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PCB traces again found in trout of 2 area streams

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For the third year, the state Department of Environmental Resources has found low levels of toxic polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in brown trout caught in two popular streams in Chester and Montgomery Counties.

Officials said the PCB levels found in trout from 3½ miles of Little Valley Creek and the lower four miles of Valley Creek did not pose a health hazard, however.

The PCBs were found in both stocked and native brown trout from the two creeks, officials said. The Little Valley feeds Valley Creek, which empties into the Schuylkill at Valley Forge.

"It's a real shame, because these are two of the last remaining natural trout streams in southeast Pennsylvania," said Don Knorr, a DER aquatic biologist in Norristown.

Knorr said the PCBs had been traced to a SEPTA railroad repair yard near Little Valley Creek in Pao-li. The DER has been negotiating with the railroads to clean the PCB oil from the yard.

The DER said that tests showed 1.76

parts per million of PCBs in trout fillets from Valley Creek, and 5.3 parts per million in whole fish from Little Valley Creek. The federal Food and Drug Administration advises against eating fish containing more than 5 parts per million PCBs.

David Mashek, DER spokesman, said the trout did not pose a health hazard because the trout fillets showed acceptably low levels. "The actual stuff you eat is 1.76" parts per million, he said.

The DER advised fishermen to fillet and skin the fish before cooking, because the PCBs tend to accumulate in organs and in fatty tissue under the skin.

The Pennsylvania Fish Commission stocks Valley Creek with brown trout each year. The highest levels of PCBs were found in older trout, because it takes several weeks to several months for the chemical to build up in the recently stocked fish.

PCBs have been linked to cancer, birth defects and liver disease in laboratory animals. Congress has banned production of the chemical since 1978, but the chemical is still widely used as an electrical insulant in transformers and capacitors.