

Chemical made by firm said to threaten fish

A chemical manufactured solely in this country by the Monsanto Co. is endangering fish in the Great Lakes, a federal official said in Chicago.

The statement, made Friday at an Environmental Protection Agency conference, follows disclosure that low levels of the chemical — polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) — were measured last spring in the discharge of a water treatment plant in Sauget, Ill.

THAT TOWN IS the site of Monsanto's PCB manufacturing plant. Monsanto voluntarily limited sale of PCB in 1971 after dangers of the chemical became known.

The federal official, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Nathaniel P. Reed, said PCB in the Great Lakes appears to be threatening the reproductive cycle of fish, including those involved in an effort to restock the lakes.

concentrations of the

chemical in fish got too high (5 parts per million or higher), those fish are unsafe to eat under standards set by the federal Food and Drug Administration.

Reed said PCB has been found in fish samples taken from 110 stations in the major river systems across the nation.

It is "literally everywhere. And I do not mean just the Hudson River and the entire Great Lakes system, but ... the Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio rivers," he said.

Concentrations of PCB found in the water treatment discharges of Sauget are extremely low, about 6 parts per billion, a spokesman for Monsanto said.

THE SPOKESMAN said Monsanto had taken elaborate precautions to prevent the chemical from escaping into the water.

Before 1971, PCB was used in numerous products, such

as hydraulic fluid and a form of carbon paper. Disposing of these products or leaks of the PCB fluid resulted in release of the pollutant into the water, the spokesman said.

Just after Monsanto learned this chemical was being found

in fish, it limited its sale to manufacturers using it in sealed transformers and capacitors, the spokesman said.

The chemical is used in such products because it is highly resistant to heat, the

spokesman said.

However, once PCB escapes into water, it remains there for a very long time without decomposing, the spokesman said.

THE EPA is pushing a bill called the Toxic Substance

Control Act, which would give the agency control over manufacturing, distribution and disposal of such chemicals as PCB.

That bill has been bottled up in congressional committees since 1971.