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Pulp Mills Oppose PCB Ban

Journal Madison Bureau

Madison, Wis. – A state proposal to limit discharges of the chemical polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) to near zero would raise economic havoc with the paper recycling industry, a paper company spokesman said Thursday.

The statement was made by Richard W. Wand, vice president of the Bergstrom Paper Co., at the first of a two day hearing on Department of Natural Resources proposals to limit discharges of the chemical to no more than 5 parts per million in a 24 hour composite sample.

It was noted at the hearing that 10 of Wisconsin's pulp and paper mills recycle waste paper.

State investigators have reported significant amounts of PCB in discharges from the Bergstrom and Fort Howard Paper Companies, which recycle waste paper, and a Nation-Portage. The Bergstrom firm is in Neenah and Fort Howard is in Green Bay.

In Carbonless Carbon

The investigators trace the PCB to carbonless carbon paper in which PCB has been used.

Wand said that Bergstrom had no control over the PCB because it had never bought any of it and that it would be impossible to test all the waste it accepted in order to identify its presence. In addition, he said, there was no evidence that the type of PCB found in its plant was the same type found in the fatty tissue of fish that was causing concern for regulatory agencies.

Not Primary Cause

Howard Ness of New York, representing the National Association of Recycling Industries, Inc., said it would be unfair to blame the recyclers when they were not the primary cause of PCBs being there.

Zero discharge rules for such paper plants would be unnecessary and disastrous, Ness said.

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PCBs

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Lt. Gov. Martin Schreiber, in a statement read for him, said he hoped the hearing would draw attention to the fact that while Monsanto Chemical Corp. the only maker of PCB in this country, had restricted its sale to closed uses, it was being imported from other countries without adequate monitoring.

Aspin Favors Ban

A representative for Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wis.) said Aspin favored an outright ban on discharges of the chemicals into state surface waters.

"What recent research has offered to us is a further strengthening of the opinion of many federal, Wisconsin and other Great Lakes states agencies that PCBs pose a potential long term hazard to humans," Aspin said in prepared testimony.

He said he would support federal action in the matter.

Albert K. Forster of Madison, secretary of the Wisconsin Izaak Walton League, said the organization opposed the use of any chemicals until they were proven safe.

The Food and Drug Administration has set a 2.5 part per million tolerance for PCB in milk and 5 for fish, and recently dramatized its concern over the industrial chemical by seizing carp from Green Bay and Lake Pepin that exceeded that amount.

This tolerance was based on the no effect level determined from studies of Japanese families who suffered skin discoloration, loss of hair and liver trouble when PCB accidentally got into their cooking oil in 1968.

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