have been tested, and it is thought that shad and sturgeon would not be in the river at this time.

The PCB problem is not a new one, but the emergence of it at such levels in New York waters has surprised state officials.

A Problem Stated

"I understand that despite all the warnings we've had, General Electric was putting 40 pounds of PCB into the Hudson at Hudson Falls and Fort Edward each day," Mr Reid said. "This year, they've apparently reduced the amount to less than two pounds a day. I don't see why they should be putting any of this stuff into any river."

Mr Peel of G.E. noted that PCB was used in making capacitors, devices that hold electrical charges, and that if for some reason the capacitors had to be disposed of, they were buried in landfill sites away from water.

"That is absurd," said David Seymour, president of the Hudson River Fishermen's Association. "The anybody at G.E. asked what happens when a garbage dump is full of the capacitors holding PCB are broken, the stuff will leach into the ground and may contaminate water for miles around."

One of the earlier incidents involving PCB occurred in 1968 in Japan when approximately 1,000 people developed a skin disease after eating rice oil that had been contaminated by PCB.

According to research done by Dr. Robert Risebrough, an authority on PCB from the University of California at Berkeley, foods when also pregnant women eat of this studied. He said that two of their babies often stillborn and "all showed symptoms of chloroldshloroy poisoning." The Japanese discovered 10 deaths in PCB poisoning.

In 1971, the presence of PCB in Lake Michigan ended its role as a commercial fishery.

Stanley Kliebert, of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, said yesterday that "we had hoped the PCB would biodegrade but it has not yet happened." Mr Reid said his research suggested that PCB in water could remain toxic for decades.

Litigation Inherent

The substances is ubiquitous and persists once it gets into the food chain. A Federal Environmental Protection Administration spokesman said yesterday that PCB had been found in turtle eggs in Europe and in the milk of pregnant women in Newfoundland. It has also been detected in children that have never even had meals from fish meal.

The "New Columbia Encyclopedia" notes that PCB "is extremely stable, withstanding temperatures of up to 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit." The pamphlet notes that in the past, the contaminant has been found in cardboard containers, which was ultimately traced to printer's ink.

The effect of PCB on whitefish near Lake Michigan has been documented. Gilman D. Veith, head of the Federal E.P.A. National Water Quality Laboratory in Duluth said that rainbow trout fed with 0.8 parts per million of PCB failed to reproduce and suffered a mortality rate of 71 per cent. Adverse effects, including reproduction changes and liver enlargement, have been noted in rats with rats, guinea pigs and chimpanzees.

State Says Some Striped Bass And Salmon Pose a Toxic Peril

By RICHARD SEVERO

8/6/75

State officials warned consumers yesterday not to eat striped bass from the Hudson River or salmon from Lake Ontario because Federal and state researchers have found that the fish contain dangerously high amounts of PCB, a toxic chemical used in a wide range of manufacturing processes.

The warning was issued by Ogden R. Reid, the State Environmental Conservation Commissioner and Dr. Robert P. Whalen, the State Health Commissioner.

"I don't want to be an alarmist," Mr Reid said, "but this is a question of public health."

The warning is essentially a regional one. Striped bass from the Hudson River can be bought many miles away. It is not possible to tell just by looking at the fish if it contained PCB.

Mr Reid said his advisory would remain in effect at least until the was able to determine the full scope of the problem which he is "fearful" may involve more than just striped

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