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St. Louis—The Conservation Department has removed and buried all fish from five St. Louis city park lakes after they were found to be contaminated with PCB, an industrial chemical.

The fish, all carp, had been stocked in the five lakes as part of the Urban Fishing Program, co-sponsored by the Conservation Department and the city of St. Louis.

They were purchased from a commercial source in Green Bay, Wis., and were stocked in the five lakes July 31. On Aug. 6, the Food and Drug Administration notified the Conservation Department that its tests of fish from the shipment indicated levels of PCB averaging 50 parts per million when five parts per million is the highest acceptable level.

The department immediately closed the lakes to fishing and on Aug. 8 removed all fish—including those already in the lake before the contaminated fish were stocked.

"This is one of those ironic and tragic by-products of modern life," said Charles Purkett, chief of fisheries for the department. "What has been a warmly received fishing program suddenly contains dangers that our grandfathers or fathers couldn't have imagined."

The one producer of PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl) is Monsanto Chemical, which is based in St. Louis. Although no one thinks St. Louisans who have caught and eaten carp with PCB residues could have eaten enough to harm them, PCB accumulates in the body and is eliminated very slowly.

No fish tested in Missouri ever have tested above the five p.p.m. maximum, except for two isolated instances in the Bootheel area where the fish showed nine p.p.m. several years ago.

"We'll restock the lakes within a couple of weeks," says Purkett.

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